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Muktar Abdullahi, Dr. Paul Gesimba & Dr. David Gichuhi

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Effects of Network Outlets and Fleet Policy on the Customer Service Delivery of Courier Services of Postal Corporation of Kenya

[1*] Muktar Abdullahi, [2] Dr. Paul Gesimba and [3] Dr. David Gichuhi

[1]Post graduate student, St. Paul's University

[2]Lecturer, Department of Business, St. Paul's University

[3]Lecturer, Department of Business, St. Paul's University

***E-mail of corresponding author:** mabdullahi2004@gmail.com*

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Abstract

Businesses establish reputations for themselves based upon how well they treat their customers over time. It is critical for mail and courier business organizations to have efficient and effective transport service in order to achieve excellent performance and hence attain their overall business objectives of economic, financial viability, improved quality of service, product diversification, increased Postal volumes and revenue generation. The main objective of the study was to investigate the effects of network outlets and fleet policy on the customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya. A case study of Postal Corporation of Kenya was adopted where the target population was 300 employees. A sample study of 169 respondents was selected from the total target population. The study was grounded Servqual Model Theory. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from employees in management level, the operation, fleet and logistic staff. The collected data was edited, coded and entered for analysis using the computer statistical package tool SPSS. Data was analyzed

using both descriptive statistic and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was applied in analyzing general data and inferential was used to analyze the relationship of the variables. Analyzed data was presented in tables, graphs and charts for clarity. The study found that network outlets had positive and significant effect on customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya; fleet policy also had positive and significant effect on customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya. The study recommended network outlet improvement on technology for efficient delivery and increment should be a major target for the leadership of the corporation. The study also recommends that Postal Corporation of Kenya should have elaborate, detailed and well understood fleet policy procedures to improve performance. Better procedures improve service delivery which aid in minimizing the cost of corporation. Real-time fleet management should be implemented to reduce the need for human supervisors for fleet management, improves service and increases courier effects.

Keywords: *Network Outlets, Fleet Policy, Customer Service, Delivery of Courier Services and Postal Corporation of Kenya.*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Courier services began during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's, with small companies in a handful of cities across the United States. When few homes had telephones, personal messages had to be carried by hand. Some early companies provided delivery of luggage and other packages. With the rise of large retail and department stores in the early twentieth century, package delivery services became even more popular. The scale of such services grew over the next several decades. Although fuel and rubber shortages during World War II caused a decline in the courier industry, the use of air freight by courier services after the war allowed for wider markets (Campbell, 2007). Globalization and increment in cross-fringe exchange likewise contributed extraordinarily to the development of the express business. The business made quick walks in the underlying time frame. The expedited service administrations were at first to a great extent restricted to report shipments. Over a timeframe, it has developed into the conveyance of reports and packages to pro things, for example, innovative items, and general airfreight wares. Regularly, the sorts of products transported by expedited service administrations are high-esteem/low-weight things (Chaturvedi, *et al* 2015).

The main traditional services provided by Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK), include; letter post (mail), parcels and post cargo, EMS courier, philately, Postal financial services (e.g. money order), and Agency services. The Corporation discharges its mandate and universal services obligation through a vast network consisting of over 600 post offices spread throughout the

country (PCK, 2016). Whereas other communication service providers are driven by the profit motive while building their network outlets, Postal Corporation of Kenya can be found in areas that are economically unviable. This is not only because of the statutory mandate but also recognition of communication service as a basic human right. The Corporation's 2016 – 2019 Strategic Plan, defines its Corporate vision as "to be recognized nationally and internationally as a leading customer organizations in the provision of communication, distribution and financial services" and the mission is outlined in the same plan document as " to provide quality communication, distribution and financial services by embracing change, technology and innovation to meet the needs of our customers and create value for our stakeholders and employees". These vision and mission statement forms the foundation upon which the Corporation exists and what it is supposed to do in the present and in the future to address the business challenges mentioned and endeavor to create wealth for the stakeholders.

