

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN FACILITIES MANAGEMENT: A STUDY OF OFFICE BUILDINGS IN SRI LANKA

H.M.P.K. Herath, Damitha Rajini*, Uthpala Rathnayake and Nimesha Jayasena

Department of Building Economics, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a strategy used by the business organisations in order to optimise the service efficiency in the current competitive business environment. The aim of CRM in Facilities Management (FM) is to build an acceptable long-term relationship with customers and users of the facility for long term sustainability. Though CRM in FM is an area gaining importance, the CRM practices in FM is still unclear. Therefore, this study intends to develop an understanding of the current CRM practices in FM in Sri Lankan Office buildings focusing on the tenants, identify the issues and propose strategies to overcome them. The case study approach was adopted as the research method and the required data were collected from both the management and tenants of the selected cases. The data collection was done through semi structured interviews whereas the analysis was conducted through code-based content analysis. The results of the study showed that CRM in FM in Sri Lankan office buildings sector is at a low level and there are different issues related with CRM process, employees who involved in providing customer services and the technology used for CRM. The identified common issues were unavailability of a mechanism to evaluate CRM process or tenants to give their feedback, the FM employees' poor communication skills, ineffectiveness of manual processes used for some CRM activities and the like. Conducting customer satisfaction surveys, training and development on CRM practices, periodical tenant meeting, etc. are the proposed strategies to overcome those issues. It was also established that the current CRM practices can be enhanced by implementing the identified strategies, with the effort of all the parties involved in service provision for tenants in Sri Lankan office buildings. The results of the study guide the industry professionals to improve the CRM practices related to FM in Sri Lankan office buildings.

Keywords: Customer Relationship Management (CRM); Facilities Management (FM); Office Buildings; Tenants.

1. INTRODUCTION

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a practice and a strategy that organisations use to retain, acquire, identify and cherish profitable customers by constructing and sustaining long-term relationships with them (Adikaram, 2016). As mentioned by B.C. Opara and Opara (2016), it involves the integration of people, process and technology to enhance customer satisfaction with the view of achieving organisational objectives. CRM in Facilities Management (FM) can be defined as the interaction of FM department with core business or users of the premises at all levels of FM to build a long-term acceptable relationship (Naaranoja, 2011). Good CRM practices should therefore be maintained among the FM department and its customers to deliver a quality FM service and to achieve the core business objectives (Ogbeifun et al., 2016). Though, a number of previous researchers (Hoots, 2005; Naaranoja, 2011; Ogbeifun et al., 2016) have highlighted the importance of customer-oriented approach for FM, still the literature and empirical findings in this area is limited, especially in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, a research need was identified to investigate issues in current CRM practices related to FM and to find strategies to overcome those issues in the Sri Lankan context. Thus, this paper presents the findings of a study carried out, with the aim of investigating the current CRM practices related to FM in Sri Lankan office buildings together with identifying the existing issues and proposing strategies to improve the current CRM practices. The paper starts with a literature review on the

*Corresponding Author: E-mail – damithar@uom.lk

concept of CRM and its applications for FM. Then it presents the research methodology followed by data analysis and research findings. Finally, the conclusions of the study are presented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. OVERVIEW OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Customers are the most valuable resource in a business (Asadi et al., 2013). Without customers, there will be no market place for services, no innovations and no returns or profit and, at least no survival (Amarathunga et al., 2004). Successful businesses are running today by questioning about their customer needs and paying attention to them. It is supported by CRM, which helps organisations to increase the revenue and obtain higher profits by properly treating their customers (Asadi et al., 2013). According to B.C. Opara and Opara (2016), CRM is a business strategy consisting with a broad range of organisational and operational activities that provides an overall combination of all areas of business including marketing, finance, production and personnel. It is also an organisational strategic tool to face competitiveness, which focuses to obtain new customers and maintain existing customers to increase competitive advantages in the business world (Tekin, 2013). As mentioned by Ragins and Greco (2003), CRM has emerged to represent more balanced performance on continuing relationships rather than simply having individual dealings. Hence, CRM in any organisation is characterized as an important and vital principle (Ghalenoie & Sarvestani, 2016).

Applying best CRM practices will result in several benefits to an organisation (Ragins & Greco, 2003). These include enhanced loyalty of customers (Asadi et al., 2013), improved communication, increased customer retention rates, reduced spending rates on CRM, reduced legal condition related costs and enhanced customer knowledge and feedback (Hughes, 2011; Buttle, 2004; Chen & Popovich, 2003; Eggert et al., 2006). Hence, effective CRM will lead to increase an organisation's income and ultimately gain higher profits.

