

MEASUREMENT OF QUALITY IN SERVICE SECTOR-AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW

D.Sidhardha,
Research Scholar,
Acharya Nagarjuna University,Guntur

Abstract During the passage of past few decades, the need and significance of service quality is increasing in the service sector. With the increase in the competition in the service sector, service marketers left with no choice other than delivering quality in service or else otherwise it would cost their survival in the market place. The service quality has become thrust area for the managers, practitioners, scholars in the process of delivering value to the customer. The present paper is a precarious review of different models from literature which presents an overview and implications of service quality models derived in order to measure the service quality under different parameters. Also this paper aims in devising a new model to measure the quality in service sector. This paper would be helpful to measure the quality in service in view of the changing demand patterns, preferences of customers and to improve the quality of interactions between the service providers and customers.

Keywords- *Service, Quality, Customer, Expectations, Perceptions, Gap.*

I. Introduction

Generally consumers will make buying decisions basing on the quality what they or others perceive. Defining the quality of a tangible product is easy when compared with defining quality of an intangible product. Because of its specific characteristics of service, understanding the quality associated with the service product is always difficult. Service quality is an important element in defining the relationship between the customer and a marketer which in future forms the basis for customer retention.

Delivering service quality will cut down the advertising and promotion costs, reduces customer churn rate, increases profitability and inturn revenue and viability of a company in the market place will be increasing. Service quality can be measured from two facets. Quality can be measured through employee perspective i.e from the people who deliver the service to the customer. Similarly service quality can also be measured from consumer point of view. Majority of the service firms have focused in assessment of service quality from customer point of view.

II. Need for the study

Present study is an analytical study which tries to identify various factors that are influencing perceived service quality. Service quality is an abstract element. Services are the outcomes of the performances but not the outcomes of factory. Performance is a combination of people, process and physical evidence. Hence quality in service is heavily effected by these three elements. In fact quality cannot be measured precisely. It can be articulated to be delivered in a particular way. In the era of globalization, profitability is not something achieving volumes beyond targets. Toda profitability is maximization of customer satisfaction, his experience with the service product and the value he perceived.

III. Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to understand different models of service quality from the literature and to propose a new model to assess the service quality in service sector.

A service is something intangible which is delivered to the customer whereas the quality is some value delivered to the customer. A customer perceives the value out of his consumption with the service product. Then he compares the value with his expectations. Expectations are the preformed opinions about the service product. Here a fact must be understood that both perceptions and expectations are illusions. At the same time these illusions are formed in the minds of customers. If he thinks about a particular service provider positively, positive or more expectations are formed on the service and can be compared with the perceptions. If he has negative opinion on a particular service provider, his expectations will be less and so are the perceptions. Finally when service quality is evaluated, there is a chance of biasing as both expectations and perceptions are formed by the customer himself.

IV. Issues in delivering quality in service

Inseparability- Production and distribution of service cannot be separated unlike goods. Services are produced and consumed simultaneously. If a service marketer wants to establish quality in service, he has to define quality in the process in which service is delivered.

Heterogeneity- Services are purely heterogeneous. Similar service cannot be delivered in the same way, with same fashion to anyone. Because, it is people oriented. When both consumer and marketer are participating in the service delivery process, naturally some deviations will be taking place in service delivery.

Intangible- One of the critical factor of the service is its intangibility. Services cannot be touched. We can judge the quality of a service through merely by seeing the product and by touching it. But customers cannot touch or see the service since they are intangible. One can perceive the quality in service only by feeling it.

Perishability- Services are purely perishable. Once services are produced, they have to be consumed at that time itself. They cannot be stored unlike goods. Goods once manufactured can go for quality checks. But services whenever they are produced, must be delivered with quality.

Lack of accountability-Quality in service is severely effected by lack of accountability. When services are produced by the service provider, consumer needs to perceive. Hence, both the parties are responsible for the service. But if the service provider fails to deliver in a positive way or if the consumer cannot perceive the service in the way he needs to, will effect the quality in service.

V. Models of service quality

With the availability of information across the globe, when organizations rightly focusing on improving the process of service delivery, making customer as a part of service delivery, the need to be more accessible to the customers, being more competitive in the era of liberalization are the outcomes of synthesis of various service quality models available from the literature for the practitioners and service providers at large.

V.1 GAP model of service quality

Parasuraman et.al have developed the gaps model of service quality. In this model service quality is defined as the difference between expectations and perceptions of the customers. Gaps model explains service quality with the gaps such as Knowledge gap (the difference between what expects and management perception of expectations of customers), Design gap (the gap between service design and management perception of customer expectations), Communications gap (Difference between what marketer communicated and the service delivered), Delivery gap (The difference between service design and service delivery). If all these gaps are closed, which leads to closure of service quality gap.