1.2 Statement of the problem

It is critical for mail and courier business organizations to have efficient and effective transport service in order to achieve excellent performance and hence attain their overall business objectives of economic, financial viability, improved quality of service, product diversification, increased Postal volumes and revenue generation. Courier service sector contributes greatly to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by facilitating communication among citizens. The sector also generates employment opportunities for majority of Kenyan people, currently employing about 3,600 workers (PCK HRD, 2016).

The customers who visit the Kenya Post & Telecommunication Corporation in Kenya banking hall on daily basis continue to reduce with time. On average 200 customers visit for service delivery according to Cash Account Record (2011/2012). This figure is far below what their competitor G4S for instance serves according to CCK (August 2012) and considering that EMS Kenya has been in the business longer than the competitors. The number of EMS courier outlet has grown modestly in the year 2007 from 119 to 184 in the year 2012. But the growth in EMS traffic has not grown in consistent to the growth of the outlets. There have been a lot of inconsistencies in the EMS traffic in this period. EMS National Revenue and Traffic Performance Report (April, 2013) shows how the traffic has been growing for the past five years (ENR and TPR, 2016).

Postal Corporation of Kenya transportation involves the delivery of courier items from primary acceptance office to the final delivery office where the item is handed over to the customer i.e. the entire process of moving postal goods and services from the receiving business point (post office) to the delivery post office. Transportation costs are incurred for long or short haul trucking between sorting centers. Roads transport is used for both short and long distance travel but air and rail transport are mainly used for long haul movement. These transport means are usually affected by the state and quality of national infrastructure facilities, i.e. the state and quality of the national road network. Logistical activities also form part of transportation system in Postal Corporation of Kenya, and plays a key role in optimal allocation or utilization of available fleet.

In most cases, customers usually get dissatisfied when their mails are not delivered on time. Customer dissatisfaction arises from frequent low quality of service, which would eventually lead to low business performance as a result of customer flight. In addition postal business volume has been shrinking globally as people embrace modern technology. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the effects of network outlets and fleet policy on the customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya.

1.3 Specific objectives

i. To determine the effects of network outlets on customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya.
ii. To determine the effects of fleet policy and customer service and delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya.

1.4 Research questions

i. What are the effects of network outlets and customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya?
ii. What are the effects of fleet policy and customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical review: Servqual Model

The second relevant theory was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1985 and it covered customer service quality model which was named as Servqual model or PZB model. In

1988, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry conducted an empirical study that measured the service quality towards the customers' perceptions by using the ten dimensions as a basic structure of a determining factor. The Servqual model theory approach is the most well-known technique for measuring administration quality. Benefit quality is an idea that has stirred impressive intrigue and civil argument in the examination writing on account of the troubles in both characterizing it and measuring it with no general accord developing on either (Wisniewski, 2001). There are various distinctive definitions with respect to what is implied by administration quality. One that is regularly utilized characterizes benefit quality as the degree to which an administration lives up to clients' needs or desires (Mitchell, 2003). Benefit quality can along these lines be characterized as the distinction between client desires of administration and saw benefit. In the event that desires are more prominent than execution, then saw quality is not as much as palatable and consequently client disappointment happens (Mitchell, 2003). Quality is measured in light of the fact that estimation takes into account examination prior and then afterward changes, for the area of value related issues and for the foundation of clear gauges for administration conveyance. The beginning stage in creating quality in administrations is investigation and estimation (Wisniewski, 2001).

O'Neil (2002) attests to enhance benefit quality, it is important to contact workers routinely and survey their administration encounters. Like the outer client, an inward client too considers classifications of administration characteristics, for example, dependability and responsiveness, in judging the nature of the inside administration. With the information of the inward administration quality measurements, the administration associations can then judge how well the association or representatives performed on each measurement and directors could distinguish the shortcoming so as to make changes.

2.2 Empirical review

Attanisio, Bregman, Ghiani and Manni (2007) conducted a study on real-time fleet management as well as the theoretical and implementation challenges of constructing such a system and the findings indicated that the system dramatically reduced the need for human supervisors for fleet management, improves service and increases courier effects. This improves the services delivery to customers which in turn improves customer satisfaction.