According to Mendoza et al. (2007), human, process and technology are the three fundamental resources which integrated with CRM strategy. A number of previous researchers namely, Chen and Popovich (2003); Couldwell (1998); Rigo et al. (2016) identified those three factors as determinants of effective CRM, which have been described in detail below.

- **Process-** Maintaining best process for identifying the customer requirements is one of the main CRM strategies since retaining a customer is more profitable than building a relationship with a new customer. There are some organisational practices to identify the customers' perspectives like measuring customer satisfaction, performance assessment and handling customer complaints (Chen & Popovich, 2003).
- **Human/ people factors** - Effectiveness of the CRM largely depends on the people who are performing it, even the process and technology helps for CRM (Rigo *et al.*, 2016). Top management commitment is an essential factor for strategic development in CRM and according to Brito (2011), employees should be provided with necessary trainings and motivation to meet customer expectations and needs. Effective communication can identify the customer's needs and manage the problems which are arisen due to poor services provided by the organisation. Therefore, a competent and skilled person should be appointed to handle relationships with the customers. In this sense, human factors and behaviours are more important in maintaining strong CRM (Chen & Popovich, 2003).
- **Technology-** Technology applications for CRM include front office and back office functions with the organisation's customer touch points (Fickel, 1999). Electronic CRM equips electronic or traditional channels (Milovic, 2011). Through the technology platform like the internet, an effective customer relationship can be developed. It would be helpful for customer retention and to improve the satisfaction and loyalty of customers (Behravan & Rahman, 2012).

Osarenkhoe and Bennani (2007); Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001) as well as Oztaysi et al. (2011) identified various CRM strategies coming under process, human and technology related factors. Accordingly, maintaining a dialog with customers by arranging regular meetings, measuring customer satisfaction, setting realistic targets and assessing performance of service provision, improving service quality, investing to improve the skills and competencies of workers involved in CRM, and using relationship-based interfaces and technology are the commonly used CRM strategies in the global context.

2.2. CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

The following sections describe the importance of CRM for FM, CRM practices in FM and the associated issues with those practices.

2.2.1. INTRODUCTION TO CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN FM AND ITS IMPORTANCE

According to International Facility Management Association (IFMA, 2009), FM is a profession, consists with multiple disciplines, which coordinates built environment by ensuring its functionality by integrating people, places, processes and technology of an organisation. It involves various activities to manage built assets and deliver services effectively (Amarathunga, 2000). FM fulfils the requirements of a facility and maintains the coordination between FM department and FM consumers. Therefore, it needs to be adjusted and balanced to meet the requirements of both parties.

For FM, its main customer is the executive management of the organisation, the complementary unit responsible for the implementation of the core functions of the organisation and service providers (Ogbeifun et al., 2016). Other customers can be identified as employees, employees of third parties, visitors including the organisation's customers and potential customers, stakeholders of the business and members of the public (FMworld, 2010). In the FM sector, CRM can be identified as a tool, which looks at the FM function as a customer intensive business function rather than facilities services cost centre. CRM in FM can therefore be understood in such a way that facility manager expects to build a long-term satisfactory relationship with customers and users of the building (Naaranoja, 2011).

Relationship management creates a good relationship between FM suppliers and customers (Coenen et al., 2013). As Tucker and Pitt (2010) pointed out, customer satisfaction is the second most important priority after loss of business due to facilities failure, and accordingly, managing critical FM services and appropriate relationships can be seen as important simultaneous things. Thus, the emphasis on the effective workplace has shifted from profit maximisation to customer satisfaction, emphasising strategic FM. All aspects of functions are designed and run to satisfy the FM customers by addressing their requirements for services. Therefore, managing customer relationships has become a facility manager's job (Hoots, 2005).

2.2.2. CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES USED IN FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

As Coenen et al. (2013) identified, relationship management is a key point to interact with each other as customers and FM professionals. When maintaining relationships with customers, FM department should first analyse its operations and facilities along with its capabilities. Therefore, it needs to be determined what could be delivered to the customer. Based on that, the policies, procedures and systems should be developed, and plans, programmes and budgets should be prepared (Barrett, 2000).

There are some activities, which help in maintaining the relationship between FM professionals and their customers and the assessment of their performance (Lavy, 2008). Those activities include effective communication in the form of periodic reports, comprehensive analysis about the assets and the development of objective planning with suitable budgetary allocations. According to Campbell and Finch (2004), the customer satisfaction is not limited to technical performance but also includes effective communication and management of expectations as well (Campbell & Finch, 2004). Therefore, as Hoots (2005) suggested, regular customer surveys or performance assessments should be conducted by the FM unit in order to improve the image of an organisation before its customers. The questions content should be varied from time to time with their objective of taking the customers concerns over a wide range of service providers by the FM units. Currently, internet has become one of the main communication strategies, and more benefits can be gained by using Information Technology (IT) for maintaining relationship with the customers (Barret, 1995). According to Naaranoja (2011), FM organisations can use IT to help CRM in FM like document management systems for drawings, letters, memos, and contract files, bookkeeping system linked to customer and space register, email messaging, extranet for maintenance manual information, etc.

