

Public loyalty in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation

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Abstract

Public loyalty studies have focused primarily on showing loyal customers to tangible products and are often referred to as brand loyalty, while previous studies have not been concerned with general loyalty related to services. This study aims to suggest a conceptual framework for the relationship between service quality and public loyalty by the moderating effect of trust in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation. A systematic literature review indicated that service quality had a positive direct effect on public loyalty. Moreover, a systematic literature review indicated that trust had a positive direct effect on public loyalty. This study presents a general view of what the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation needs to improve public loyalty. Therefore, future studies should be examining the conceptual framework by using advanced statistical methods in order to examine the previous hypotheses and provide the results to help decision-makers in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

Key words: Public Loyalty, Service Quality, Trust, Systematic Review

1. Introduction

In the last decade, the Jordanian public sector has seen substantial disorder regarding the loyalty of customers and citizens (Abu-Rumman, Mhasnah, & Al-Zyout, 2021). Rapid changes and globalization in the world caused imperative changes and structuring in classical public administration. As a result, these changes create pressure on public sector institutions about delivering high-quality and customer-oriented services (Aburumman et al., 2020; Aladwan & Alshami, 2020). This pressure has increased substantially in recent years. Service delivery is more complex in the public

sector than in the private sector because it is not merely to meet stated needs but to discover non-expressive needs (Aladwan & Alshami, 2020; Kumasey, 2014). Public services in developing countries have been described as unproductive and depleting the productive part of the wealth of the economy (Mohamed & Sheikh-Ali, 2014). This can be explained by the enormous challenges facing public sectors in these countries, such as political instability, political interference, excessive bureaucracies, corruption, and unattractive working conditions (Fahim, 2019).

Many Jordanian public sectors face a decrease in the loyalty of customers and citizens. For example, Alhunaiti (2017) indicated that the health service in many government hospitals in Jordan is still below the expected level, and does not work to develop the level of health service, and many indicators show a decline in the level of health services in Jordanian government hospitals and the presence of low level of health service. Likewise, Al-Maaitah, AbuAlRub, and Honig (2020) stated that there are a large number of complaints from Jordanian citizens benefiting from health insurance services related to the low level of government health care. These issues of poor service provided by the Jordanian government to citizens, lead citizens to feel dissatisfied, hence a low level of loyalty to Jordanian government services. Moreover, Tawalbeh (2021) pointed out that the faculty members of Jordanian public universities have many problems. Some of them relate to the low level of regulatory climate, the low level of fairness of evaluation and promotion systems, and the weak job stability at work.

Jordan witnessed the worst water shortage rates in 2021, the reason may be due to the effects and variables that are plaguing the region, on top of which is the decline in rainfall and the excessive use of water during the closures against the background of the Corona pandemic (Daoud, Dehnavi, & Ribbe, 2022). A spokesman for the Ministry of Water and Irrigation confirmed that Jordan is suffering from a real water crisis, noting that the rate of water loss is estimated at 45% at the country level and that 70% of the volume of water pumped is “without bill” water as a result of attacks and thefts on water lines. As a result of malfunctions in water networks, such as leakage and waste of water due to its deterioration and the invalidity of many of it (Arabic Post, 2021).

Lestariningsih, Hadiyati, and Astuti (2018) indicated that service quality has a positive relationship with loyalty through trust. Moreover, trust plays a moderating role in the influence of service quality on loyalty (Wang et al., 2014). Social exchange theory assumes that social relationships are the source of emotions, and trust is a necessary element in these relationships (Blau, 1968). Social exchange theory suggests that social behavior is the result of the exchange process. The basic idea of this theory is that both parties enter into and maintain exchange relations with others with the expectation that, practicing, it will be rewarding (Blau, 1968). Based on this idea, trust is the result of the shared value of creation. Social exchange theory argues that behavior is the key to conducting an exchange that maximizes benefits and minimizes costs while generating benefits (Yacob et al., 2018). The purpose of the influential theory of social exchange is to integrate emotions as a fundamental characteristic of social exchange processes, where the social exchange is conceived as a joint activity, with at least two parties, and each party has some other values (Lawler, 2001). Therefore, this study aims to suggest a conceptual framework for the relationship between service quality and public loyalty by the moderating effect of trust in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Service Quality

