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Boosting Customer Satisfaction and Unleashing Inventory Mastery through the Dynamic PDCA Cycle at a Trendsetting Outlet in Malaysia: A Case Study of PKS Fashion Outlet

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate how PKS Fashion Outlet utilizes the PDCA methodology to enhance inventory management which eventually will boost customer satisfaction. As the department responsible for order-taking, customer feedback, and issue resolution over various channels, including phone and social media platforms, maintaining high customer satisfaction is crucial for PKS Fashion Outlet's primary business of selling fashion products. The research seeks to establish a continuous improvement process and enhance product quality by implementing the PDCA technique. Through a literature review, this study contrasts various approaches that have employed PDCA methods, demonstrating that PKS Fashion Outlet can improve service quality and inventory management through the Plan-Do-Act-Check process. The research provides recommendations and solutions to address the identified issues, leading to improved customer happiness and reduced complaints. It is important to note that this study focuses solely on customer service departments and enhancing customer satisfaction within PKS Fashion Outlet. The originality of this research lies in its application of the PDCA approach and fishbone analysis to identify the root causes of problems and their impact, contributing to the existing body of literature.

Keywords: *Plan-Do-Check-Action, Inventory management, Customer satisfaction, Malaysia.*

1. Introduction

The primary business activity of PKS Fashion Outlet, a private company, is to market items to consumers online. A cultural change resulted from the quick growth of information technology. Customers began making purchases online rather than in actual stores. By interacting with clients online, physical firms have been striving to obtain a competitive edge (Lee and Lin, 2005). One of PKS Fashion Outlet Sdn Bhd's duties is to offer the most outstanding products, including apparel and scarves (hijabs), through social media. The department's duties include interacting with consumers, gathering their comments and grievances, conducting inspections, and updating inventory. Because customer happiness directly encourages client loyalty, which is essential for sustaining long-term success and growth (Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003), businesses invest considerable resources to increase customer satisfaction (Durvasula et al., 2004). The determining factors were the customer's opinions about the goods, payment, delivery circumstances, services, risk, privacy, security, personalization, aesthetic appeal, navigation, entertainment, and enjoyment. This study shows a strong correlation between consumer happiness and the service quality provided by Internet shops. Customers' experiences and happiness are influenced by three metrics: dependability, attention, and usability (Ali et al., 2020; Rod et al., 2009). In conclusion, addressing problems with customer service and the time allotted for inventory management would enhance product quality based on customer input and guarantee that consumers are happy with the goods and services offered by PKS Fashion Outlet.

The widespread usage of the internet in recent years has led to a rapid increase in online shoppers and the number of online retailers as well as an increase in demand for selling products online, especially among women and focusing on women aged 30 and above since PKS Fashion Outlet's product is a scarf (hijab) suitable for older women. In addition, the increase in complaints also increased, which caused several issues to occur within PKS Fashion Outlet management. These problems have led to complaints from customers about their dissatisfaction with the products they purchase from PKS Fashion Outlet, including poor customer service management, poor customer service quality, and lengthy delays from PKS Fashion Outlet to restock

products that are getting thinner and thinner, keeping customers, dropships, and agents waiting when PKS Fashion Outlet wants to do so. Customer discontent leads to customer complaints (Bakar et al., 2016; Nimako & Mensah, 2013). Thus, these troubles produced a negative reputation for PKS Fashion Outlet and led to a rising number of unanswered complaints from the client. Therefore, the primary goal of this research is to apply the PDCA technique to PKS Fashion Outlet management to enhance inventory management which eventually will boost customer satisfaction of PKS Fashion Outlet.

2. Literature Review

The Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle is a quality management system used in manufacturing, services, offshore, project areas, and organizations. Dr. Edwards Deming, an American quality management expert, popularised the cycle in 1950 (Isniah et al., 2020). This strategy's four phases are repeated to regulate and enhance the management process, supply chain, or organizational practices (Isniah, Purba & Debora, 2020). The Planning, Conducting, Testing, and Implementation phases, commonly called the Deming Phase, mark the culmination of the PDCA process. Plan Do Check Action Cycle was created by Deming as a four-stage repeating issue resolution technique. Firstly, a "plan" to accomplish particular objectives consists of defining goals and following procedures. Secondly, "do" is for carrying out the initial step per their objectives. Next, "check" is that there ought to be two inspections throughout the project. First, inspections throughout project implementation make sure that the goals are being fulfilled. Second, a thorough evaluation of the project is conducted when it is finished to identify its accomplishments and shortcomings to make future improvements. Last but not least, "act", which is after prior errors have been found and fixed. The last stage is to take remedial action. The PDCA Cycle is repeated and may be redesigned to provide better outcomes when new rules are followed (Zailani et al., 2023).