2.2.3. ISSUES IN CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT IN FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

There are numbers of issues due to poor CRM in FM such as, increasing the number of complaints, abate customer loyalty and less customer coming back to the organisation (Hoots, 2005). As Tax *et al.* (2013) highlighted, customer complaint is the key issue of poor CRM and it will affect the goodwill of the

organisation. Ree and McLennan (2006) identified that without accurate CRM in FM, both external service value and internal service quality might be decreased as supply chain becomes weak. Further, poor employee loyalty to FM performance will ultimately lead to decrease the market share, profitability and growth of the organisation. Even the operatives of FM units put in their best to see that the facilities and services that support the core activities of their customers are up and running, they consider and pay attention to documentation, reporting and effective and efficient communication. Increasing of complaints can be seen when any part of the services is not functioning (Ogbeifun *et al.*, 2016). Hoots (2005) summarised that there are three main causes for customer dissatisfaction with FM services i.e. resources, response and respect. Lack of sufficient resources to meet customer needs, not having the ability to respond effectively to organisational requirements and absence of mutual respect between FM division and customers are examples for such dissatisfactions. Therefore, these factors affect towards the initiation of customer's issues like customer complaints and effective management of them is the basis for effective CRM in FM.

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research was to investigate the issues in current CRM practices related to FM in office buildings in Sri Lanka and to find strategies to overcome those issues. The customers considered in this study were the tenants who are the main FM customers of office buildings. The case study method was used to carry out in-depth study for this research in order to achieve research objectives. Considering the availability of time and other inconvenience, the number of cases were limited to three and three (03) buildings. The buildings, where the spaces have been rented out to more than twenty tenants were selected as the cases. The three selected cases in this study were named as Cases A, Case B and Case C. Case A has rented out 30 numbers of office areas for tenants whereas Cases B and C have rented out 48 and 20 numbers of office areas respectively. The data collection was done from both the management as well as from the tenants of the selected buildings. Hence, in each case, one semi-structured interview was conducted with one management professional and the codes used in this paper to represent them in Cases A, B and C are M1, M2 and M3 respectively. Five tenants from each case were also interviewed for data collection and the codes used for tenants in the Cases A, B and C are TA-n, TB-n and TC-n respectively. All selected respondents had more than 5 years' work experiences within the selected cases. As the data analysis method, content analysis was used with the aid of NVivo software. The following sections discuss and analyse the findings of this study.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. CURRENT PRACTICES OF CRM IN FM IN OFFICE BUILDINGS SRI LANKA

The data on current CRM practices in FM were collected from the representatives of FM department in each case. Accordingly, in Cases A and C, the facilities managers and in Case B, premises engineer were interviewed to collect the required data. All the respondents who represented the management mentioned that carrying out effective CRM practice provides benefits to any organisation. According to them, CRM is a strategy implemented to manage their interactions with the customers. Further, CRM helps to attract and win new customers as well as nurture and retain the customers that the organisation already has. According to M1 and M2, generating long-term satisfied customers and retaining them is the main benefit that they have gained by maintaining proper CRM in their organisations. Working with happy customers is easy compared to dissatisfied customers and if any issue occurs, it is easily negotiable. In addition, CRM accommodates effective communication among parties so that there will be minimum opportunities for misunderstandings and future issues. Respondent M3 stated that if an organisation has a CRM process, the customers will get the sense of feeling that they are cared, and the customers' trust will be enhanced and thus, it will help to create a good image about the FM department.

Generally CRM process includes activities such as; developing strategies, collection and use of customers' data, performance evaluation of the strategies and documented processes, etc. (Ngambi & Ndifor, 2015). However, in selected cases, there are no formal procedures or processes specifically implemented for CRM. As mentioned by M1, even though they do not have a special process which has been documented in a policy or anywhere for maintaining CRM, they always try to maintain a good relationship with their tenants by working with them face-to-face in a friendly manner and being available for them to approach at any time.