Another study was conducted by Waiyaki, (2013) on the utilizing innovation for business fleet management: a contextual analysis of armada administration framework executed in Kenya control and lighting organization restricted. The review meant to assess the adequacy of a present day fleet management framework in enhancing the coordination of transporting staff, products and materials in Kenya Power and Lighting Company, an utility firm in power conveyance. The discoveries of the review showed that the execution had expanded the viability and productivity of the calculated procedures in KPLC therefore of receiving present day fleet management frameworks, a genuine instance of utilizing GPS innovation for business armada applications. The positive effect on the conveyance of administration at decreased operational expenses has empowered the association to break old working examples and fortify its focused edge in the market.

Another study was conducted by Pholsuwanachai, (2007) whereby he examined the conceptual model of transport networks in a courier company in Thailand and the effect on customer satisfaction. The findings indicated that the proposed conceptual model of transport network quality has a significant influence on customer satisfaction. The researcher concluded that the findings will help managers to understand the business performance and level of customer satisfaction, in order to improve the service. This in turn helps the company to enhance its reputation, help it gain more market share and helps make the company a success. Haughton (2000) developed a framework for quantifying the benefits of fleet management, also under stochastic customer demands. Zhong et al. (2007) proposed an efficient way of designing driver service territories, considering uncertainty in customer locations and demand. Their method uses a two-stage model: in the strategic level, core service territories are constructed; in the operational level, customers in the non-core territories are assigned on a daily basis to adapt to uncertainty.

Groer et al. (2008) introduced the Consistent VRP (ConVRP) model. The objective is to obtain fleet management policy such that the couriers' visiting the same location at roughly the same time on each day. They develop an algorithm, ConRTR (ConVRP Record-to-Record travel), which first generates a template and then generates daily schedules from the template by skipping non-occurring customers and inserting new customers. Sungur et al. (2010) introduce the concept of "route similarity" as the number of customers of the daily routes that are within a

given distance of any customer on the master plan route, and use it as a key measure for developing optimal routing strategies.

Saga (2003) reiterated that poor transportation systems in an economy usually hamper the courier delivery system, which may negatively affect customer service. Due to this, several companies have emerged in order to capitalize on the weaknesses of the traditional courier service providers. The successes and performance of a mail and courier service industry highly depends on the kind of transport service that exists within that particular company (Kamau 2001). There are unsystematic factors that contribute to the productivity and competitive strength of that given organization

2.3 Conceptual framework

According to educational researcher (Smyth, 2004) conceptual frameworks are structured from a set of broad ideas and theories that help a researcher to properly identify the problem they are looking at, frame their questions and find suitable literature. Figure 1 shows the conceptual representation.

