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Critical Assessment of Balking and Service Abandonment in Waiting Environments: Causes, Costs, and Cures

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Abstract
Queueing is still and will be an undesirable, yet inevitable portion of services to which both business owners and customers are not immune to its spew; and would always want to avoid. The purpose of this paper is to meticulously re-examine the causes of waiting lines' balking and abandonment, and their consequences in the service environment. The discussions herein revealed that several causes aside customer specific personality dispositions, such as: new customers, a contactless service, extent of customer involvement in delivery process, urgency of the service, service ambience, individual waits, and available substitutes, are factors that frequently breedbalking and abandonment in service queues. The cost of waiting in most cases has been discussed synonymous to 'the cost of poor quality' in this paper, as direct and significant to the service provider as much as to the customer, and a spill over effect on the economy as a whole. The consequential effect of balking and abandonment could be ferocious in services and can lead to bad word of mouth, self-provider of the service (the customer as a competitor), and even loss of the service. The paper suggested that effective capacity management, demand management strategies, and modern technologies should be adopted in managing service operations in a continuous manner as a means for managing waiting lines since it is a win-win situation for both the provider and customer. The originality of this paper lies in new insights to the neglected and hidden costs of waiting lines. Also, the suggested combination of queuing analysis with capacity and demand management strategies as well as process improvement strategies are altogether invaluable directions for practitioners and researchers. The paper, finally, is an immense contribution to literature in the field of operations management and operations research from a new perspective.

Keywords: service, waiting, balking, abandonment, causes, costs, cures

INTRODUCTION

In the more turbulent business environment of our generation where customers increasingly have copious market information (Zeithaml et al., 2002), patience of customers (i.e., the tolerable delays customers permit) keeps dwindling. In an e-service environment, Zona Research (1999) cited in Chaffey (2009) concluded that customers' patience is even more worse; and thus are not willing to wait longer than 8 seconds for a page to load. Rajamma et al. (2009) recognize that especially for online shoppers who are termed as 'conveniences seekers', any form of actual or perceived further delay of waiting time would most likely disconfirm their expectation of quick online shopping episode, and would consequently lead to abandonment.

Whereas the patience of waiting customers may differ in the offline environment, waiting equally raises serious concerns for operations managers in offline businesses. It is said, about 70% of purchasing decisions and 90% of all purchasing transactions are made offline (NOMi, n.d.); and hence it makes total economic sense to consider the topic of service level in the offline setting as well while discussing waiting. Customers in the offline environment on the other hand are referred to as those who shop for pleasure/experience (Rajamma et al., 2009). A customer who has made an effort to walk to a service center is willing to spend some time shopping, and has made a sacrifice, hence would not easily give up on waiting. However, this does not imply that checkout point delays, for example, could be tolerated, as it does not in any way form part of a pleasurable shopping experience.

For many customers', time spent in queues are productive hours wasted, which partly explains why people may adopt an online transaction or mostly engage in offline shopping during holidays and weekends. Expected long waiting times have often resulted in frequent service balking or abandonment among customers of today. Moreover, unlike an online service where customers can shop from their convenient locations (workplaces and offices) such that they can multitask shopping and work, in the case of offline service, customers have to vacate their location to a

physical shop, and in that sense, waiting in lines comparatively presents a high economic and psychological consequences on the part of the customer, and is likely to result in a more cataclysmic impact on service the provider's business.

In as much as resources continue to be limited to insatiable wants, the problem of queuing would continue to exist with humanity and their processes; hence cannot be entirely eliminated (Hillier and Lieberman, 2010; Taha, 2007; and Taylor, 2006). That notwithstanding, appropriate remedies need to be put in place to minimize its growth and consequences. While the act of waiting remains an inevitable aspect of life (Johnston et al., 2013); unlike in the manufacturing industry where production can take place while consumption is postponed, most pure services per their nature are produced and consumed simultaneously (Fitzsimons and Fitzsimons, 2006), and that, to a large extent, aggravates the growth of waiting lines in services, particularly, in cases where customer self-service is not applicable, and the service cannot be automated or its consumption cannot be postponed by transforming it into a product via technology.

