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## SERVICE QUALITY AND ITS DIMENSIONS

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### ABSTRACT

Service quality is an assessment of how well a delivered service conforms to the client's expectations. Service business operators often assess the service quality provided to their customers in order to improve their service, to quickly identify problems, and to better assess client satisfaction. The purpose of this paper is to gain basic knowledge of service quality models, explaining the different dimensions in Service quality.

**KEYWORDS:** Service, Quality, Inseparability, Realization, Intangibility.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The term Service Quality is an association of two different words; 'service' and quality. Service means "any activity or benefit that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything". Quality has come to be recognized as a strategic tool for attaining operational efficiency and better performance of business.

Service quality means the ability of a service provider to satisfy customer in an efficient manner through which he can better the performance of business. In the service sector too 'quality' is an important element for the success of business. It is because of the realization of its positive link with profits, increased market share, customer satisfaction. Several earlier studies and authors pointed out that quality concept in service is different

from the concept prevalent in the goods sector. The reasons for such a treatment are inherent features of services like intangibility, inseparability from the provider, heterogeneous etc. Hence there is a distinct frame work for quality explication and measurement.

### II. DEFINITION OF SERVICE QUALITY

The term 'Service quality' is harder to define and judge. Number of authors tried to define it and give definitions in different point of views.

Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong defined the term 'service quality' as it is the ability of a service firm to hang on to its customer. That is, in their opinion customer retention is the best measure of service quality.

Christian Gronroos suggested that the quality of service as perceived by the customer has

two dimensions - technical or outcome dimension and the function of process related dimension.

A. Parasuraman, Valarie A. Zeithaml and L. Berry defined service quality as "the delivery of excellent or superior service relative to customer expectation."

### III. MEASUREMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY

In the case of tangible goods, quality can be assessed by examining the goods. Quality control can be used to check specifications and reject defective goods. But service quality cannot be assessed in the same way as a tangible product due to particular feature of service such as, intangibility, in separability etc.

As in the case of goods, the service provider cannot undertake quality check before the service is finally delivered to the customer. In order to assess the service quality the customer judges the expected service quality against the perceived quality when they receive it. There are mainly two methods for measuring service quality viz.,

- Gap analysis Service
- performance measures

#### Gap analysis

Gap analysis model of service quality was developed by Parasuraman, A. et al. in the year 1985. The model indicated that customer perception of quality was influenced by a series of five distinct gaps. They are mentioned below.

Gap - 1 - Gap between customer expectation and Management perception. The reasons for this gap are lack of adequate market research and lack of upward communication. This gap can be narrowed by adopting adequate research programs to know customer needs and to improve the communication system. It can be measured by using the SERVQUAL scale and comparing the scores obtained from the management and customers.

Gap - 2 - Gap between Management perception and service quality specification. This gap exists in service firms because of the lack of whole hearted commitment of management to service quality, inadequate service leadership etc. It can be closed by standardizing service delivery process and setting proper organizational goals.

Gap - 3 - Gap between Service quality specification and service delivery. The third gap originates from the discrepancies in the actual service delivery, that is, the service providers or employees do not perform at the level expected by the management. It is because of the ineffective recruitment, lack of proper incentives and motivations etc. This gap can be eliminated by providing the employees with adequate support

system, better human resource management system etc.

Gap - 4 - Gap between Service delivery and external communication. The gap between service delivery and external communication occurs due to exaggerated promise or ineffective communication to the customer, which raise customer expectations. This can be narrowed by efficient and effective communication system.

Gap - 5 - Gap between expected quality and perceived quality. This gap exists because of the inequality in the service expectation of customer and his service perception. This can be overcome by identifying, quantifying and monitoring customer expectations and perceptions through the effective use of marketing and marketing research tools.

#### Service performance measures

An alternative to using gap theory methodology for measuring service quality is the service performance measures. The two types of performance measures can be used under this method.

#### Soft measures of service quality

Soft measures are those that cannot easily be observed and must be collected by talking to customers, employees or others.