V.2 Performance only model

This model suggests that the perceptions of the customers are only the determinants of service quality. Cronin and Taylor have proposed SERVPERF model which explains that service quality is an outcome of the attitude of the customers which has strong influence on perceptions of the customers. But the applicability of this model for all service delivery institutions is a limitation. This model reduces the job of measuring service quality to greater extent when compared with SERVQUAL model.

V.3 Attribute service quality model

Attribute service quality model was designed by Haywood-Farmer. According to this model different attributes contributing to service quality are divided into three groups namely Physical attributes and process group, people behavior and Professional judgment groups. This model emphasizes that too much attentiveness to any of these elements will lead to misappropriation of other elements.

V.4 Behavioral model of service quality

This model was proposed by Beddowes and others. According to this model the interpersonal behavior of the employees of the service provider with the customers plays an important role in service delivery. This model emphasizes that according to the customer expectations, service systems and service processes must be created. Controlling the customer expectations with right marketing mix is required. This model also argues that the service firms need to identify the reasons for service problems rather than exploring what those reasons are.

V.6 Service delivery model

Johnson has proposed this model. This is a process oriented service quality model. According to this model, the attributes causing service quality are dynamic in nature. During the process of service delivery, from one stage to another stage, expectations will be increasing. The experience at one stage will shape the expectations at another stage. According to this model, internal factors are mostly influencing the service quality of a firm. All the stages of service delivery are important since once stage of service process has influence over other stages.

V.7 IT alignment model

According to this model, information technology improves customer service and productivity in service sector. This model was proposed by Berkley and Gupta. According to this model information system strategies must be well

coordinated with the variables of service quality such as Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness. Service firms should understand the information requirements at every stage throughout the service delivery system and accordingly design service strategies.

V.8 Retail service quality model

Sweeny and others have proposed this model. This model has got two components. One is value delivery model and willingness to buy model. The value delivery model says that the quality associated with a service product will be compared with the price paid by the customer to get the service. Besides functional aspects and technical aspects associated with the service will also influence the value perceived by the customers. On the other hand, willingness to buy model says that the customer would be willing if additional functional and technical aspects are included in the service product, customer will be willing to buy the product.