Service quality is a gauge of how well a company meets the requirements and expectations of its customers. Any organization can expand if it can figure out how to raise the quality of its services and products (Zygiaris et al., 2022). Next, expand on the body of information on e-service quality in online buying to create new knowledge to better understand the most crucial aspects of e-service quality that affect customer pleasure, trust, and behavior (Rita et al., 2019). A cultural change resulted from the quick growth of information technology. Customers began making purchases online rather than in actual stores (Sivan et al., 2023). Providing and maintaining client happiness is the primary problem in online buying. A service-focused strategy is essential for surviving in a highly competitive online world. To encourage repeat business and client loyalty, a business must provide exceptional customer service (Zygiaris, et al. 2022). Besides that, services, goods, procedures, and human resources are strongly tied to service quality. Additionally, service quality aims to please clients by upholding their established standards and exceeding their expectations (Selvaraju et al., 2019).

Customer satisfaction is a consumer's assessment of his or her level of fulfillment in connection to decisions made about acquiring and using particular goods and services. Customer happiness and service quality are crucial business factors since a company's ability to expand depends heavily on its ability to retain clients through customer service and keep them happy (Edward and Sahadev, 2011). Managers who know what influences consumer satisfaction and their decision to shop online may assess their companies' performance and provide direction for future enhancements (Vasic et al., 2018). Because it allows businesses to get consumer feedback in a way that allows them to manage and improve their operations, customer happiness is crucial (Vasic et al., 2018). Also, the level of fulfillment for the client following the completion of the service delivery process is known as customer satisfaction (Zygiaris, Hameed, Alsubaie & Rehman, 2022).

Customer complaints are feedback identifying issues with one business's goods or services (Vatumalae et al., 2023). The way a business reacts to online complaints may make all the difference. Managers can employ strategies to lessen online complaints' adverse effects and result in positive outcomes (Stevens et al., 2018). These are chances for the company to enhance internal operations and client experiences (Jenkins, 2020). A customer complaint reveals a worker, product, or internal procedure problem. By hearing about these issues directly from consumers, the company can look into them and make improvements to stop future complaints (Steven Macdonald, 2023). To restore confidence, make amends, and/or prevent future incidents,

complainants demand dependable and trustworthy psychological calm-downs that explain what went wrong, why it happened, and what the provider will do or has already done (Awa et al., 2021).

To identify the root causes of consumer complaints, problems must be identified. According to the results, problems with customer services, employees, management, and system operations might be the root. The repair process is the following phase, where the improvement, implementation, and assessment outcome will be assessed. The primary idea of the PDCA technique will be explained by the framework using a flowchart (Vasic, et al., 2018).

3. Research Methodology

It appears that you've described the research approach and methodology for a study related to customer feedback, inventory management, and customer service improvement in a specific firm, PKS Fashion Outlet in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The methodology involves a qualitative research approach, particularly focusing on descriptive research and problem-solving techniques (Sundram et al., 2023a; Sundram et al., 2023b).

Research Approach: *Descriptive Research* - Descriptive research aims to describe and document the characteristics of a phenomenon or situation. In this study, you intend to describe how customers provide feedback, how inventory management affects customer service, and how the qualitative model problem-solving approach can enhance services.

Analysis Approach: Qualitative Analysis- The analysis of the gathered data will be qualitative. This means that instead of relying on statistical methods, the focus will be on understanding the underlying meanings, patterns, and themes in the data. This could involve techniques such as thematic analysis or content analysis.

Problem-Solving Technique: Qualitative Model Approach (PDCA Cycle) - The study will use a problem-solving technique based on the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. This iterative cycle involves planning a solution, implementing it, checking its effectiveness, and adjusting as needed to improve the process. This approach is often used for continuous improvement.

Data Gathering: Observation and Recording - The study will gather data through observation, likely involving direct interactions with customers, monitoring inventory levels, and recording feedback from customers. This is in the form of interviews with the members of the QCC (Quality Control Circle) team, surveys, or other methods of data collection. The plan outlined presents a structured approach to addressing the issues with customer complaints and service quality at PKS Fashion Outlet. This Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle is a common problem-solving framework that focuses on continuous improvement. Here's a breakdown of the steps you've outlined:

Plan:

a. Gather Information: Collect customer complaints and feedback to understand the specific issues they have faced with PKS Fashion Outlet's services.
b. Cause Analysis (Fishbone Diagram): Analyze the root causes of the identified problems using a fishbone (Ishikawa) diagram. This helps to identify the underlying factors contributing to poor service quality.
c. Issue Determination: Identify the most critical issue that needs to be addressed to improve the overall quality of PKS Fashion Outlet's services.
d. Action Plan: Develop a detailed plan of action that outlines the steps and strategies to address the identified issue effectively.

