

# After-Sales Service Strategies and Customer Satisfaction in Selected Diesel Power Generator Firms in Nairobi City County Kenya

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## Abstract:

**Background:** The World Bank Enterprise report indicates that power cuts in Sub-Saharan Africa have cost organizations in the continent. Although numerous milestones have been made in reforming the power sector over two decades, the after-sales strategies and customer satisfaction on power supply substations in Kenya have remained wanting. Most after-sale strategies and customer satisfaction are associated with problems of power supply distribution system, poor management strategies, and lack of capacity by Kenya Power to handle the ever-increasing demand for electrical energy. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the contribution of after-sale service strategies employed by power suppliers that will enhance customer satisfaction. The specific objective of the study was to establish the influence of quality of customer service, complain-compliant handling, maintenance practices, and product-service deliveries on customer satisfaction. The study was anchored on the social exchange theory, relationship marketing theory, and service quality theory as well as customer satisfaction and behavioral theory.

**Methodology:** The study employed a descriptive assessment design using a target population of 153 top managers of the ten selected diesel generating firms in Nairobi City County. The study utilized a stratified sampling technique to get the respondents to the study questionnaire. The diesel generating firms were selected for this study because of their strategic position and performance in respect to sales and customer service. The study collected primary data using a well-structured questionnaire with both open and closed-ended statements and questions on the after-sales and customer satisfaction in the power supply sector. The data collection instrument was tested for validity and reliability by conducting a pilot study and the use of Cronbach's Alpha equation. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics by the use of SPSS software version 25 and the results were presented in the form of figures, charts, and tables.

**Results and Findings:** The study findings indicated that quality of the customer service, complement/compliment handling, maintenance and repair practices, and product and service deliveries were significant in predicting the level of customer satisfaction among the selected firms. The coefficient of the variables, quality of customer service, compliment/complaint handling, maintenance and repair practices, and product were found to have a positive and significant correlation with customer satisfaction in the selected power generation firms in Nairobi City County.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that quality customer services offered by power generation companies lead to customer satisfaction. The study also concluded that careful handling of customer complaints and compliments was a major factor in meeting the expectation of customer satisfaction in the industry and finally the study concluded that product and service deliveries contribute significantly to the level of customer satisfaction of the company's products and services.

**Keywords:** After-sale service, Complaint/Compliment, customer service, service delivery, strategy.

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## I. Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the Study

The main market methodologies of the twenty-first century are to offer after-sale benefits to customers. Various organizations in the power generation and indeed across the industry have effectively actualized quality improvement activities with fantastic outcomes. The absence of fruitful implementation continues disturbing given the meaning of the customer to the service duties and the methodology of the execution. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the after-sale service strategies that can impact the customer satisfaction of the selected firms that operate in diesel power generators in Kenya.

## 1.2 Research Problem

The power generator sector has remained underdeveloped despite the efforts by government agencies investing a lot of funds in the sector. According to [9] the industry returns have been declining and there are only 10 dominant players. However, on the unfavorable front, there is no generator producing plants in Kenya and the business players import assembled generators and other accessories from foreign production companies. This leaves the players to upscale their after-sales strategies to cut an edge on their rivals in managing their customer satisfaction.

A study by [5] revealed that there was no doubt that customer satisfaction played a significant role in the company's business life cycle. [8] demonstrated that after-sale strategies were significant in ensuring that customer satisfaction has been achieved to create brand loyalty. At the same time, the studies recommended that future studies ought to focus on the impact of after-sale strategies on customer satisfaction in other sectors.

## 1.3 Research Objective

### 1.3.1 General Objective

To investigate the after-sale service strategies and customer satisfaction in selected diesel power generator firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To establish the influence of quality of customer service on customer satisfaction
- ii. To determine the influence of complain-compliment handling on customer satisfaction
- iii. To establish whether repairs-maintenance practices influence customer satisfaction
- iv. To assess the influence of products-service deliveries on customer satisfaction

## II. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Literature

The study was anchored on the social exchange theory, relationship marketing theory, service quality theory and customer satisfaction, and behavioral theory. The social exchange theory proposes that human association was a normal cycle that arises and prompts money-related accomplishments where both the business and the customer benefit. In social exchange theory, people like making comparisons, often unconsciously [4]. In most cases, they tend to compare their relationships to their expectations or previous similar relationships and other relationship choices. This theory was critical in explaining the effect of after-sale on the satisfaction of the customers.