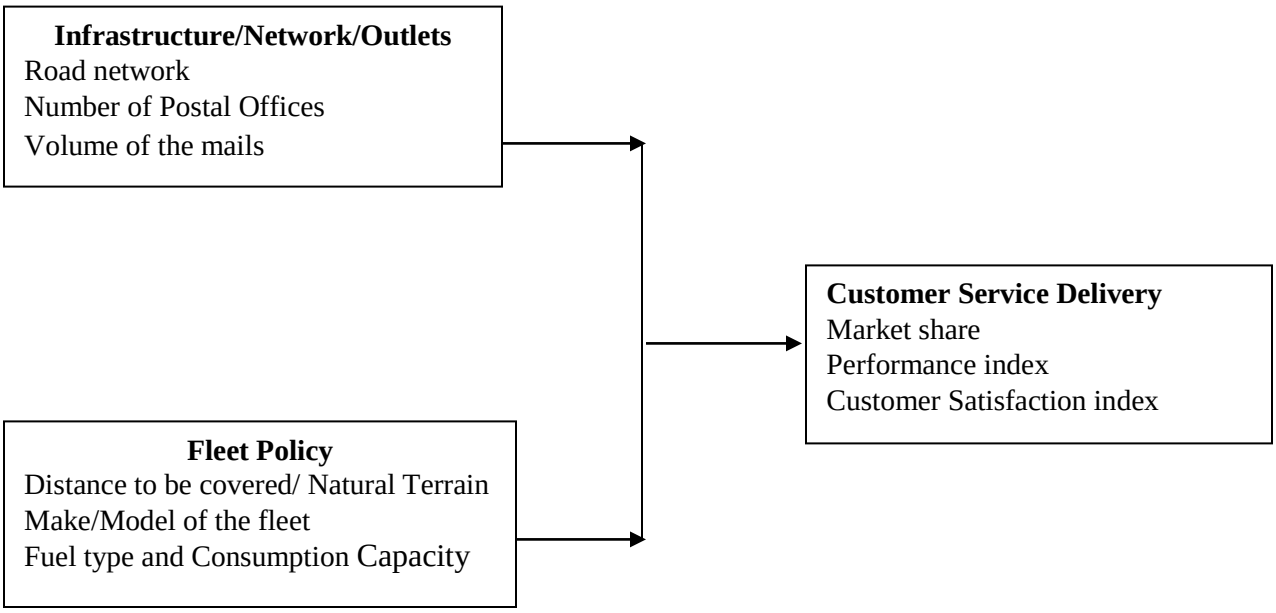

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3.0 Research methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research designs. A research design is the strategy and the plan to be carried out (Cooper & Schindler, 2001). It specifies the methods and procedures for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. Gupta (2008) avers that a research design is the basic plan that indicates an overview of the activities that are necessary to execute the research project. The target population was 300 employees of PCK and at the Headquarters in Nairobi. The specific targeted employees were structured as 20 management staff, 180 operations officers for mails and courier, 100 fleet and logistics officers. The sample size was 169 selected from a target population of 300 using Krejcie and morgan sample size table as cited by Oso and Onen 2013.

Stratified sampling method was applied in carrying out the study as per the table 3.2 and therefore 169 respondents constituted the sample population for the study. A sample is a small group obtained from accessible population; Sampling is the technique a researcher uses to gather people, places or things to study. The study used primary data sources in gathering data for analysis. The primary data source was collected by the use of a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of both open and close-ended questions. A questionnaire is a pre-formulated written set of questions to which the respondents record the answers usually within rather closely delineated alternatives. Structured questions were so as to capture the opinion of the respondent. Likert-type questions are useful because the respondents are not restricted to a common way of answering the questions.

A pilot test was conducted in one of the Postal Corporation offices within Nairobi to test the reliability and the validity of the data to be collected using the questionnaire (Kothari, 2009). The questionnaires were tested to a selected sample which was similar to the actual sample. Same procedures were used in the actual data collection exercise for pretesting study. The pretest sample was 10% of the 169 respondents sample size population which was enough for piloting study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The study employed both construct validity and content validity to check on the validity of the instruments. To check on the construct validity, the questionnaire was separated into a number of sections making sure each section was evaluating certain information for a certain objective, and also making sure it closely tied to the conceptual framework of the study. For content validity, the research instrument was subjected to comprehensive examination by 5 arbitrarily chosen industry experts and the supervisor. They

were requested to give their views on the statements in the questionnaire for importance and their meaningfulness. From evaluation received, the instrument was appropriately accustomed before being subjected to the final exercise of data collection. Their reviewed comments were the utilized to make sure that content validity was effectively enhanced.

The cronbach alpha was calculated in a bid to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. This was done by subjecting the seventeen (17) questionnaires to respondents that were randomly selected. All the variables were reliable since their Cronbach alpha was above 0.7 which was used as a cut-off of reliability for the study. The data collected was coded summarized then analyzed by the use of the computer package SPSS (statistical package for social sciences). Hypothesis testing was done using Pearson correlation and regression techniques. Pearson correlation was used to measure the nature of relationship between independent and dependent variables while regression analysis was used to measure statistical relationship between two variables.