Respondent M2 pointed out that when tenants come to visit their building for the first time, premises engineer shows their renting spaces to them. After that, once the two parties agreed on terms and conditions of the service, the contract is signed. As the FM service providing party, the management of an office complex is responsible for providing several services, which are required to carry out tenants' office activities without any disturbance. The FM services provided by the selected cases include building and building services maintenance (electricity and water supply, air conditioning, security systems, lifts and escalators, etc.), janitorial services, security, occupational health and safety, mail service, etc. In Cases A and C, the janitorial services have been outsourced whereas security services of all the cases have been outsourced. In situations where both in-house and outsourced service provision can be seen, both parties should be involved to maintain a good CRM. As M2 mentioned, if there is any issue about the FM services, the tenants can communicate them to the FM department and get them solved. Further, if there is any need with respect to the operations of the rented space, tenants can get them fulfilled by contacting the relevant party. In case B, these issues are also handled by the premises engineer. The similar procedure can also be seen in Cases A and C as well where the facilities manager is communicated by the tenants and facilities manager has the ultimate responsibility with respect to the tenant services. However, as the responsible party to provide FM services to the tenants, the responsibility to make the tenants happy lies with the entire FM department.

The FM department generally comprises of managers, technicians and some other clerical staff to take care of administration works. All these parties directly contact with the tenants of the building and they also have a role to be play when it comes to effective customer relations. Representative from top management like premises engineer in Cases B generally communicate with the top management of the tenant organisations. Technicians are assigned to perform building services related tasks and they are the people who directly work at the tenant's place and directly interact with the tenants. Therefore, as M1 described, they educate technicians during the induction i.e. how they should maintain a good relationship with tenants. The interviewees elaborated that the technicians are required to be concerned on their uniform, the language they use, how polite they talk to the tenants, patience in front of the tenant, responsiveness, etc. and especially how to handle difficult customers. In Cases A and B, a separate person has been assigned to handle customer calls and complaints with a dedicated telephone number. Therefore, they are also educated on the way that they should communicate with tenants. As highlighted by M1, all the managers and employees should have good communication skills in order to maintain a good relationship with tenants. Similarly, it was mentioned that they should have, decision-making skills and interpersonal skills as well. As, M2 of Case B pointed out, there should be a proper training and development procedures for the employees to maintain good CRM practices in the organisation. Except Case B which provides trainings for its technicians to improve their English knowledge, none of the other cases have paid attention to arrange such training programmes for their lower level employees. However, the HR departments of selected cases arrange performance interviews with their employees to evaluate the effectiveness of their works in regular intervals.

Retaining existing tenants is the most important concern in office complexes. The biggest determinant of tenant satisfaction and relationships is service quality and therefore, as the respondents from all the cases mentioned, they take immediate actions for tenant's complaints to provide them with a speedy service. Further, they always take necessary actions to improve the service quality. Evaluating the effectiveness of the CRM practices also provide necessary information about the tenants and their requirement to maintain a good relationship. Thus, to further enhance the service quality and effective relationships, Case B conducts a monthly meeting with its tenants. Here, the representatives from tenant organisations and the representatives of FM division get together and discuss the matters and come up with solutions. The representatives of the organisations which provide outsourced FM services are also required to attend these meetings. Moreover, in Case B, refresher meetings are also conducted with the FM employees weekly to ensure that all the expectations of their tenants are met. In the briefing, they discuss about service delays and reasons for them. Further, they decide on actions that can be taken to eliminate the issues and guide their workers to achieve them. However, as M1 and M3 disclosed, even though they do not have any practices to evaluate the effectiveness of the CRM, normally they arrange meetings with their tenants in case of emergency or at request of the tenants. Getting feedbacks from tenants will provide a clear understanding on tenants' expectations from the service provider. Case A uses a special mechanism for getting feedback from their tenants via emails. Normally it happens after they provided services like maintenance. In Case B, the feedback is taken during monthly tenants meetings.

As the study revealed, telephone calls and emails are the most widely used communication techniques in selected cases whereas formal letters are used in case of a special situation like requesting permission to get

some help to renovate premises or repair the building, request some financial concerns related to the rent of the building, etc. In addition to that, the general tools and techniques used to maintain effective relationship with tenants in office complexes include memos, relationship-based interfaces as well as work order procedures to get maintenance jobs done. In Cases A, B and C, e-mails and relationship-based interfaces are the only technology based applications that they use to maintain the relationship with tenants. Hence, it shows that the use of technology for supporting CRM is at a low level in office buildings in Sri Lanka.