Another theory that was relied on in this study was the relationship marketing theory. The theory focused on the value addition kind of marketing. The theory portends that a customer is an inactive element that has the power to acknowledge or dismiss the product or service offered by the company [3]. Therefore, the theory states that for a company to sustain a loyal customer base relationship marketing along with other marketing mix forms a strong base in the new marketing world. Further, the theory demonstrates that the role of relational marketing was to ensure that the marketers develop an approach and strategy that will generate customer retention [3], therefore, a shift from the traditional marketing strategies.

Service quality theory also indicated that customers make service quality decisions based on five variables; confirmation, sympathy, dependability, substance, and responsiveness. The theory states that service quality is a general assessment of a product's greatness or predominance that is comparable to satisfaction. It also further alludes that service quality is a mentality as satisfaction is seen as a monetary judgment that is made dependent on a particular service experience [7]. In this study, the evaluation was done to determine the customer relationship before purchase and the service quality that may impact the decisions to buy. Moreover, the customer should get the value of its money and the experience [7].

Finally, the customer satisfaction and behavioral theory were critical in the study as they indicated the techniques to employ in meeting the customer's satisfaction level by observing their behavior towards a product or a service [1]. According to the theory of customer satisfaction and behavior, satisfaction is an idea that cannot be wished away in the after-sale strategies notwithstanding the practical challenges in measuring and deciphering common ways to deal with its evaluation [8]. The most widely employed technique concerns the utilization of the general satisfaction reviews embraced like clockwork and intended to follow changes over the long run.

### 2.2 Empirical Literature

Past studies on the after-sale strategies were reviewed to establish the relationship with customer satisfaction. A study by [3] on the effect of complaints-compliment handling on the level of customer satisfaction indicated that proper handling of customer concerns was critical in developing a strong relationship between the customer and the brand. The complaints ought to have been viewed as positive criticisms, which must be taken seriously by an organization or management as it improves customer satisfaction. Disappointed

customers who whine have a more elevated degree of repeat purchase compared to the customer who keeps quiet [8];[10]. Disregarding the complaints or compliments by the customer may lead to dissatisfaction and loss of customer loyalty to the brand, which has significant ramifications to the survival of the company in the industry.

Repairing and Maintenance Practices play a critical role in customer satisfaction as indicated by [1]. The study indicates further that scheduled repairs and maintenance refer to activity intended to re-establish whether the machine/hardware/ plant is working adequately after the sale transaction. [1] also demonstrated in their study that scheduled maintenance covers assessment, change fix, substitution pre-decided from the past disappointments on design fix maintenance.

An empirical study by [6] on the effect of product or service deliveries on customer satisfaction revealed that reliable, safe, and timely delivery was central and significant, assuming all factors remained constant. The study demonstrated that generally, customers have high expectations of the safety, reliable and fast delivery of the product they order to purchase. Similarly, [4] supported [6] that timely and reliable delivery was a key parameter on the customer’s satisfaction level.

### **III. Research Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive assessment research design which was typical in providing answers to the questions of how, who, when, and where the phenomena under study occur. The study targeted a population of 153 top managers from the top 10 selected power diesel firms in Nairobi City County according to business volume. The firms were selected due to their position and strategic position in the contribution on the after-sale strategies in conducting their businesses. The study used a stratified random sampling technique to get a sample size of 30% as recommended by [11]. The study made use of primary data, which was collected using the semi-organized poll with both open-ended and closed-ended statements. The open-ended statements were used to ensure that more coordinated responses are obtained and the open needed statement aimed at obtaining additional information on the opinion of the respondents.