Whereas the discussion above suggest that the concept of waiting and discussions on its precursors and outcomes should be taken seriously in today's business environment, extant literature on queuing have mostly been operation research based with the motive of balancing the cost of service level with cost of waiting(Anderson et al., 2012; Taylor, 2006).While it is quite easier to estimate cost of service levels, one can hardly estimate closely the cost of waiting. In literature, both costs have been estimated from the perspective of the firm, which we opine makes the foundation of the economic queuing model wobbly. According to Anderson et al., (2012),the objective of the economic queuing analysis model is said to determine the number of channels that would minimize total cost by balancing the waiting cost with service cost; a point at which level of service is said to be optimal (reasonable).

However, an inaccurate estimation of the cost components implies that any supposed optimal service level is not really an ideal or truly an optimal service level. We argue that such an error may endanger the service firm's competitive position in the market. Most service firms would be missing the point while thinking they are offering reasonable service levels to their customers. This in part would be a potential explanation of customer disloyalty and loss of business most service firms experience today.

Secondly, queuing models are based on the assumption that at the point in time when customers are queuing up, the firm in question's capacity utilization is at its maximum. The case of waiting lines resulting from capacity underutilization due to poor process engineering and capacity management (i.e. where waiting line is a sign of capacity underutilization or bottlenecked business processes) appears to be overlooked in queuing literature. These assumptions do not help reveal the true cost of waiting lines and are far from practical; hence the need for reexamination of the waiting line problem. Moreover, waiting is simply undesirable to consumers irrespective of the person's socio-economic background; and it is hard to prove that some amount of discount is compensating enough to get customers waiting. How then; should we say, customers today are overly demanding and yet are unwilling to pay more? What is undesirable is undesirable. The tendency to marginalize and underestimate the waiting cost component of the economic analysis of waiting line systems (to both the customer and business) is the underlining motivation for this paper.

Uniquely, this paper focuses attention on balking and service abandonment as immediate consequences of waiting. In this light, factors or situations that call for or intensify the tendency of balking &abandonment are discussed. A new perspective of the costs of waiting as well as balking & abandonment to both the customer and the service organization are also discussed. Accordingly, the paper suggests remedies to addressing the development of waiting lines, waiting duration, and balking & abandonment. To facilitate our discussions, we will briefly define the key issues in the following paragraph.

Waiting or a queue is simply said to be formed or experienced when people, products, or processes line up in wait for a server or a process or to be served (Hillier and Lieberman, 2010). Service abandonment, commonly referred in management science literature as 'reneging' refers to a situation where a customer already in a queue may become impatient and departs without being served. This often occurs when they expect that the additional waiting time will be long as well. In some situations however, new arrivals who find the queue full, long or not moving, may anticipate the time they may have to wait, and decide not to join the queue at all. This is referred to as balking.

Causes of Balking/Abandonment in Waiting Lines

In line with the concept of psychology of waiting (Maister, 2005), previous literature and emerging empirical studies have paid much attention to the wait's perception of the waiting time/duration vis-à-vis the

actual waiting time. Although we accept that the various reasons or factors cited as 'causal' variables for one's perception of the waiting time (i.e., short-long) are likely, we feel that a thorough discussion on the consequence of short or long waiting time and the nature of the waiting line itself is not done. We believe most of the variables discussed as discriminating waits' perceptions into short and long waiting time explain the tendency of balking/abandonment as a more immediate manifest consequence of waiting. Below, we identify and discuss nine of these factors:

New Versus Existing Customers

Customers' perceptions about waiting, to a much larger extent, will differ between new customers and exiting ones across various service environments and therefore, tendency of balking and abandonment will equally differ across these customer groups. Other things held constant, the tendency for abandonment or balking to occur would be lower for existing customers. This is because, existing customers would have already had a service encounter or obtained previous knowledge on or experience of the waiting situation hence, are more likely to tolerate or accommodate the waiting situation.