The regression model adopted was:

$Y== \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e$

Where:

Y = Customer Service Delivery

X_1 = Network Outlets

X_2 = Fleet Policy

e is error term

β_0 represents the constant

$\beta_{1,2}$ are regression coefficients

4.0 Results and findings

4.1 Network Outlets

4.1.1 Descriptive statistics

In this section, network outlet on customer service delivery was measured by four questions. The respondents were asked to give their opinion regarding network outlet. Specifically, they were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 represented the highest and 1 represented the lowest rate as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Network Outlets

Statements	Lowest	2	3	4	Highest	Mean	Std. Dev
Road Network	4.6%	6.9%	16.8%	33.6%	38.2%	3.94	1.12
Number of Post Offices	9.9%	6.1%	16.8%	29.8%	37.4%	3.79	1.28
Distance Coverage	5.3%	8.4%	26.0%	29.0%	31.3%	3.73	1.15
Road Maintenance	5.4%	14.6%	31.5%	23.8%	24.6%	3.48	1.17
Average						**3.74**	**1.18**

According to results in table 1, majority of the respondents who represented 38.2% of the respondents rated the highest scale of 5 on the statement that Road Network affected customer service delivery. 33.6% rated a scale of 4, 16.8% rated scale of 3, 6.9% rated the scale of 2 while 4.6% rated the lowest of 1 on how Road Network affected customer service delivery. On the rating of how Number of Post Offices affected customer service delivery, 37.4% rated the highest scale of 5, 29.8% rated a scale of 4, 16.8% rated a scale of 3, 9.9 % gave the lowest rating of 1 while 6.1 % rated a scale of 2. The third statement on network outlet was how distance of coverage affected customer service delivery, 31.3% gave the highest rating of 5, 29.0 indicated the scale of 4, 26.3 indicated a scale of 3, 8.4% indicated a scale 2, while 5.3% indicated the lowest scale of 1. Finally, the respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 on how road maintenance affected customer service delivery, 31.5, the majority rated a scale of 3, 24.6 indicated the highest rating scale of 5, 23.8% indicated the scale of 4, 14.6% indicated a scale of 2 while 5.4% indicated the lowest scale of 1.

On a five-point scale, the average mean of the responses was 3.74 which mean that majority of the respondents indicated a relatively high scale on how network outlet affected customer service delivery. The answers, however, were varied as shown by a standard deviation of 1.18 which measures the difference from the mean. The highest of the mean scale was 5 while the lowest was 1. The finding considerably implies that network outlets affected customer service delivery.

4.2 Fleet Policy

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

In this section fleet policy on customer service delivery was measured by four questions. The respondents were asked to give their opinion regarding fleet policy. Specifically, they were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 represented the highest and 1 represented the lowest rate.

Table 2: Fleet Policy

Statements	Lowest	2	3	4	Highest	Mean	Std. Dev
Distance to be covered/Natural Terrain	3.1%	6.9%	22.9%	32.8%	34.4%	3.89	1.06
Make/Model of the Fleet	4.5%	15.2%	18.9%	35.6%	25.8%	3.63	1.16
Fuel Type	23.1%	16.2%	26.9%	23.1%	10.8%	2.82	1.32
Fuel Consumption Capacity	16.8%	13.0%	22.9%	24.4%	22.9%	3.24	1.39
Average						**3.40**	**1.23**

According to results in Table 2, majority of the respondents who represented 34.4% of the respondents rated the highest scale of 5 on the statement that distance to be covered and natural terrain affected customer service delivery. 32.8% rated a scale of 4, 22.9% rated scale of 3, 6.9% rated the scale of 2 while 3.1% rated the lowest of. On the rating of how model of the fleet affected customer service delivery, 35.6% rated the scale of 4, 25.8% rated the highest scale of 5, 18.9% rated a scale of 3, 15.2 gave a rating of 2 while 4.5% rated the lowest scale of 1. The third statement on fleet policy was how fuel type affected customer service delivery, 26.9 % gave a rating of 3, 23.1% indicated the lowest rating scale of 1, 23.1% also indicated a scale of 4, 16.2% indicated a scale 2, while 10.8% indicated a scale of 5. Finally, the respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 on how fuel consumption capacity affected customer service delivery, 22.9% rated a scale of 3 and the highest scale of 5, 24.4 indicated a rating scale of 4, 16.8% indicated the scale of 1, while 13.0% indicated a scale of 2.