The pilot study was conducted to ensure that the data collection instrument was reliable and valid in obtaining the intended data that could explain the variables and meet the objectives of the study [11]. The validity of the data collection instrument was reviewed by the supervisor and experts in the area of marketing, which necessitated the modification of the constructs to fit the context of the study. However, the reliability of the data collection instrument was tested by the use of Cronbach Alpha to evaluate the internal consistency. The Cronbach Alpha of the pilot was 0.8. which was above the recommended coefficient of 0.7 and above. Therefore, the data collection instrument was found to be adequate to obtain accurate data.

The data collected was analyzed by the use of descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS version 24). Descriptive statistics included the percentages, mean and standard deviation while the inferential statistics involved multiple linear regression, analysis of variance, and correlation coefficient of the study variables. The study variables were tested at a 95% confidence level and the multivariate regression equation was employed to indicate the type of relationship that existed between the independent and dependent variables. The regression model was as follows:  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \alpha$

Where; Y is the dependent variable (customer satisfaction among selected firms in diesel power generators in Nairobi City County, Kenya),  $\beta_0$  is the regression coefficient,  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ ,  $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  are the slopes of the regression equation,  $X_1$  = quality of customer service,  $X_2$  = complaint-compliment handling,  $X_3$  = repairs-maintenance practices,  $X_4$  = product-service deliveries and  $\alpha$  = an error term.

### **IV. The result, Findings, and Discussion**

#### 4.1 General Information

Table 4.1 presented the results of the response rate of the study. The response rate was 80% of the respondents that represented 36 managers drawn from the selected diesel generator suppliers. This was adequate for the analysis and generalizability of the study results and findings.

**Table 4.1 Response Rate**

Response	Frequency	Percent
Returned	36	80
Unreturned	9	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Research Data (2020)**

4.2 Background Information

Table 4.2: Respondents' Age

Category	Frequency	Percent
20-30 years	6	16.7
30-40 years	10	27.7
40-50years	15	41.7
Above 50Years	5	13.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Research Data (2020)

Table 4.2 presented the results of respondents' age where the majority (41.7%) aged between 40-50 years, which indicated that the respondents have a wide view and responses to the statement and questions posed in the questionnaire.

Figure 4.1 Respondents' Education Level

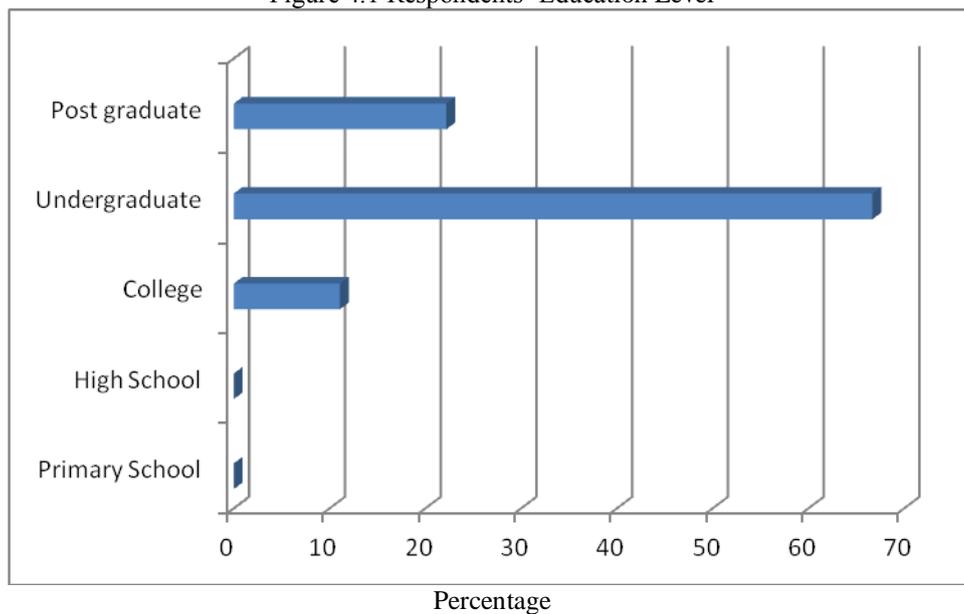


Figure 4.1 Represents the results of the respondents' education level, where the majority of the respondents were found to have the adequate educational background to enable them to read, understand and reply to the questionnaire adequately