Service quality is the ability of the organization to meet or exceed customer expectations (Alshurideh, 2022). According to Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996), service quality is “the delivery of excellent or superior service relative to customer expectations”. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) identified ten determinants of service quality namely Reliability, Responsiveness, Access, Credibility, Competence, Courtesy, Tangibles, Understanding, Security, and Communication. Reliability refers to dependability and consistency in the performance of an organization (Parasuraman et al., 1985). In the mid of 80’s, Parasuraman et al. (1985) have explored the phenomena of service quality and revealed that high or low service quality decisions made by the customers purely depends on the perceptions of customer that how they perceive the actual and expected performance (Ahmad, Farhan, & Fareed, 2019). Moreover, reliability was adjudged to be a vital determinant of service quality (Pakurár et al., 2019). Responsiveness refers to the readiness and willingness of workers or the public in an organization to provide quality service (Uppal, Ali, & Gulliver, 2018). Access refers to approachability and ease of contact (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Credibility refers to trustworthiness, honesty, and belief. It involves having the customer’s best interest at heart (Lee, 2016). Competence refers to the possession of the requisite skills and knowledge required to perform the service. The competence level of a company matters a lot in determining customers and is also found relevant in retaining existing customers (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Courtesy refers to politeness, consideration, respect, and friendliness of contact personnel. Here, courtesy deals with the way and manner through which the representative of the organization addresses the customers (Zaim, Bayyurt, & Zaim, 2010). If the reception is warm, interesting, and stimulating, customers will have a good return and will be satisfied with the service, but if the reception is dull and unattractive, customers will lose confidence in the company. Tangibles refer to physical evidence of the service. In essence, tangibles are those physical things that customers can hold on to about the service rendered by the company. Therefore, tangibles are evidence for customers to judge the product or service delivered by the company (Green, 2014).

Understanding involves the ability of the company to know the nature of its customers, striving to identify the needs of its numerous customers, and putting in place necessary measures to provide and satisfy multiple customer needs (Budiwan, 2016). Once an organization understands the nature of its customers, identify their needs, know their likes and dislike, and meet the needs of its customers, then, such a company will be able to retain present customers and will also entice new ones. Security or safety refers to freedom from danger, doubt, or risk (Pakurár et al., 2019). Customers need to be secure from any form of harm or danger. Once the service of their companies can guarantee the safety of life, health, and property, then, customers will derive satisfaction from the service and product of such company. Finally, communication is a vital tool in enhancing organizational performance (Green, 2014).

2.2 Trust

Trust is people trusting those they believe can solve problems and provide desired results (Dirks & de Jong, 2022). According to some academics, the phenomenon of trust has numerous dimensions (Möllering, Bachmann, & Lee, 2004). The first factor of trust is frequently mentioned as a trustworthiness perception of the trustee, which is defined as positive

expectations about the trustee's competency, generosity, and integrity in a specific relationship (Karim et al., 2021; Oliveira et al., 2017). The term "ability" relates to recognized abilities, competencies, and other traits that enable values to make an impact in certain areas. Generosity refers to the view that the trustees wish to do good for reasons other than self-interest, while integrity refers to the belief that the trustees follow a set of values and principles that they have agreed to Fjaeran and Aven (2021).

Trustors can suspend unpredictability, ambiguity, and current complexity in interactions based on their trustworthy beliefs, promoting their readiness to accept weakness in a specific connection (Rasiah et al., 2020). The second component of trust is when the trustor takes a "leap of faith" based on insufficient knowledge, suspending a sense of danger and vulnerability (Chita-Tegmark et al., 2021). This vulnerability stems from the trustor's "uncertainty about the motives, intentions, and potential actions of individuals on whom the trustor is reliant" (Abu-Shanab & Al-Azzam, 2012). Because "trust is involved only when the expectation of trust makes a difference in the decision; otherwise, what we have is a simple hope," the third dimension of trust must be considered (Arkorful et al., 2021). As a result, in the process of relationship exchange, the behavioral trust might be considered a substantial risk behavior. Such behavior can emerge from the trustor's desire to accept weakness, as Fjaeran and Aven (2021) point out, but this is not always the case.