Contact Versus Contactless Service Environment

With abandonment, the tendency of it occurring is dependent on where the service is taking place, that is, whether the customer has a 'face-to-face' contact with the service provider or not. Taking a service environment like telephone calls (made to a mobile service provider for support/assistance) for example, all things being equal, the lack of 'close presence' of service provider could easily stimulate abandonment. In the case of a contact service environment like a bank, the customer is 'physically surrounded' by the service provider, hence, the actual or psychological restrains could be higher and hence the wait could find it difficult, in most cases, to abandon the service.

Personality Disposition of the Customer

Further, the tendency of abandonment is subject to the personality disposition of the customer. As explained by Maister (2005), waiting time is often longer for waits who are anxious, feel they are receiving unfair treatment, don't get explanations for why they are being kept long in the queue, or uncertain about the wait. It can clearly be seen that the extent of the wait's judgment about the waiting time and or behavioral tendencies toward the waiting line is likely be influenced by his/her personality trait. In this regard, it can be said that customers who are friendly, tolerant, understanding, could cope under pressure, among others, would be less likely to abandon a service. On the other hand, customers who exhibit nervousness, sense of depression, distress, bitterness, feeling of 'unfair' treatment, etc. could easily abandon the service.

Extent of Customer Participation in the Service and Occupied Versus Unoccupied Waits

It must be noted that in situations where the level of customer participation is adequate, the tendency for abandonment to occur is very minimal. For example, this is likely to occur where technologically aided self-serve is available and its complementary role in the whole service delivery process is positioned such that the customer can begin the service delivery process before he/she finally gets to a contact personnel to complete the service delivery. In such service environments, the customer feels part of the process, and that alone is enough motivation for him/her to continue with the service delivery process until finally served. On the contrary, for unoccupied or unfilled wait time, waits are more likely to abandon the service than occupied/filled wait time.

The reasons are that, such service environments (i.e. customer participation and occupied waits) are more likely to ease boredom and weaken any sense of neglect on the part of the customer. As literature (e.g.,Maister, 2005) suggests, boredom and sense of neglect increase when the wait has nothing doing. A study by McGuire et al. (2010) found that when people have nothing to do during the wait increases perceived boredom, resulting in a more negative wait experience. Hence, other things being equal, it should be expected that in such situations, not all waits can endure the process till being served and could easily abandon the service when such negative wait experience resulting from no or lack of participation in the service delivery process or there is no/poor filled waiting time increases.

The Urgency or Need of the Customer/Value of the Service

Also, the need of the customer or value of the service would highly influence the tendency of abandonment/balking. In situations where the customer badly or urgently requires the service (e.g. health services), he/she will be more likely to cope with the waiting till the service is received. However, when the customer can afford to postpone the need for the service, or simply be without the service, they are more likely to balk or abandon when longer waiting is anticipated. Also, when the value of the service to be received is comparatively higher than the cost of waiting (e.g. time, conveniences), abandonment is less likely to occur.

The 'Atmosphere' of the Service Environment (Ambience)

The nature of atmospheric make-up (e.g. music, visuals, decorations, etc.) of the service environment would influence the tendency of abandonment. Equally, the attitude of contact personnel could even create nuisance or otherwise for waits and that could influence their decision to wait or abandon the service. Where the atmosphere of the service environment is not conducive enough or does not create pleasantness for the customer, abandonment is more likely to occur.

Solo Versus Group waits

Further, Maister (2005) discusses that perceived wait duration is often higher for solo waits than for group waits. Where individual/solo customers (e.g., without knowing anyone else in the queue) show up for the service, or there is lack of interaction, shared concerned, collective reasoning, etc. among waits, boredom and neglect is high, and for that matter, negative affect is likely to be high. And for these reasons, the tendency of abandonment could should be expected to be higher for solo waits than group waits.

Availability of Substitutes or Competing Services

When customers can find perfect substitute to the service, they are more likely to balk/abandon the service to obtain it from competitors where they may not need to queue for long. This however depends on the comparable quality of the alternatives available to customer, and how accessible such alternatives may be. Most often than not, customers keep waiting on a server only when it is inconvenient to find an alternative, when they are locked into the service such that there is high switching cost, when alternatives are comparatively, of poor quality, or not close enough as a substitute, etc. Hence, under the assumption that substitutes or competitors' services meet or are far better and the cost of obtaining it is reasonable, then abandonment should be expected to be high.