Table 4.3: Respondents' Level of Experience

Category	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 years	10	22.2
5-10 years	12	26.7
11-15years	15	33.3
Over 15 years	8	17.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Research Data (2020)

Table 4.3 presented the results of the respondents' level of experience, which indicated that 33.3% had between 11 and 15 years of experience in the sector. This indicates that the respondents had well knowledge in the energy sectors that would give objective insights into the study findings to accurate results and conclusions.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

4.3.1 Quality of Customer Service

Table 4.4: Results of Quality of Customer Service

Statement	M	SD
Our staff have required knowledge and skills in customer service	4.4	0.161
Our staff respond to customer concerns in good time	3.5	0.785
Our customer service department is accessible 24 hours	3.0	0.826
Our customer service personnel are very approachable.	3.8	0.45
Our customer service personnel can offer any type of solution to a customer	3.9	0.706
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>0.59</b>

Source: Research Data (2020)

Table 4.4 presents the study findings on the effect of quality of customer service as an after-sale customer strategy in the selected firms in Nairobi City County. In regards to whether the staff had required knowledge and skills in customer service, the majority of the respondents agreed as shown by a high statement mean at 4.4 with a standard deviation of 0.16. The results indicated that employees' skills and knowledge in customer service play a greater role in ensuring that the customers get quality service. Further study findings indicated that in regards to whether the staff responds to the customer concerns in good time, the response was in agreement as indicated by a statement mean of 3.5 with a low standard deviation, which indicates that there were no significant variations in the responses. In regards to whether the customer service department was accessible 24 hours, the majority of the respondents agreed as depicted by a mean statement of 3.0 with a standard deviation of 0.826. The study results and findings also revealed that customer service employees needed to be approachable as indicated by a statement mean of 3.8 with a standard deviation of 0.45.

These study findings are following the findings in the study by [2] who led an examination in Taiwan to inspect the immediate impact of apparent service quality and saw reasonableness cost on customer satisfaction. The study findings demonstrated that a higher customer service quality positively affected customer satisfaction. Therefore, the study findings gave an affirmation that customer quality service significantly affects customer satisfaction.

#### 4.3.2 Complaint/ Compliment Handling

Table 4.5 Complaint /Compliment Handling

Statement	M	SD
Our staff possess good product knowledge	3.3	0.593
Our staff have good mannerisms when handling customer related issues	4.2	0.774
Our staff always offer relevant solutions to our clients	3.0	0.826
Our staff respond to queries swiftly	3.8	0.494
We have a laid down policy on handling customer complaints/compliments	3.6	0.672
Our customers are satisfied with our services	3.9	0.706
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>0.678</b>

Source: Research Data (2020)

Table 4.5 presents the results and findings of customer complaint and compliment handling strategy. Regarding whether the staff of the selected firms possessed good product knowledge, the findings indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement as depicted by a statement mean of 3.3 with a low standard deviation of 0.59. the study findings also indicated that staff of the selected firms had exhibited mannerism when handling the customer-related issues as shown by a statement mean of 4.2 and standard deviation of 0.77. The low standard deviation indicated that the responses were too close that no major variations in the response among the participants.

Regarding whether there was a swift response to customer concerns, results showed that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement as depicted by a high statement mean of 3.8 with a standard deviation of 0.49. The study findings further indicated that the selected firms had a laid down policy on how customers complaint and compliment in their organizations. This finding is depicted by the high statement mean of 3.6 and a standard deviation.