2.3 Public Loyalty

Public loyalty is the level of loyalty display by the public towards the organization. It can also be described as the amount of commitment shown by the public towards the organization (Rodríguez, Román, & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019). Generally, there are three main dimensions for public loyalty namely behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty, and cognitive loyalty Behavioral loyalty definitions were nearly entirely focused on its behavioral aspect (Ailawadi et al., 2014; Zamanan et al., 2020). In particular, loyalty was considered a sort of government behavior (such as recurrent purchases) focused on a given brand over time (Ailawadi et al., 2014; Gecti & Zengin, 2013). Despite the fact that current thinking implies that loyalty is more than just a behavior dimension, some scientists continue to evaluate allegiance only on the behavior dimension (Bilgihan, Madanoglu, & Ricci, 2016).

Scholars have questioned the validity of considering action as the sole indicator of allegiance. Dahhan (2019) questioned behavioral loyalty conceptualizations, arguing that brand loyalty emerges as a result of purposeful efforts to evaluate rival products. It is important to take into consideration that the entire brand loyalty phenomenon can't be assessed if the attitudinal loyalty is not extended over the action behavior (Salleh et al., 2020). Others have suggested that this attitude is influenced by customers' preferences or intents (Saini & Singh, 2020). Following Day's criticism, attitude became a more prominent dimension of loyalty (Kaur et al., 2021; Shahid Iqbal, UI Hassan, & Habibah, 2018). Academics began to see government allegiance as having two aspects over time: behavioral and attitude (Moriuchi, 2019; Saini & Singh, 2020).

A few researchers include a "cognitive" kind of allegiance in addition to behavioral and attitudinal characteristics (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019; Salleh et al., 2020). Moreover, some research shows that brand or store loyalty requires a customer to first determine what to buy or where to go (Bilgin, 2018), while others make allegiance the "first option" of the public options (Froudi et al., 2018). Similarly, Park, Ritala, and Velu (2021) suggest that "partaking in a relational exchange virtually limits consideration of other exchange partners such audiences have retained their awareness of alternatives without constancy 'continuous and frenzied testing". This suggests that alternative organizations are not taken seriously by truly loyal

viewers when they make repeated purchases), a point of view shared by other scholars (Yoshida et al., 2018). That is, a very committed audience isn't actively looking for or evaluating alternative companies to buy from (Jung, Kim, & Kim, 2020).

3. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

This study aims to suggest a conceptual framework for the relationship between service quality and public loyalty by the moderating effect of trust in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation. In this study, service quality constitutes the independent variable of the study, while the construct of public loyalty constitutes the dependent variable. Finally, the construct of trust is moderating variable for the relationship between service quality and public loyalty. A conceptual framework has been developed based on social exchange theory.

Social exchange theory suggests that social behavior is the result of the exchange process. The basic idea of this theory is that both parties enter into and maintain exchange relations with others with the expectation that, practicing, it will be rewarding (Blau, 1968). Based on this idea, trust is the result of the shared value of creation. Social exchange theory argues that behavior is the key to conducting an exchange that maximizes benefits and minimizes costs while generating benefits (Yacob et al., 2018). The purpose of the influential theory of social exchange is to integrate emotions as a fundamental characteristic of social exchange processes, where the social exchange is conceived as a joint activity, with at least two parties, and each party has some other values (Lawler, 2001).

Social exchange theory assumes that social relationships are the source of emotions and attempts to characterize the distinct emotional effects of different exchange structures (Cook et al., 2013). Moreover, social exchange theory which underlies much of the work in relations in marketing and other disciplines, states that trust is a necessary element in relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Trust consists of perceived credibility and charity and has two levels: the customer trusts a particular service representative; and the customers trust the organization (Liu et al., 2011). Trust leads to long-term loyalty and strengthens the relationship between the parties (Ferm & Thaichon, 2021), as well trust is an antecedent to loyalty (Wang et al., 2014). Social exchange theory can be applied to a wide range of contexts including compliments from acquaintances, support among coworkers, information flows between companies, trade between nations, and relationships between companies and customers. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this study.