4.2. ISSUES IN CRM IN FM IN OFFICE BUILDINGS SRI LANKA

A lots of CRM issues could be identified through the interviews with the respondents as they are the parties who directly face those issues. The issues identified have been summarised in Figure 1 categorising them under CRM process related, people related and technology related issues. As majority of tenants mentioned, improper behaviour of technicians is the major issue that they face with respect to CRM in FM. As mentioned, technicians behave in unsuitable ways in the tenant's place, where the tenants' customers are present. These unsuitable behaviours improper wearing, not polite to tenants' customers, making noises by over speaking with each other, which is disturbing to the occupants in that area. In Case A, the tenants have got complaints about technicians, even from their own customers. As most of the tenants pointed out, though this issue was communicated to the FM division several times, still the issue has not been totally solved. At the same time, the tenants acknowledged that, yet there are some employees who are polite and easy to work with.

Another issue faced by both the tenants and FM department is lack of communication skills and English knowledge of the employees who directly work with tenants. Though the management of Case C has arranged some English classes, it has not been successful due to the reluctance of the employees to participate to it.

Respondents of Cases A and C respectively have experienced delays in providing services and the absence of maintenance staff for reactive maintenance repairs on time. According to them, the technical staff do not consider that their jobs needs to be completed as soon as possible, thinking that it is enough to complete them within that day or within the week. However, the workers must follow their work order procedures which consumes some time so that small delays are happened. As mentioned by M3, Case C attempts to issue the work orders, relevant equipment and spare parts on time and mainly they persuade the technical team to finish the work on time to overcome these issues. According to a tenant from Case A, "Small delays of some services can be the root cause for a materialised issue" and therefore, a careful attention needs to be given to this issue since it is the responsibility of FM department to provide the tenants with required FM services on time.

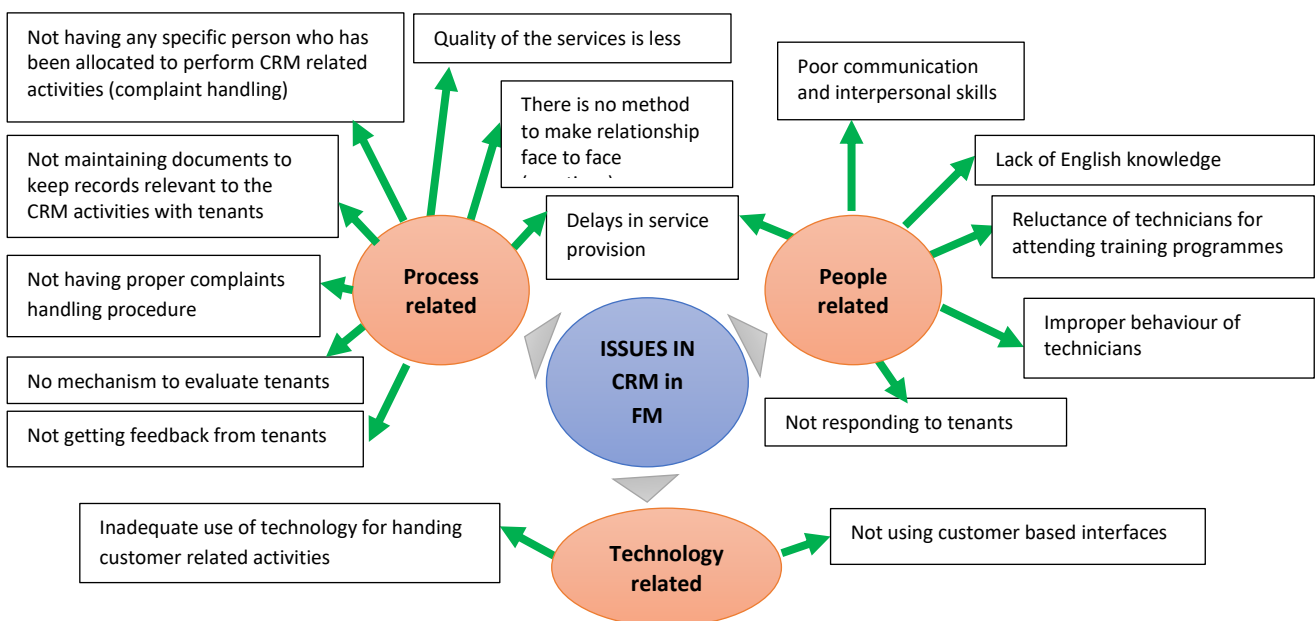


Figure 1: Issues Related to CRM in FM in Office Buildings in Sri Lanka

Moreover, most of the tenants who were interviewed pointed out that the service providers' staff do not quickly respond to telephone calls sometimes. As per the tenants of Case C, sometimes technical staff do not respond to telephone calls and they do not even call back. Then, they have to call again to remind, which is very difficult

for them, when they are busy. As tenants mentioned, it is really disappointing for them if it is an emergency situation. Moreover, a tenant in Case C stated that they have not been allocated a special person to handle calls, which is a very big barrier for effective CRM. Moreover, in Case C, FM department has not provided any mechanism to give tenants' feedback to them. Although the feedback for some maintenance activities in Case A are taken via emails, there is no standardised format for it. Further, tenants who were interviewed in Case A and Case C highlighted the importance of having regular meetings with the FM department.

