

## **OUR's Mystery Shopping points to Utilities' customer service deficiencies**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2018 March 26):** The findings of a Mystery Shopping exercise conducted by the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) has revealed that none of the utility service providers are delivering an above average in-store customer experience and that there was a significant 30% customer satisfaction gap.

The survey was carried out across four (4) utility service providers: the Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS), the National Water Commission (NWC), Digicel and FLOW, by Market Research Services Limited. Among the objectives of the study were to ascertain the levels of customer satisfaction, the major areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with customer service and to determine the level of satisfaction with the customer service offered by the operators.

Utility companies were scored on the physical space in their stores, the quality of customer service and customer service representatives' knowledge of specific services that the company provided.

Telecommunications provider, FLOW, topped the overall scores with 71%, with JPS coming in at a close second with 70%. Digicel garnered a combined total of 69%, and NWC, 67%. JPS topped the utility companies on the issue of customer service, with a score of 80%, followed by NWC which scored 77%, FLOW 71% and Digicel 68%. JPS got top marks for its physical space with a score of 97%, followed by FLOW at 76%, Digicel 71% and NWC 64%.

Service above expectations and acknowledging customers upon entry were consistently featured among the weaknesses identified across nearly all service providers. The utility service providers were encouraged to place more emphasis on customer experience in terms of individual attention given to customers, as well as the acknowledgment customers receive upon entry into the retail spaces.

Service Providers were also urged to work extensively on consistency in how they addressed customers' access to service Terms & Conditions, Code of Practice and Customer Charter as well as information regarding their products, particularly telecoms products *Digi Play* and *Triple Play*. Attention to these areas are likely to have a positive impact on the scores obtained moving from average performances, the research noted.

The OUR intends to conduct annual mystery shopping exercises across all utility sectors and will share the findings with the public.

## **OUR's Mystery Shopping.../2**

### **BACKGROUND**

The mystery shopping exercise was conducted by Market Research Services Limited on behalf of the OUR, between 2017 July and August.

It was conducted to ascertain the levels of customer satisfaction provided by service providers in-store; to find out the major areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with customer service, and ascertain the means by which the areas of dissatisfaction can be improved; to determine the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with how the operators communicate with consumers; and to determine the level of satisfaction with the customer service offered by the operators.

Twenty eight (28) stores operated by the utility companies were visited a total of fifty six (56) times. Each store was visited twice – once during peak times, while the other visit was conducted during off-peak times.

A structured score card was used by both male and female mystery shoppers. This allowed for only “yes” or “no” answers to exclude opinions and potential biases. No single shopper was allowed to shop at the same branch or more than two (2) different branches.

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**Contact: Elizabeth Bennett Marsh – Public Education Specialist: 968-6053**