Do:

a. Remedial Action: Implement corrective measures, such as introducing a new protocol for staff-customer interactions to improve engagement and communication.
b. Enhance Management Systems: Establish new procedures within the management systems to prioritize and manage cases more efficiently as they are received.

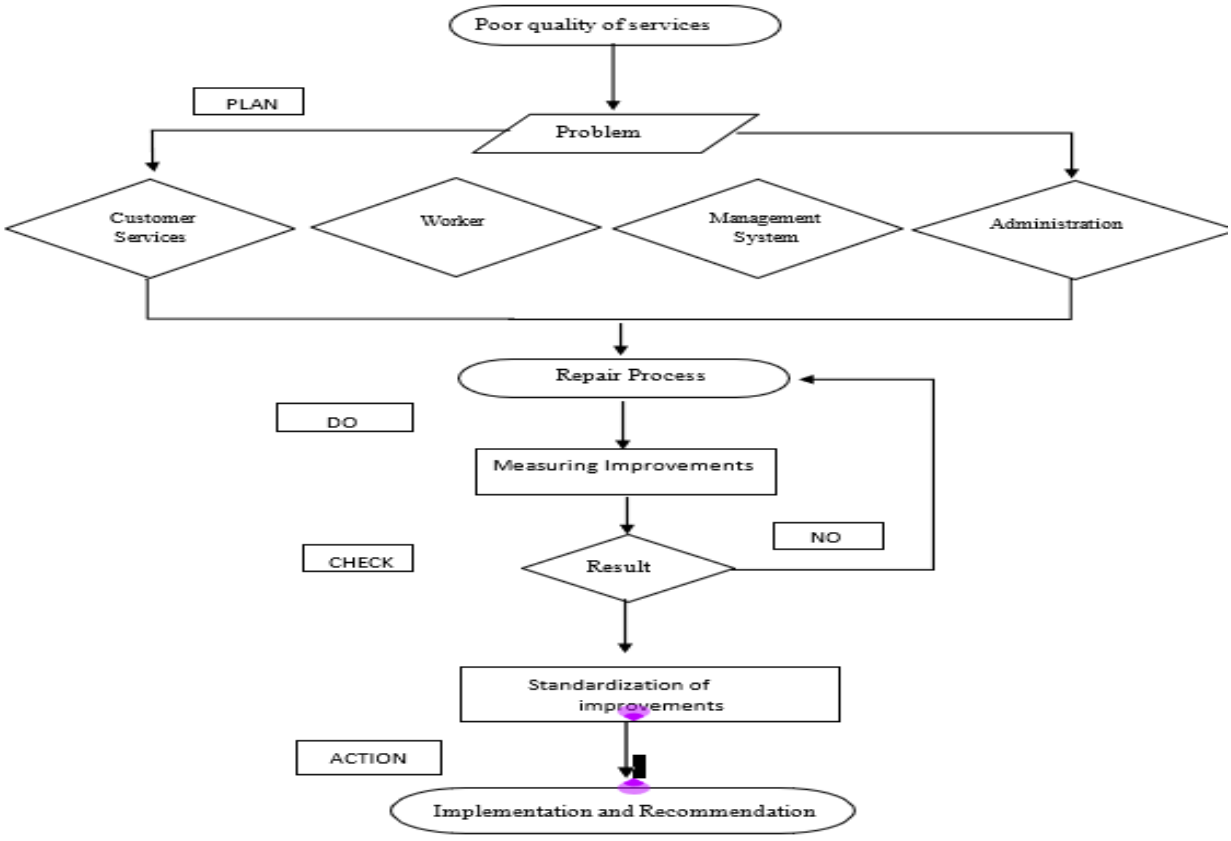
Check:

a. Review Response Times: Evaluate the time it takes to respond to each received case. This helps to understand the efficiency of the response process.
b. Set Deadlines: Establish specific deadlines for case resolution (e.g., 1-2 business days). This ensures that cases are addressed promptly.
c. Monitor Intended Times: Continuously track and monitor whether the intended response and completion times are being met for each situation.