Customer Qualifies as a Potential Competitor to The Service Provider

In the paper "customer contribution and roles in service delivery", Bitner et al. (1997) discussed the customer's competitive role to the service organization, as where a customer decides to perform the service on their own as an 'internal exchange' other than outsourcing it. For both a business and individual buyer, some services could be performed in-house (by self) provided the customer has the necessary skills and or the equipment/tools. The authors posit that ultimately, the internal versus the external exchange decision depends on which one offers the most value or benefit to the customer. Customers who are wearied by long waiting time, may therefore consider the option of providing a service all on their own and therefor are likely to balk/abandon.

Costs of Waiting, Balking and Abandonment

In most cases, the service organization perceives that the worst that would happen is that the customer may take their business elsewhere, when they (i.e. customers) balk as a results of expected long waiting time or abandon as a result of undue delays. However a critical look at the situation from other angles suggests that the consequences of balking/abandonment are more than losing sales from the frustrated customer. It is an implication of poor productivity, poor customer service, and poor service level, hence an indicator of poor quality to the customers (both those who balk/abandon and those who do not). This goes a long way to affect their level of satisfactions, loyalty, re-purchase intention, as well as the image of the business in question. In the following paragraphs, we discuss the cost of waiting lines as well as balking/abandonment further from three main perspectives.

The customer

Lost service value

Psychologically, customers might have pre-estimated time span within which they must obtain the service. This could be based on past experience or information obtained from other customers or communicated by the service provider. In this case, we can say that the sum of the opportunity cost of such time needed to wait for the service and the actual fee the customer would have to pay for the service, constitute the cost of the value of the service. When customers wait beyond the customer's estimated/budgeted time, they would normally begin to feel they are paying more than the value of the service since the opportunity cost of waiting is now becoming larger.

Lost productive hours

First to begin with, a customer who approaches a service provider has taken off some time from their schedule for the day. Consider an office worker taking a break for lunch, a trader or business person taking some time off to seek medical attention at the hospital, or to pay utility bills in the case of most developing countries. In all these cases, their own productive hours are sacrificed/forgone. The longer they wait in queues, the more productive hours being wasted, which affects their businesses, accumulating into low national productivity (this observation is common for low GDP economies as they unnecessarily waste time in producing less).

Psychological/emotional impairment

The psychological impairment on the customer (i.e., the worries of the customer, frustrations, uncertainties, anger, boredom, etc. in the service delivery process) is also heightened in undue waiting. The extent of this however, will depend on other factors. For example, the psychological impact of waiting should also be expected to be higher for the customers who exhibit nervousness, sense of depression, distress, bitterness, and feeling of 'unfair' treatment, among others. Similarly, new customers (i.e., first-time) are more likely to undergo high levels of psychological impairment.

Other consequential costs

An employee returning late (as a result of undue delays) from lunch may have to work overtime to cover up lost time without pay.The private business person may also end-up losing customers who may visit during his/her absence due to excess waiting time (i.e., over the pre-estimated waiting time).In other cases, ones' private or leisure time is lost.

The Service Organization

Here we discuss the direct and the indirect costs of waiting and balking/abandonment to the service provider:

Direct costs

Queuing is most often studied under the assumption that service processes and operations are excellent; only the number of servers and their service rate do not match the customer arrival rate, and that there is the need for balancing the servers with the queuing system at a reasonable time of waiting. For most studies, the economic analysis of waiting lines are based on this premise. However, the server may be just enough but other back office operations, and processes and procedures may be suboptimal causing service bottlenecks, which if fixed, may not call for additional servers and yet improve service rate, hence cut down on waiting time.