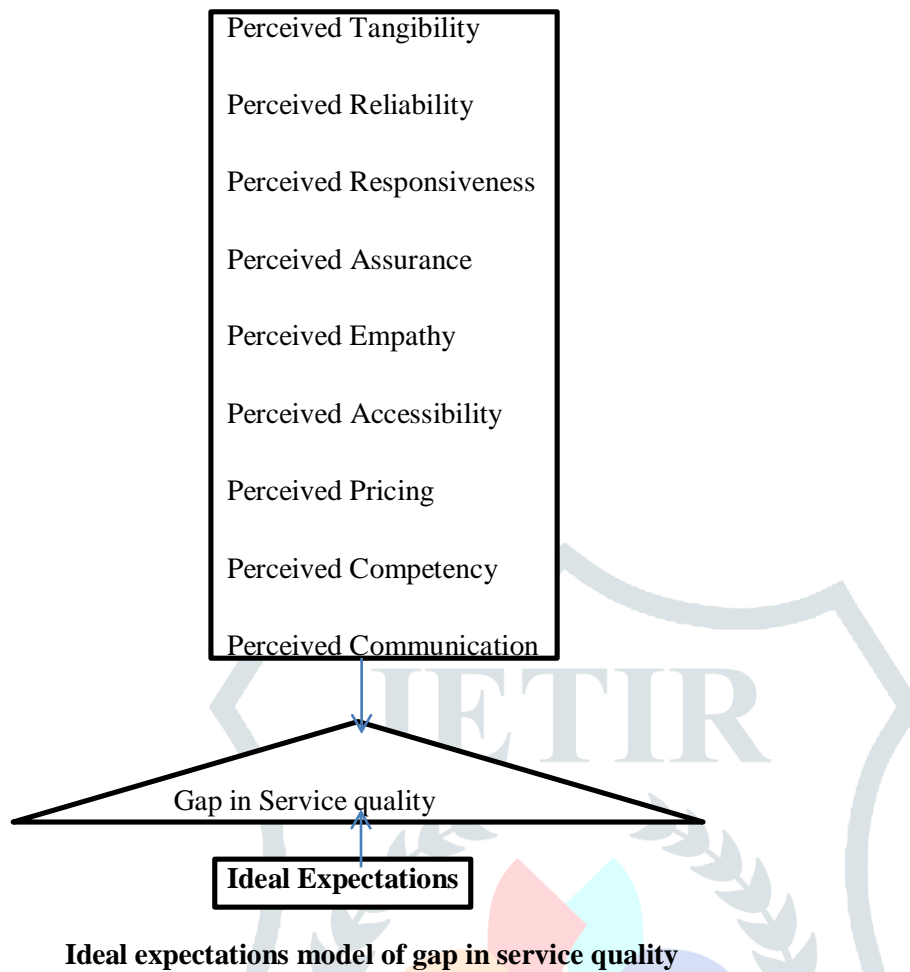
V.9 Internal service quality model

Frost and Kumar have developed this model basing on gaps model of service quality of Parasuraman. This model defined service quality in terms of frontline staff and supporting staff. Authors have claimed knowledge gap as the perception of supporting staff on the expectations of internal staff. Performance gap is the difference between service design (designed service with the perceptions of supporting staff on expectations of internal staff) and service delivered.

V.10 Internet banking model- To assess the service quality among the customers using internet banking, Broderick and others have defined a model with five elements which have direct influence on perceived service quality. This model emphasized that the level of participation of customer has greater influence on service quality. This model has focused on enhancing the service interface with increasing customer's role in service performance.

Proposed model of service quality-Ideal expectation model

A model with nine elements of service quality is being constructed basing on the model proposed by Parasuraman and Gronroos. In this model, ideal expectations of the customers are considered. There are different levels of expectations from worst possible expectations, minimum expectations, will expectations, should expectations and ideal expectations. The model believes that Ideal expectations are the maximum level of expectations. As customers expects maximum from any service provider, ideal expectations are considered as assumed expectations for any service attribute. Gap in service quality can be assessed by obtaining the difference between ideal expectations and customer perceptions. Along with the dimensions proposed by Parasuraman, four more dimensions such as Accessibility, pricing, Competency and communications will derive greater service quality were also considered.



Conclusion and recommendations

There is a significant change in the way how quality is supposed to be delivered to the customers in service sector. With the emergence of technology, the perceptions and expectations of the customers are changing. Ideally those service firms which could able to deliver the service the service in line with the changing requirements of the customers will survive in the present competitive scenario. In this paper an attempt is made to understand the service quality in the view of different models present in the literature. Some light is focused on the attributes used. Though new models also proposed, gaps model of service quality was popularly used and significantly applied in various fields of study. Accordingly in this study, an ideal expectations model of gap in service quality is proposed which considers ideal expectations of the customers from the expectations hierarchy with an assumption that any customer always expects best from any service provider. The resultant gap with the perceptions provides the final gap in service quality. This model may be used in the service industries like health care, Airlines, Trave, education where expectations of the customers are high in nature. This model can also be refined according to the situation and type of the industry.

References

1. Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L.(1988). SERVQUAL: a multiple item scale for measuring consumer perception of service quality, *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1):12-37.
2. Cronin, J.J. and Taylor, S.A. (1994), SERVPERF versus SERVQUAL: reconciling performance-based and perception-minus-expectations measurement of service quality, *Journal of Marketing*,58(1):125-31.

3. Haywood-Farmer J (1988) .A conceptual model of service quality. International Journal of Operations & Production Management, 8: 19-29.
4. Beddowes, P., Gulliford, S., Knight, M. and Saunders, I. (1988). Service Success! Who Is Getting There?, Operations Management Association, University of Nottingham, Nottingham.
5. Johnson, W.C. and Sirikit, A. (2002).Service quality in the Thai telecommunication industry: a tool for achieving a sustainable competitive advantage, Management Decision,40(7):693-701
6. Berkley, B.J. and Gupta, A. (1994).Improving service quality with information technology”, International Journal of Information Management,14:109-121.
7. Sweeney, J.C., Soutar, G.N. and Johnson, L.W. (1997). Retail service quality and perceived value, Journal of Consumer Services, 4(1):39-48.
8. Frost, F.A. and Kumar, M. (2000). INTSERVQUAL: an internal adaptation of the GAP model in a large service organization, Journal of Services Marketing,14(5):358-77.
9. Broderick, A.J. and Vachirapornpuk, S. (2002).Service quality in internet banking: the importance of customer role, Marketing Intelligence & Planning,20(6): 327-35.
10. Nitin Seth and S.G. Deshmukh.(2004).Service quality models-A review, International journal of quality and reliable management,22(9): 913-949.
11. Ankit Agarwal and Gulshan Kumar.(2016). Identifying the need of new service quality model in today’s scenario:A review of service quality models, Arabian Journal of Business and Management review,6(2).