Act:

a. Next Corrective Plan: Based on the information gathered during the "Check" phase, determine the next set of corrective actions that need to be taken.
b. Schedule Meetings: Schedule meetings to address any unresolved issues and discuss strategies for improvement.
c. This PDCA cycle is a dynamic process that encourages continuous refinement and enhancement of processes. By following this approach, PKS Fashion Outlet can identify areas of improvement, take targeted actions, monitor progress, and adjust as necessary. It's important to involve relevant stakeholders, including employees and management, in each phase to ensure effective implementation and collaboration.

Figure 1: Flowchart of Research Data Analysis



Based on the flowchart above, the main issue is poor customer service and stock management, problems from various aspects such as customer service, workers, management system and administration. Each aspect has its problems; the company needs strategic and effective planning to solve them. Next, the company needs to improve the process for each aspect and try and measure the level of strategic effectiveness that has been planned.

After that, we can check the results whether the plan is effective or not. If not, the company must repeat the

repair process until it is effective. Once the results are promising, standardization of improvement is vital to impose a degree of uniformity or consistency on specific procedures or methods within the chosen setting. Last but not least, implement the planned strategy and give recommendations to improve the quality of customer service and stock management.

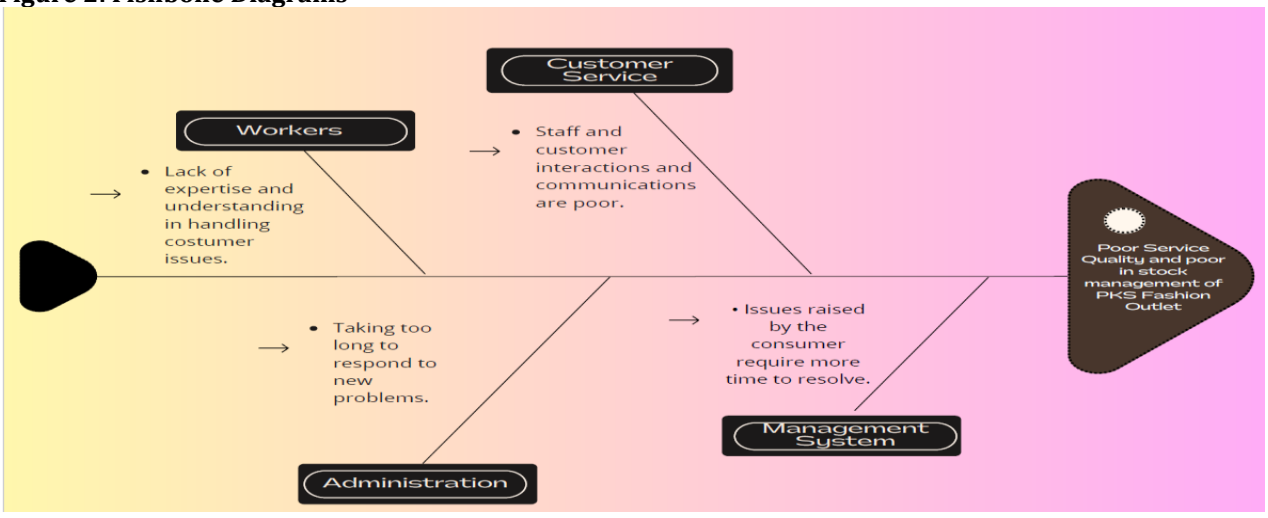
4. Analysis of Causes and Effects

The issues are picked based on the prioritization of the analysis's findings and the analysis results. The research focuses on four variables—customer services, employees, administrative, and management variables that directly affect the service offered by PKS Fashion Outlet. The following categories describe the variables that influence the services offered by PKS Fashion Outlet:

Customer Service: This term refers to the support and assistance provided to customers before, during and after their purchase of products or services. It involves addressing customer inquiries, concerns, and issues to ensure their satisfaction and maintain a positive relationship between the customer and the business.
Workers: In the context of customer service, "workers" typically refer to the frontline employees who interact with customers directly. These employees are responsible for assisting customers, answering their questions, resolving their issues, and ensuring a positive customer experience.
Administration: "Administration" in the customer service context involves the methods and processes used to manage various aspects of customer interactions. This includes handling customer complaints, addressing out-of-stock situations, and overall managing customer-related issues to ensure efficient resolution and customer satisfaction.
Management System: A "management system" refers to the structured procedures and processes that an organization uses to manage specific functions or areas. In the context of customer service, a management system could encompass the processes and steps followed to handle customer cases from the time they are reported or received until they are successfully resolved.