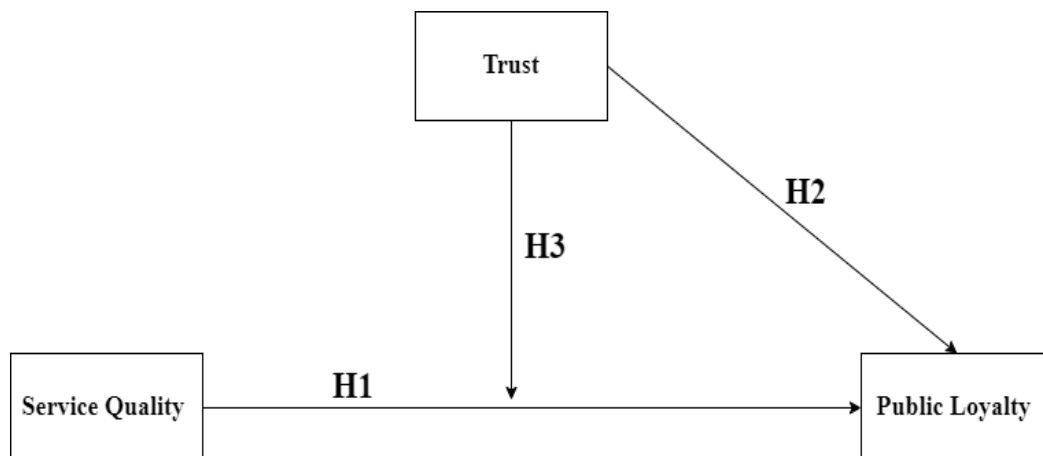


Figure 1: A conceptual framework

As a result, the following hypotheses are drawn from the above discussion:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between service quality and public loyalty in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between trust and public loyalty in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

Hypothesis 3: Trust moderates the relationship between service quality and public loyalty in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

4. Conclusion

Public loyalty studies have focused primarily on showing loyal customers to tangible products and are often referred to as brand loyalty, while previous studies have not been concerned with general loyalty related to services. This study aims to suggest a conceptual framework for the relationship between service quality and public loyalty by the moderating effect of trust in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

A systematic literature review indicated that service quality and trust had a positive direct effect on public loyalty. Many previous studies support these results. For example, [Van Lierop and El-Geneidy \(2016\)](#) looked at how the perceptions of service quality and customer satisfaction of transit users impact loyalty. To better comprehend the complexities of several variables affecting passenger satisfaction and behavioral intentions, they used data from five years of public satisfaction questionnaires gathered by two Canadian transit suppliers. The results of their research have been used to identify regions where transit organizations can create particular approaches to benchmark customer satisfaction with the goal of increasing patronage among the various organizations. Insight into passenger perceptions offers helpful data that can assist transit organizations to know what generally inspires satisfaction and loyalty perceptions of the public.

Moreover, [Ali et al. \(2016\)](#) explored the impact of the quality of service provided by Malaysian public universities on global student satisfaction, institutional picture, and loyalty. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to global learners at three government Malaysian university campuses in Kuala Lumpur, chosen using the convenience sampling technique. The results showed that all five dimensions of the quality of higher education service impact student satisfaction, which in turn affects the institutional image and influences student loyalty.

On the other hand, [Yacob et al. \(2018\)](#) conducted a study to examine the value of co-creation and its impact on trust and behavioral loyalty among members of cooperation in Malaysia. Trust plays a crucial role in determining the loyalty of members. Due to cultural differences, the moderate effect of race was also investigated. Therefore, the study bases on the effects of the four dimensions of member participation, which is an important component in the formation of shared value, on trust and behavioral loyalty as well as the moderate effect of race on the relationship of the path. The questionnaires were distributed to 309 Malay and Dayak members of credit cooperatives in Sarawak. The results showed that information seeking, personal interaction, and responsible behavior have significant positive effects on trust. In addition, trust was found to have a significant positive impact on behavioral loyalty. The moderation test showed that there was no moderate effect of race on the relationship between trust and behavioral loyalty despite cultural differences.

Finally, the intent of this study is to suggest a conceptual framework for the relationship between service quality and public loyalty by the moderating effect of trust, as well as to

present a general view of what the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation needs to improve public loyalty. Therefore, future studies should be examining the conceptual framework by using advanced statistical methods in order to examine the previous hypotheses and provide the results to help decision-makers in the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

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