In some cases, not only do customers wait, but also servers. Hence, the cost of waiting is as direct to the provider as to the customer waiting. When operational procedure and processes are not efficient (delays are as a result of poor back office configuration) causing longer queues, the service provider incurs substantial direct costs as follows:

Costs of idleness and underutilization

Where employees are the servers and their remuneration is based on time, the service organization would have to pay for periods they (i.e., employees) were waiting, or idle, due to reasons they are not accountable for. Also, a fixed salary earner would at the end of the month be paid in full but might have worked below capacity as a result inefficiencies which led to them waiting in the process. Further, the cost of equipment or machinery is generally fixed and therefore their value depreciates due to passage of time (i.e., obsolescence) or when they are underutilized within their expected productive hours. This means that higher level of idleness or underutilization of equipment/machines as a result of waiting presents 'irrelevant' cost to the service organization.

Cost of accommodating queuing/waiting lines

Aside the fore mentioned costs, the service organization may have to invest in infrastructure and other auxiliary services (constituting an addition to the tangibles aspect of service) that would have to accommodate waiting. For some service providers, reducing waiting time and improving the service level implies expanding facilities, providing a comfortable environment for waiting customers, and installing distractive services in the service facility. While the logic behind such initiative may be mostly to minimize the perceived waiting duration, this may only work for some customers (who do not have an opportunity cost of the time spent in waiting), and does not in fact solve the problem of waiting.

In effect, the cost of improving the service has been channeled into two other costs: cost of accommodating waiting lines, and the waiting cost for customers 'who are not easily fooled'. Depending on the severity of each cost component, this may be more costly than improving the service level which would go a long way to improve the customers' perception of service quality, spreading positive word of mouth, and increase the productivity and capacity utilization of the service firm.

Indirect costs

Lose customer – lost sales: current & future

Some customer may decide to balk or abandon the service before it gets to their turn when they think they have waited enough and can no longer wait. At that instant, the service provider loses business from that customer; a slipped opportunity. Apart from the immediate lost, (1) future cash inflows may be lost, and (2) competitors will be granted the opportunity to broaden their anchors and market shares asthe annoyed/dissatisfied customer may take the business next time to a competitor. While some customers are quite conservative, when they face poor service issues with their current provider, it gives the customer reasons enough to try out other service providers. This often offers the competitor an opportunity to impress that customer, and chances are that, that customer may be lost to a competitor entirely.

The severity level of these costs however depends on the nature of the service (i.e. one-off or non-one-off) and whether the customer is an existing one or first-time. For non-one-off service environments (i.e., continuous delivery of service and 'membership' relationship may be required, e.g., banking – Fitzsimons and Fitzsimons, 2006) the impact would be less on the business as the customer who balk/abandon are more likely to return than for one-offs (i.e., discrete services and no formal relationships is required, e.g., road-side restaurant – Fitzsimons and Fitzsimons, 2006). Similarly, existing customers maybe familiar with the waiting situation and could be tolerable enough to return. However, for first time customers, other things being equal, poor first impression of the service as a result of undue waiting as less likely to return.

Customer perception of poor service quality

Over the years, there has been an increasing emphasis on service quality by customers, of which the manner, consistency, and speed of service delivery is a critical component (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Taylor, 2006). In the conception of quality, 'responsiveness' is said to be a very essential dimension to customers during their evaluation of a service's quality (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2006). However, one should agree that long queues or waiting time negatively affect the customer's judgment on responsiveness which is a critical component of service quality (Parasuraman, 1985) as well as service level. A customer who is unduly delayed in a queue would associate it to poor service quality, which in turn have a consequential effect on their satisfaction of the service, the perceived value and the repurchase intention, and ultimate on the image of the service provider's business.

Other Consequential Cost

Bad word of mouth-Lost future business may also take the form of the grieved customer spreading bad word of mouth about the service provider (to which other customers, potential customers, family members) are more likely to listen to. Studies have revealed that about 96% of customer would never complain about poor service, out of which 25% would have very serious problem with the service; and each dissatisfied customer would tell about 10 to 20 other customer about the problem (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2006: pp. 156; and NOMi, n.d.).