As most of the important information are communicated to the FM department via emails, sometimes it takes some time to take the necessary actions. The technicians are not always in the office as they are assigned different works throughout the day and therefore, in some situations, the FM division has to wait until they come back after their work. Further, the allocation of work in all the cases are done manually in all the cases consuming a huge lot of time. The study revealed that the use of technology for CRM especially when it comes to FM is at a low level in office buildings in Sri Lanka. However, as both management of tenant organisations and the FM departments highlighted, the use of advanced technology need be a priority of office buildings in Sri Lanka in order to improve the effectiveness CRM in FM.

4.3. STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THE CURRENT ISSUES AND IMPROVE CURRENT CRM PRACTICES IN FM IN OFFICE BUILDINGS IN SRI LANKA

The strategies to overcome the issues mentioned in section 4.2 were identified through the interviews conducted with respondents of the cases and the findings have been discussed below.

- **Developing clear procedures for CRM:** The organisation should have a clear procedure which explains how the FM department should coordinate with its tenants and the responsible parties for each task. It should also include the process that need to be followed if any issue occurred. These procedures should be communicated to FM staff as well as to the relevant personnel of the tenant organisations. When they are clear about the procedures, there will be minimal chances for misunderstandings and future issues.
- **Understanding the expectations of tenants:** The organisation should identify the requirements for healthy relationships among the FM department and the tenants of an office complex. Generally, the tenants expect the FM department to provide them with a quality and timely service. In addition, they expect friendliness, empathy, required information and good suggestions when working with tenants. There can be other needs specific to each tenant, which are required when they carry out their office activities. Therefore, first, it is required to understand the tenants and their requirements so that they can be fulfilled, leaving no chances for poor relationships.
- **Appointing a specific person for complaint handling of the tenants:** A specific person should be appointed so that all the complaints can be handled through a central point. This person can be given the responsibility to record the complaint, communicate it to the relevant party, check whether the requirement has been fulfilled and finally confirm whether the task has been completed. If such a procedure is there in the organisation, the FM employees will tend to complete their tasks timely manner and since the records are kept, they can be used as a reference source if any issue occur in future. Further, it will support effective communication among parties.
- **Getting feedback on CRM:** There should be a mechanism to get feedback from tenants after completing activities. This feedback will provide an overall idea to the FM department about the tenants' comments on the work done and it will encourage the future work. And also, this should cover the feedback on CRM of the organisation as well. If there is any negative feedback, FM department can identify the issue and prevent them from occurring in the future. Especially, when working with outsourced parties' tenants' feedback should be considered to overcome the issues that the tenants are facing. Customer satisfaction survey is one method which can be conducted to get tenants' feedback.
- **Conducting regular meetings with tenants:** Conducting meetings with tenants and the representatives from outsourced service providing organisations provide a platform for face to face discussion. Any issue related to the provision of FM services can be discussed and appropriate solutions can be decided based on the views of all the parties.
- **Implementing customer complaint handling procedure:** It is required to implement a proper customer handling procedure which records complaints, evaluate them and take corrective actions.