On a five-point scale, the average mean of the responses was 3.40 which mean that majority of the respondents indicated a relatively high scale on how fleet affected customer service delivery. The answers, however, were varied as shown by a standard deviation of 1.18 which measures the difference from the mean. The highest of the mean scale was 5 while the lowest was 1. The finding considerably implies that fleet policy affected customer service delivery. The study is consistent with that of Waiyaki, (2013) on fleet management system implementation in Kenya power who found a positive impact on the delivery of service at reduced operational costs that

enabled the organization to break old working patterns and strengthen its competitive edge in the market.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

A correlation analysis finding is present in table 3

Table 3: Correlation Table

		Customer Service Delivery	Network Outlets	Fleet Policy
Customer Service Delivery	Pearson Correlation	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Network Outlets	Pearson Correlation	.310**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
Fleet Policy	Pearson Correlation	.724**	.205*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.019	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis results in table 3 revealed that there was a positive and a significant relationship between network outlet and customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya (r=0.310, p=0.000). Further the results showed that there was a positive and a significant relationship between fleet policy and customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya (r=0.724, p=0.000).

4.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was performed by using the composites of the key variables. The data was input to the SPSS software. Results were then presented in Tables 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4: Model Fitness for the Regression

Indicator	Coefficient
R	0.776
R Square	**0.602**
Adjusted R Square	0.590
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.27741

The results presented in Table 4 present the fitness of model used in the regression model in explaining the study phenomena. This is supported by coefficient of determination also known as the R square of 60.2%. This means that network outlets and fleet policy explain 60.2% of the variations in the dependent variable which is the customer service delivery. This results further means that the model applied to link the relationship of the variables was satisfactory.

Table 5 provides the results on the analysis of the variance (ANOVA).

Table 5: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	14.798	4	3.7	48.075	0.000
Residual	9.773	127	0.077		
Total	**24.572**	**131**			

The results indicate that the overall model was statistically significant. Further, the results imply that the independent variables are good predictors of the implementation of sand dam drift project. This was supported by an F statistic of 13.735 and the reported p=0.00 which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05 significance level.

Table 6: Regression of Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	t	Beta	Sig.
(Constant)	1.571	0.318		4.942	0.000
Network Outlet	0.178	0.057	0.181	3.125	0.002
Fleet Policy	0.463	0.038	0.688	12.026	0.000

Regression of coefficients results in table 6 showed that network outlet had a positive and significant effect on customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya (r=0.178, p=0.002). Fleet policy had positive and significant effect on customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya (r=0.463, p=0.000).

5.0 Conclusions

The first objective was to determine the effects of network outlets on the customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya. The statistical and empirical results finding reveal that network outlet had a positive and significant effect on the customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya. It is therefore concluded that an

improvement in network outlets leads to a positive improvement on the customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya.

The second objective of the study was to evaluate the effect of fleet policy on the customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya. The results finding of regression analysis found that fleet policy had a positive and significant effect on the customer service delivery of courier services of Postal Corporation of Kenya. The study concludes fleet management dramatically reduced the need for human supervisors for fleet management, improves service and increases courier effects. This improves the services delivery to customers which in turn improves customer satisfaction. Modern fleet management system improves the logistics of transporting staff, goods and materials and increased the effectiveness and efficiency of the logistical processes.

6.0 Recommendations

From the findings and the conclusion, this study recommended that there is a need for network outlet improvement and increment should be a major target for the leadership of the corporation since the findings of this study has shown that increase in network outlet improves customer service delivery. The study further recommended that real-time fleet management be implemented to reduce the need for human supervisors for fleet management, improves service and increases courier effects. This will lead to improvement of services delivery to customers which in turn improves customer satisfaction. Further recommendation was modern fleet management system be implemented to improve the logistics of transporting staff, goods and materials to increase effectiveness and efficiency of the logistical processes. There is need for deliberate measures such as national addressing system to facilitate delivery of letters to doorsteps, diversification into financial services and wireless Internet services across postal outlets.

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