#### 4.3.3 Repairs/Maintenance Practices

Table 4.6 Repairs/Maintenance Practices

Statement	M	Std. Dev.
We have scheduled maintenance for all the generators that we sell.	3.5	0.655
Our maintenance department deals with preventive servicing of generators	3.9	0.706
Our maintenance department deals with corrective servicing of the diesel generators	3.7	0.797
We offer product warranty to our customers	4.2	0.715

We have service contracts with our customers	4.4	0.578
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>0.672</b>

Source: Research Data (2019)

Table 4.6 presents the study results on the repairs and maintenance practices on the customer satisfaction among the selected diesel power firms in Nairobi County, Kenya. The majority of the respondents agreed there was scheduled maintenance for their customers as evidenced by a mean of 3.5 with a low standard deviation of 0.66. The high mean and low standard deviation indicate that the respondents' answers were similar. Similarly, the statement means on whether the department of maintenance was carrying out preventive servicing of generators was 3.9 and the standard deviation was 0.71. In addition, the respondents' statement mean on corrective servicing of the diesel generators was 3.7 with a standard deviation of 0.80. This indicated that the selected firms were carrying out both preventive and corrective maintenance of generators for their customers. This was proven by a high statement mean which indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed that both corrective and preventative maintenance and servicing of the generators are done to their customers.

In addition, the study findings indicated that the selected firms that deal with diesel generators provide their customers with product warranty and offer service contracts to their customers to guarantee timely and quality repairs and maintenance of the generators. This was evidenced by a high mean on product warranty statement mean of 4.2 with a standard deviation of 0.72, and a statement means on servicing contracts at 4.4 with a standard deviation of 0.58. The low standard deviation indicated that there was no significant variation between the respondents' answers, indicating that the answers were similar across the selected firms in Nairobi City County.

#### 4.3.4 Product/Service Deliveries

Table 4.7 Product/ Service Deliveries

Statement	M	Std. Dev.
Our company always delivers customer orders at the agreed time	4.1	1.134
We deliver our products in good functional order and condition all the time	4.0	1.401
We always deliver to locations advised by the customers	4.2	0.767
We have a schedule of deliveries to be made.	3.5	1.127
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>0.963</b>

Source: Research Data (2019)

Table 4.7 presents the results of product or service deliveries to the customer. The results and finding on whether the selected firms deliver customers order within the agreed time shows that the firms delivered customers' orders timely as agreed. This was evidenced by a mean of 4.1 with a standard deviation of 1.13. The mean indicates that the majority of the respondents agreed that there was the timely delivery of products or services and the low standard deviation shows that there were no significant variances on the respondents' answers indicating that all answers were similar across the firms.

In regards to whether the firms delivered products in good functional order and conditions, the majority of the respondents agreed as indicated by a statement mean of 4.0 with a standard deviation of 1.4. Further, the respondents were requested to indicate whether the deliveries were made to the destination the customers' requests, which the majority of the respondents agreed as shown by a high mean of 4.2 with a low standard deviation of 0.77. The findings further indicated that the selected firms maintained delivery schedules every day so that to track the customer order deliveries, as shown by a mean of 3.5 and standard deviation of 1.13. These findings were similar to Liu et al. (2008) that indicated that deferred delivery of products or services disappoints customers. The study findings further concurred with [12] who concluded that timely delivery of services or products to customers had a great impact on customer satisfaction, which is also seen as offering quality service.

#### 4.3.5 Customer Satisfaction

Table 4.8 SME Performance

Statement	M	Std. Dev.
Our customers keep buying our products over and over again	4.5	0.515
Our company has a history of high customer retention	4.2	.715
Customer satisfaction has improved	3.7	0.797
Our sales volumes keep improving over time	3.7	0.719
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>0.740</b>

Source: Research Data (2019)

Table 4.8 presents the results and findings on customer satisfaction as a dependent variable. The customer satisfaction of the selected firms in diesel power generators in Nairobi City County, Kenya was high as demonstrated by the aggregate mean score of 4.8 with a standard deviation of 0.74. The majority of the respondents indicated that customers continued buying their products over and over again as demonstrated by a mean of 4.5 and a standard deviation of 0.52. These results show that the customers were satisfied with the company's products and services.