It's clear that you are highlighting the importance of effective customer service and issue resolution within a business. Establishing clear roles and processes for workers, administration, and management is crucial to providing high-quality customer service and maintaining customer satisfaction. An efficient management system ensures that customer issues are handled systematically and with a focus on resolving them promptly.

Figure 2: Fishbone Diagrams



The diagram you've provided illustrates the factors contributing to poor quality at PKS Fashion Outlet, particularly regarding consumer complaints. The factors you've identified are related to different aspects of the business that impact customer service and satisfaction. Let's break down each factor and its associated issues:
Customer Services Factor: This factor highlights issues stemming from the customer service department's

practices and interactions. Specifically:

- **Lack of Employee Reaction:** Employees are not adequately engaging with and addressing client complaints and inquiries. This lack of responsiveness can lead to frustrated customers who feel unheard and dissatisfied.

Workers Factor: This factor focuses on challenges related to the skills and performance of the workers or frontline staff:

- **Lack of Experience and Expertise:** Staff members lack the necessary experience and expertise to effectively address customer issues and complete their tasks. This lack of competence can hinder the resolution of customer problems.
- **Staff Underperformance:** Underperforming staff members negatively impact the overall level of customer service provided by the outlet.

Administration Factor: The administration factor addresses issues related to how the business manages and responds to customer complaints:

- **Slow Response to New Complaints:** The administration takes too long to respond when new complaints are received. This delayed response can lead to customer frustration and dissatisfaction.
- **Inadequate Action:** It's implied that even when action is taken; it might not be sufficient or effective in resolving customer issues.

Management Factor: This factor involves the time and effectiveness of management's involvement in addressing problems.

- **Extended Problem Resolution Time:** The time taken by PKS Fashion Outlet management to resolve problems is longer than what customers anticipate. Prolonged resolution times can lead to increased customer frustration and dissatisfaction.

5. Discussion and Recommendations

The corporate improvement plan must be implemented to raise the standards of employee performance, administration, management, and customer service. With this technique, PKS Fashion Outlet hopes to decrease customer complaints and raise customer happiness. The firm improvement strategy must be implemented to enhance PKS Fashion Outlet's stock management and service quality. With this technique, customers will be more satisfied with the services they receive and will be less likely to complain about them, and PKS Fashion Outlet will never run out of stock.

Guidelines for Customer Service Interaction: Customers are continually impacted by the actions of service organizations and those of other resources and players in the service environment. One such factor that affects the service is the presence of other clients. Every company's approach to client interaction depends on its industry, size, and objectives. However, all effective client interactions follow the same basic principles. Keeping the consumers engaged with the company's brand by showing them that the organization values them, being open and honest with them, and addressing any problems they may have (Rita et al., 2019). Customer services must have a suitable protocol and rules to refer to and follow. Client satisfaction would be favorably impacted by the quality of the services offered to the client (Tjahjaningsih, Maskur, Widyasari, & Kusuma, 2020).

Staff Members' Expertise and Abilities Are Lacking: The degree of applied manufacturing technologies (intelligent machines, gadgets and autonomous vehicles) necessitates the employment of highly skilled personnel and their capacity to impart knowledge, operate in a team environment, and be flexible (Saniuk et al., 2021). For a firm to succeed, training is essential. The training options will vary depending on the organization, but providing educational chances at work has several advantages. By ignoring the importance of workplace training, some risks will occur, such as unsafe workplace conditions, Workers who are unhappy and dissatisfied, a decrease in productivity and others (Awa et al., 2021). The expertise and abilities of the personnel will be enhanced via training, which will improve PKS Fashion Outlet's level of service. This is because training and development are the primary elements influencing organizational performance (Jenkins, 2020).

Poor Performance of Staff: Failure to fulfill the requirements of the function or fall short of the acceptable

standard is a frequent sign of poor performance or underperformance. Violation of workplace norms, regulations, or practices. Unacceptable conduct at the office. Disruptive or unfavorable activity that has an impact on co-workers. To improve the staff's performance is to provide them with weekly or monthly feedback so they understand what they should do to achieve their goals. Also, the management must evaluate its personnel annually and reward success with incentives. This will motivate the personnel to give their all to their work. This is because employees who perform well will benefit from the standard of customer service (Rita et al., 2019). Furthermore, without training, high-quality and consistent performance is entirely unachievable. For this reason, every organization includes a human resource development component to ensure that its employees can do their duties ((Hlengane & Bayat, 2013).