- **Maintaining documents:** Records on all the activities related to the service provision and other customer related activities need to be maintained for future reference purposes. Further, these information can be used as evidences as well. Specially, customer complaints and feedback related information should be maintained so that they can be analysed and appropriate decisions can be taken.
- **Providing quality FM service:** Service quality is an important aspect based on which the trust and the image of the tenants on the FM department is built. Good service quality is an enabler to build an effective relationship among parties. Generally, customer relations related issues are occurred due to the poor quality. Therefore, the FM department should always try to enhance quality of FM services.
- **Minimising the time wastage and delays of FM service provision:** As it was discussed earlier, one determinant of customer relationships is customer satisfaction, which is greatly affected by the timeliness of service. Therefore, the prevailing issue of delays need to be minimised in order to achieve effective CRM. This can be achieved by implementing a proper CRM process with appropriate technologies and by training and educating employees to complete their tasks on time.
- **Evaluating tenants:** As per the prevailing practice, there is no mechanism to evaluate the tenants. However, evaluation of tenants is important as it allows the FM department to understand their tenants. There can be some difficult tenants who always try to complain to the management even about a small issue. At the same time, there can be friendly tenants with whom, the issues can be discussed in a friendly manner and come to a decision. Therefore, understanding the nature of tenant is important when dealing with them. For example, if it will be delay completing a work at a difficult customer's place, the facilities manager can communicate it to the management of the tenant organisation beforehand so that the tenant will not get angry and complain about it. By having informal discussions with the FM employees will also help to get an understanding about different customers.
- **Organising CRM related training and development sessions for workers:** When recruiting technicians and minor staff who will be assigned to work in tenants' places, their communication skills and English knowledge also need to be considered. Further, based on the work performed by the FM employees and technicians, they should be provided with required skills and knowledge on their woks as well as CRM through training and development sessions. Further, the facilities manager should take the responsibility to motivate the staff to participate in such programmes and help them to eliminate their reluctance.
- **Changing the attitudes of in-house and outsourced staff:** In order to succeed in a business, the only way is to satisfy the customers. As the findings revealed, the tenants are largely dissatisfied with the behaviour of FM staff, especially the technicians. Therefore, it is recommended to educate the workers on the importance of treating the customers well and behave well in their office spaces. Further, the initiatives should be taken by the head of the department to encourage the staff towards this.
- **Evaluating the performance of lower level staff and giving rewards:** FM department can introduce programmes to evaluate the performance of staff related to the CRM with the involvement of HR department. Arranging small competitions among the staff members to select and reward the best staff member who maintained god customer relations will motivate the staff towards effective CRM.
- **Introducing customer-based interfaces:** Use of customer support systems which enable flexible and efficient communication among tenants and organisation is a good strategy to improve CRM. It will make the process efficient and easy for both parties.
- **Using technology for activities instead of manual procedures:** If the FM department uses advanced technology, it will help make the process efficient and easy and also save time and money of both parties. As an example, FM department can use technology for work order and feedback procedures. Further, online customer complaints forms and feedback sheets can also be introduced.
- **Organising training programmes related to the technological applications:** All the staff in FM department should be provided with necessary training related to operating computers and maintaining customer relationship via systems. Then it will be easy to maintain the relationship among both parties.

In order to ensure that these strategies are implemented, the commitment and support from the top management is required. The facilities managers or the responsible personnel of FM department need to convince the top

management the need for investment on CRM in FM. Further, in order to achieve effective CRM, support of one employee is not enough. Thus, effective CRM is a collective effort all the parties in the organisation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study intended to study the current CRM practices in FM in office buildings in Sri Lanka, identify the issues and propose strategies to overcome them. The customers considered in this study were the tenant organisations of the selected office complexes. The literature noted that there are three key factors that affect the effectiveness of CRM in an organization: CRM process followed by the organisation, employees assigned in customer relates services and the technology used for CRM. The results were proven there are various issues associated CRM in FM office buildings in Sri Lanka, which are related to all above three factors. As the findings showed, it has not been given an adequate attention for CRM in FM, rather than just focusing on customer care practices. Hence, organisations have not implemented systematic processes for CRM and not allocated a specific employee/s specifically to handle CRM related matters. Further, handling tenants' complaints and evaluating tenants' satisfaction could also be identified as areas which are still not developed up to the required level. Incorporating technology with the organisations' CRM process is also requirement for effective CRM, which is need to be fulfilled. Several issues could be noticed regarding the employees involved in CRM as well. Among them, the improper behaviour of FM employees could be identified as a huge barrier for effective CRM. However, a noticeable attention should be given to overcome these issues in order to achieve effective CRM in FM office buildings in Sri Lanka.