In regards to whether the companies had a history of high customer retention, the majority of the respondents agreed as revealed by a high mean score of 4.2 and standard deviation of 0.72. Similarly, the total mean score and standard deviation on whether the selected firms had an improved customer satisfaction overtime was 3.7 and 0.80 respectively. Finally, the study findings indicated that the sales volume of the selected firms keeps improving over time as demonstrated by a mean of 3.7 and standard deviation of 0.72, which shows that the majority of the respondents agreed and the low standard deviation indicated a low variation on the respondents' answers.

4.4 Regression Analysis  
Model Summary

Table 4.9 Results of Multiple Regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.909 <sup>a</sup>	.827	.753	.0730618

Source: Research Data (2019)

The model summary indicates that the study variables explained 82.7% of the customer satisfaction of the selected diesel power generation firms in Nairobi City County as demonstrated by the Adjusted R Square. Therefore, the remainder (17.3%) of the customer satisfaction of the selected diesel power generation firms in Nairobi could be explained by other factors that were not under this study

Analysis of Variance

Table 4.10 ANOVA Results

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.540	3	1.180	21.483	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1.154	97	.055		
	Total	4.694	100			

Source: Research Data (2019)

Table 4.10 presents the results of the Analysis of Variance of the independent and dependent variables of the study. The results indicated that the regression model was significant in determining the effects of after-sale strategies on the customer satisfaction of the selected diesel generation firms operating in Nairobi. This was demonstrated by the p-value (0.000) was less than the significance level (0.05) of the study. Since the p-value was under 0.05 it revealed that the relationship was critical at a 95% degree of importance; the model is significant in predicting the effect of after-sale strategies on customer satisfaction.

Coefficient of Determination

Table 4.9: Coefficient of Determination

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	0.540	.645			3.231	.001
Quality customer service	0.701	.082	0.135		4.421	.011
Complain handling	0.834	.214	0.051		3.715	.004
Repairs/maintenance practices	0.791	.234	0.001		6.687	0.02
Product/service deliveries	0.823	.341	0.025		4.011	0.01

a. Dependent Variable: SD

Table 4.9 presents the results of the coefficient of determination of the regression model of the study.

The established regression equation by the study was

$$Y = 0.540 + 0.701 X_1 + 0.834 X_2 + 0.791 X_3 + 0.823 X_4$$

Where Y = Satisfaction in selected diesel power generation firms in Nairobi, X1= Quality customer service, X2= Complain handling, X3= Repairs, and maintenance, X4= Product service deliveries

The results indicated that holding all study variables constant, customer satisfaction in the selected power generation firms in Nairobi City County would be 0.54. The quality of customer service, complaint/compliment handling, repairs/maintenance practices, and product/service deliveries had a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction in the selected power generation firms in Nairobi City County. The relationships ( $9 < 0.05$ ) are all significant with quality customer service ( $t=4.42$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), complaint/compliment handling ( $t=3.715$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), repairs/maintenance practices ( $t=6.687$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and the product service deliveries ( $t=4.011$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

## V. Conclusion

The study concludes that quality customer service was significant in predicting customer satisfaction in the selected diesel power generation firms in Nairobi. Quality customer service included having qualified in terms of knowledgeable and skilled staff in the customer service delivery. The power generation should employ adequate resources to facilitate staff capacity to respond to the customer's concerns promptly to boost customer satisfaction. The study also concludes that complaint handling is a major factor in deterring the level of customer satisfaction in the selected diesel power generation in Nairobi City County. The handling of complaints through discussing options for fixing the problem and doing follow-ups with the customers are major strategies to adequately resolve customer concerns and boost the customer satisfaction level. The study further concluded that repairs and maintenance practices together with providing a quality product or service deliveries such as promotion and service pricing are key predictors of customer satisfaction in selected diesel power generation firms in Nairobi City County. The major service and maintenance practices that are critical in driving customer satisfaction included timely delivery of products and services, adherence to the scheduled maintenance and servicing of the generators, and providing warranty and customer feedback.

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