SERVICE QUALITY OF BUILDING MAINTENANCE CONTRACTORS IN ZAMBIA: A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract
This study examines service quality of building maintenance contractors in Zambia. It argues that improving service quality would help local contractors to enhance their competitiveness in a globalised environment. The study uses an international organisation as a unit of analysis through the perception of the Estate’s Manager in exploring service quality issues. An instrument based on the SERVQUAL approach was used to collect data. The determination of service quality was based on the comparison between the clients’ expected and perceived service quality levels. The findings show that few contractors exceed the clients’ expectations in all dimensions, while the majority fall below the clients expectations in all dimensions. The aggregate service quality scores for all contractors show that clients do not receive the expected service quality level. The findings also suggest that there is a correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction in projects undertaken by the contractors. Contractors therefore need to acknowledge this and improve on their service quality. The paper acknowledges that there are few empirical studies concerning service quality in the Zambian construction industry and therefore contributes to the understanding of quality issues in the industry. The findings provide useful insights into service quality in the Zambian construction industry.

Keywords: Building maintenance, Service Quality, SERVQUAL, Quality, Zambia.

INTRODUCTION

The Zambian Construction industry like many others in Sub-Saharan Africa is facing major challenges in light of globalisation. Shakantu, Zulu and Matipa (2002) suggest that the Zambian construction industry is in need of clear strategies in order to compete in the globalised market. Research suggests that globalisation in general has not favoured contractors in Zambia. Dlungwana and Rwelamila (2005) also argue that the impact of globalisation has the potential to destroy non-competitive contractors. The performance of contractors in Zambia like many others in Sub-Sahara is below expectations. It is not uncommon to learn of projects that have not been completed or significantly delayed. Changes in government policy including privatisation and liberalisation have led to a reduction in expenditure on capital projects (Mashamba, 2001). This poor performance of contractors has huge implications in terms of competitiveness. In order to correct this situation there is need to find ways of improving contractors’ performance.