Self-provider of the service-For some personal services, most customers are competitors in disguise. They can perform the service on their own; however, they may carry it to a service provider perhaps for convenience and or to save time; or when they perceive a comparative advantage in that. However, if these objectives are not well met, the same customer might consider performing the service on their own if they can, in the future (Bitner et al., 1997).

Loss of the service-Out of frustration resulting from waiting lines, a customer's taste for a particular service may be lost forever for the industry altogether. Depending on the number of customer who resort to this solution, it could deteriorate the aggregate demand for the service in question. This is may be common for non-essential services (e.g. those that customer can afford to be without).

CURES

Given the explicit and the implicit costs of waiting and balking/abandonment to both the customer and the service organization, there is the need to identify strategies to prevent their occurrence, or at worst, minimize their impacts. Depending on the causes/sources of the waiting or balking/abandonment, we offer three broad remedies:

Managing Available Capacity And Investment In Appropriate Technology

Our observation from the Ghanaian environment is that the problem of waiting lines is not much an issue of unbalanced servers with the waiting lines, but instead much of operational bottlenecks, low productivity of staff, poor operational layout and underutilization of capacity, which we assume it is very much similar to the situations inother less developed countries. For certain reasons (e.g., low cost seeking), most service firms do not recruit for the right skills and are not also committed to investing in upgrading skills of their staff. They are mostly characterized by poor operational configurations as a result of their reluctance to invest in modern technologies. Manual processing and documentation slow down processes. Where processes are computerized, or computers are used in service provision or delivery process, firms usually buy cheap, very slow and old computers that are not productive.

In our observation of internet cafés around university campuses in Kumasi –Ghana, we found that at customers are billed based on the number of hours spent online using old and slow computer that load pages slowly, and thus cost to the customer. In the proliferation of smart phones as alternatives, many internet cafés in these conditions are forced to close down leaving the efficient ones. In the case of small scale printing shops in same operation environment, slow computer and printers, coupled with poor computing and operational skills of employees, simple jobs takes long time to complete and thereby increasing waiting time. At the end of the day, only a few customers are served and this affects the productivity of the service firm and their profitability.

Given these, we believe that employing appropriate/the rights servers (e.g., employees, machines, and equipment) is key to minimizing the growth of waiting lines as well as the tendency of balking and service abandonment. It is equally important to add that, although the appropriate servers may be available, ineffective capacity management (e.g., poor scheduling, poor service blueprint/facility layout) could increase waiting and its consequences, as such, best operational procedures should be employed. To address this, we suggest the following:

1. Determining the service level (i.e., minimum expected waiting time) that an average customer requires;
2. Diagnosing and troubleshooting of existing capacity (both back office operations and servers):
3. Redesigning the service blueprint in light with the expected service level. The new service blueprint should eliminate bottlenecks in the service delivery process;
4. Having in place servers that could achieve the desired service level;
5. Continuous monitoring and review of the waiting line, service level, and rate of abandonment after the restructuring; and
6. Take corrective action where necessary.

We encourage that the above should not just be seen as a process but a cycle; meaning, it should be a non-ending pursuit!

Demand Management Strategies

Customer needs (e.g., when they want the service) for all service environments would vary considerably. Similarly, fluctuations in demand is common for most services. In this sense, variations in the needs coupled with demand fluctuations could determine the length of the waiting line at the service point per every point in time. Hence, adequate understanding of the entire market requirements/needs and nature of demand (i.e., stable/predictable or not)is key here. Some of the demand strategies that could become useful for preventing or managing waiting lines/balking/abandonment under level-capacity strategy are discussed as follows:

Segmentation of demand-As highlighted by Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2006), the demand for services rarely come from a homogenous source. The heterogeneity in market characteristics and requirements and the difficulty that is experienced when employing same service delivery system to address the needs of all customers therefore require management to segment. For example, in the micro/rural banking industry, management could create different server(s) for savings account holders. Segmenting would help management better predict (1) when customers of each segment would arrive and (2) their expected time to wait for the service.