6. REFERENCES

- Adikaram, C. N., 2016. The Relationship between Customer Relationship Management and Customer Satisfaction : A Study on Private Higher Education Institutions in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Arts and Commerce* 5(2), 69-95.
- Amarathunga, D., 2000. Assesment of Facilities Management Performance. *Facilities*, 18(4), 258-266.
- Amarathunga, D., Baldry, D., and Haigh, R., 2004. Customer related facilities management process and its measurement: understanding the needs of the customer. *CIB W70 Facilities Management & Maintenance: Hong Kong 2004 Symposium*, 13-20.
- Asadi, S., Zakaria, N. H., Hossein, N. M., and Goudarzi, S., 2013. The Literature Review on Customer Relationship Management Based on Software as a Service. 3(7), 365-373.
- Barret, P., 1995. Facilities management towards best practice. Blackwell Science.
- Barrett, P., 2000. Achieving Strategic Facilities Management Through Strong Relationships. *Facilities*, 18(11), 421-426.
- Behravan, N., and Rahman, M., 2012. Customer Relationship Management Constructs under Social Network towards Customers Retention. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applies Sciences*, 6(7), 271-282.
- Brito, C., 2011. Relationship Marketing - Old Wine in a New Bottle?. *Innovative Marketing*, 7(1), 66-77.
- Buttle, F., 2004. Customer relationship management: Concept and tools. Burlington: MA.
- Campbell, L., and Finch, E., 2004. Customer satisfaction and organisational justice. *Facilities*, 13(7/8), 178-189.
- Chen, I. J., and Popovich, K., 2003. Understanding customer relationship management (CRM): People, Process and technology. *Business process management journal*, 9(5), 672-688.
- Coenen , C., Ying , Y., and Cui, S., 2013. Relationship Value in FM: A Customer Perspective. *Euro Fm Research symposium*, 1-18.
- Couldwell, C., 1998. A date day battle. *Computing*, 64-66.
- Eggert, A., Ulaga, W., and Schultz, F., 2006. Value Creation In The Relationship Lifecycle: A Quasi- Longitudinal Analysis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 35(1), 20-27.
- Fickel, I., 1999. Know your customer. *CIO Magazine*, 12(21), 62-72.
- FMWORLD., 2010. Available from: <http://www.fm-world.co.uk/good-practice-legal/explainer/maintain-customer-care-in-fm/> [Accessed 24 January 2018]
- Ghalenoioie, M. B., and Sarvestani, H. K., 2016. Evaluating Human Factors In Customer Relationship Management Case Study : Private Banks Of Shiraz City. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 36(16), 363-373.

- Hoots, M., 2005. Customer Relationship Management For Facility Managers. *Journal of Facilities Management*, 3(4), 346-361.
- Hughes, A., 2011. How Customer Service Builds Loyalty and Profits. Database Marketing Institute.
- International Facility Management Association., 2009. Available from: from <http://www.ifma.org/about/what-is-facility-management> [Accessed 15 January 2018]
- Lavy, S., 2008. Facility Management Practices In Higher Education Buildings. *Journal of Facilities Management*, 6(4), 303-315.
- Mendoza, L., Marius, A., Perez, M., and Griman, A., 2007. Critical success factors for a customer Relationship Management strategy. *Information and software technology*, 49(8), 913-945.
- Milovic, B., 2011. Differences CRM and eCRM business strategy. *International Scientific and Professional Symposium*, 720-724.
- Naaranoja, M., 2011. Customer Relationship Management in Facility Management. *Social responsibility in 21st century*, 460-472.
- Ngambi, M. T., and Ndifor, P. S., 2015. Customer Relationship Management and Firm Performance : Revisiting the Case of the Camccul Microfinance Institutions. *International Journal of Information Technology and Business Management*, 38(1), 12-21.
- Ogbeifun, E., Mbohwa, C., and Pretorius, J.-H. C., 2016. Facilities Management Unit: Improving Self- Image Before Its Customer. *Dynamic Factor Models*, 35, 317-360.
- Opara, B. C., and Opara, D. N., 2016. Customer Relationship Management and Banking Sector Market Share performance. *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*, 5(12), 13-21.
- Osarenkhoe, A., and Bennani, A. E., 2007. An exploratory study of implementation of customer relationship management strategy. *Business Process Management Journal*, 13(1), 139-164.
- Oztaysi, B., Sezgin, S., and Ozok, A. F., 2011. A Measurement Tool for Customer Relationship Management Processes. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 3(6), 943-960.
- Parvatiyar, A., and Sheth, J. N., 2002. Customer Relationship Management: Emerging Practice, Process and Discipline. *Journal of Economic and Social Research*, 3(2), 1-34.
- Ragins, E. J., and Greco, A. J., 2003. Customer relationship management and e-business: More than a software solution. *Review of Business*, 1(1), 25-30.
- Ree, H. J., and McLennan, P., 2006. FM Service Quality Indicators - Benefitting Supplier And Customer. 1-15.
- Rigo, G., Pedron, C., Caldeira, M., and Araujo, C., 2016. CRM Adoption in a higher education institution. *Journal of information system and technology management*, 13(1), 45-60.
- Tax, S. S., Brown, S. W., and Chandrashekar, M., 2013. Customer Evaluations of Service Complaint Experiences : Implications for Relationship Marketing. *The journal of marketing*, 62(2), 60-76.
- Tekin, M., 2013. Critical success factors for a customer relationship management strategy. *Mediterranean Journal of social sciences*, 4(10), 753.
- Tucker, M., and Pitt, M., 2010. Improving service provision through better management and measurement of customer satisfaction in facilities management . *Journal of Corporate Real Estate*, 12(4), 220-233.
- Yin, R., 2009. *Applications of case study research (4th ed.)*. Newbury Park, Calif: SAGE Publications.