Pending Cases Due to Slow Response Time: The study shows that postponing the recovery process can increase patronage, customer happiness, and good word-of-mouth when an apology is extended and service criticism is minimal (Crisafulli & Singh, 2017; Sundram et al., 2016). Nobody is in charge of organizing the cases the customer submits. Due to the lack of a designated person coordinating the cases, many cases are now pending. To monitor, coordinate, escalate, and follow up with the outstanding cases, a person in charge of the cases is required. In Osifo's opinion, coordinated management will improve the company's long-term success (Osifo, 2013). As a result, it is crucial to designate a specialized individual to oversee the case management to enhance the quality of administration and, therefore, the services provided by PKS Fashion Outlet.

Too Long a Delay in Entering New Stock: For retailers to succeed, supply chain management (SCM) must be first-rate. IT is the backbone of a great SCM, just as SCM is the backbone of a merchant. The foundation of retail logistics begins with a deep comprehension of client needs. The availability of supplies on the shelves would be a crucial success factor in this case (Zailani et al., 2023). Having control over the inventory will enable the organization to establish a clear procedure for handling returns and damaged goods and stop the delivery of incorrect goods to clients. To avoid too long stock delays, implement stock control systems to handle problematic inventory, such as perishable goods, delicate machinery, or outdated supplies. If the manufacturer specifies it, do routine preventative maintenance on the machinery and equipment stock in storage. To track shelf life and reduce waste, catalog data on issue stock location, cost, and amount is available. In addition, when placing orders for high-demand items, consider lead times. Utilizing cycle counting data to define automated reorder points and average lead times, monitor and manage high-demand inventory and avoid stockouts (Jenkins, 2020; Vatumalae et al., 2022).

Conclusion: PKS Fashion Outlet must act to enhance customer happiness and service quality, as these are the company's primary problems, according to the discussion and analysis results. Customer service, employee, administration, and management system quality are four areas that need significant development. First, new policies and guidelines must be adopted to improve the caliber of customer care. The employees will adhere to the regulations by establishing new processes and guidelines, which will help them connect with customers more effectively and stop them from doing so based only on emotion. Furthermore, creating a system to evaluate the team's performance which sets the team up for success with performance indicators for customer service is essential. The only approach to choosing the appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) is establishing a solid framework to serve as the direction.

Second, staff development programs and performance reviews must be conducted to improve the workforce's quality. It could seem wise to cut back on training or stop it altogether to save time and money. However, forcing individuals to pick up new skills on the job is probably a bad idea. The fact is that training is necessary for people to do their jobs effectively. Therefore, ensure that the personnel receive enough training. By doing so, they can get the self-assurance they need to perform their duties, and the manager's or the staff's time will not be squandered later in responding to straightforward queries or rectifying mistakes made by new staff. Furthermore, the staff's motivation may be raised by conducting yearly evaluations and awarding incentives. Motivated employees tend to perform better and are more devoted to their jobs.

Thirdly, an incident management system needs to be put into place to improve management quality. The incident management procedure aims to preserve agreed-upon service quality levels while swiftly returning to regular service operation and minimizing the negative impact on business activities. Next, Establishing the

proper procedures and utilizing tools that enable organizations to proactively respond, address, and learn from every issue is essential to effective incident management. This approach can aid in escalating instances and helping to prioritize situations. Besides, handling stock also is essential to improve management quality. Stock management aims to lower the expenses of retaining stock while guaranteeing that it can fulfill consumer demand and that there is sufficient material for manufacturing. Businesses should always have a "safe" amount of goods on hand to quickly respond to unanticipated circumstances.

Lastly, PKS Fashion Outlet must finally designate a responsible individual to oversee and manage the case to improve administration quality. Administrative management employees establish a power structure, choose their primary duties, distribute labor across the many divisions of the organization, and allocate the various areas of responsibility. The escalation procedure of the case received from the client will be made more accessible, and the coordination of cases will move more smoothly with the presence of a case manager. The company will see the benefits of implementing administrative management, which can be an effective practice in the successful operation of a business.

To sum up, the PDCA method aims to assist PKS Fashion Outlet in boosting production and enhancing service quality. The PDCA cycle is a crucial tool for continuous improvement because it offers a structured and methodical approach to problem-solving and process improvement, encourages data-driven decision-making, supports efficient problem-solving, boosts efficiency and effectiveness, and encourages teamwork and collaboration. This approach will let PKS Fashion Outlet continue to offer the most significant services and sound management in the future.

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