Promoting off-peak demand and offering price incentives-In addition, for services that are characterized by high-low peaks in demands, management can shift portions of the waiting lines during high peaks to the low peak seasons. For example, the demand for most restaurants services in commercial settings are high during the afternoon, hence waiting build-ups are more likely to be high. In addressing this, price incentives (e.g., discounts) could be given to customers who patronize such services in periods other than the afternoon.

Reservation system- Also, for services that are often characterized by waiting but can be sold in advance (e.g., movie, football, etc. tickets), length of waiting lines and or waiting time can be eliminated or reduced substantially.

Not only will the above demand management strategies help balance existing capacity with demand, but will also shorten perceived waiting duration, enhance service level, and end up minimizing the tendency of balking and abandonment.

Other strategies

Following Maister's discussions on psychology of waiting, management can also address waiting lines issues and or minimize the tendency of service abandonment by (1) occupying unoccupied wait duration (i.e., fill-in the waiting time by engaging the customer with something that will distract his/her attention from the time being spent in the queue), (2) giving 'fair' treatment to waits, and (3) listening, giving attention, communicating, and providing 'explanations (where necessary).

Further increasing self-service/wait participation (where applicable) in services could also be helpful. By deploying ATMs in most banks today and encouraging customers to utilize it is helping minimize the rate at which queues develop in the banking hall. Also, where the customer can be involved in the service right from the time s/he enters the system, the tendency of abandonment would be less.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Essentially, time is both life and money, and Sherman (2015) acknowledges that waiting in long queues to be served is an unpleasant experience to both customers and internal business processes; as it translates into 'life wasted', productive hours wasted, and opportunities wasted. Sadly, time lost can never be regained. In the opinion of Gupta and Garg (2012), customers "tend to

join the queue only when a short waiting is expected" and tend to continue in the queue when waiting time has been confirmed to be short by the customer; and that, beyond tolerable patience, customers leave before being served. The authors posit that at this point, the manager of enterprise in question have to take necessary actions to reduce the waiting time to a level such that customers can tolerate.

However, this is difficult to identify as it is mostly the customer who would define a tolerable or what constitute reasonable waiting time period, depending on his/her schedule for the day, his/her past experience with the service provider (taking cognizance of the service rate of the server), the value of the service to him/her, the length of the queue (where visible), the personality trait of the customer, etc. All these suggest that there cannot be one 'template' for addressing all waiting or balking/abandonment problems.

The characteristics of the waiting environment and for that matter the waiting time for most services often translate into customers' judgment of service quality (Taylor, 2006). It can be empathized that irrespective of the way or manner in which abandonment/balking occurs, the implication is that a successfully attracted customer's business is lost in the interim, and may be lost to a competitor entirely, and hence, may not come back at all. Given the potential consequences of dissatisfaction, value, loyalty and possibly service abandonment as a result of lack of responsiveness (i.e., undue delays), it is expedient for a keen attention to be given to managing waiting lines (Parasuraman et al., 2005; Taylor, 2006; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003; Zeithamlet al., 2002).

As strategies to help curb the occurrence and consequences of waiting/balking/abandonment, the paper offer that identifying the sources/causes of the waiting, its length, balking, and abandonment is a key step that need to be taken and this must be done rigorously and continuously. Also, effective management of available capacity and investment in appropriate technology will be helpful**.** In addition, management can utilized demand management strategies such as segmentation of demand, promoting off-peak demand and offering price incentives, and reservation system. Lastly, adequate use of self-service/or increasing customer participation, occupying unoccupied wait, giving 'fair' treatment to waits, and listening to them and giving attention, communicating, and providing 'explanations will be useful.

This paper is not without limitations. The discussions and arguments made in this paper are based on the review of literature and the authors' critical observations of today's business environment, and as such remain conceptual. Following this, we recommend that further study be conducted to validate the arguments raised in this paper. Specifically, future researches should empirically focus on examining the components of the economic analysis of queuing model; with the motive of examining how firms arrive at the cost components. Further, studies may also examine variables such as capacity underutilisation and process bottlenecks as antecedents to waiting lines. Such finding would be insightful to both academia and industry, in modelling and resolving queuing problems, respectively.

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