1. Customer satisfaction surveys

Under this method individual customers or corporate customer may be asked to rate their specific and overall impression of service delivery. For this a questionnaire or interview schedule can be used. Besides this, focus group interviews and other market research techniques can be utilized for this purpose.

2. Internal performance analysis

In this method employee surveys are conducted to determine perception of the quality of service delivered to customers on specific dimensions. Also, feed back from quality circles, performance evaluation reports, customer retention levels etc., provide information to monitor quality of services.

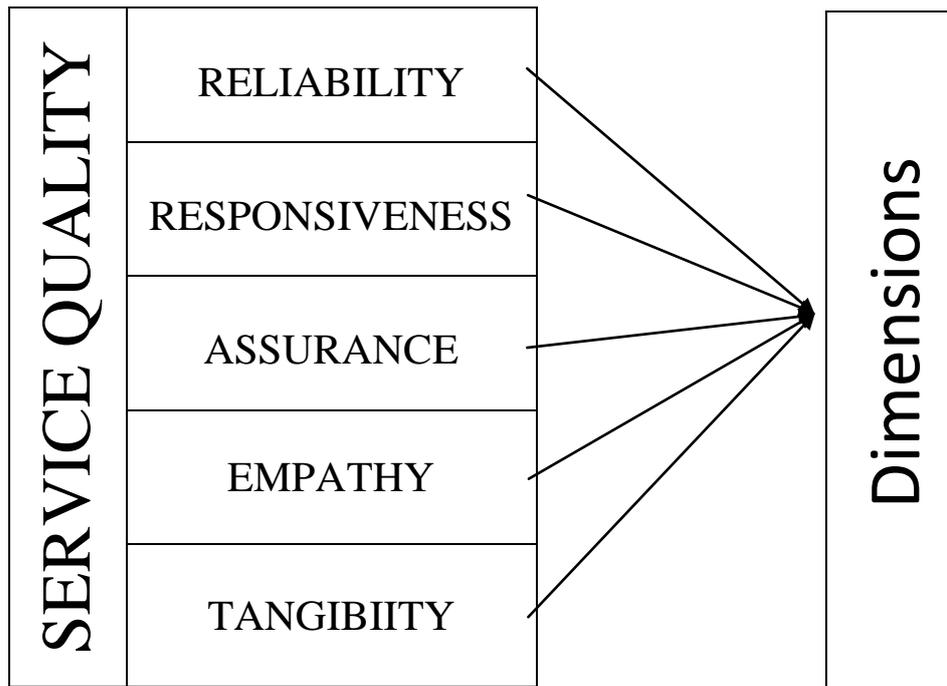
#### Hard measures of service quality

This method includes those characteristics and activities that can be counted, timed or measured through audits.

For Example - Such measures may include waiting time for the pass book to be updated by a bank, time taken to issue a demand draft, delay in clearing and crediting a cheque deposited by the customer etc.

### IV. DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY

The concept 'service quality' is not an independent term, means, its formation depends upon several factors related to service and service firms. These factors are



**DIMENSIONS**

**Reliability**

Reliability is defined as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. In broad sense reliability means, service firms' promises about delivery, service provisions, problem resolutions and pricing. Customers like to do business with those firms, who keep their promises. So it is an important element in the service quality perception by the customer and his loyalty. Hence the service firms need to be aware of customer expectation of reliability. In the case of banking services, the reliability dimension includes - regularity, attitude towards complaints, keep customers informed, consistency, procedures etc.

**Responsiveness**

Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service. This dimension focuses in the attitude and promptness in dealing with customer requests, questions, complaints and problems. It also focuses on punctuality, presence, professional commitment etc., of the employees or staff. It can be calculated on the length of time customers wait for assistance, answers to questions etc. The conditions of responsiveness can be improved by continuously view the process of service delivery and employees attitude towards requests of customers.

**Assurance**

The third dimension of service quality is the Assurance dimension. It can be defined as employee's knowledge, courtesy and the ability of the firm and its employees to inspire trust and confidence in their customers. This dimension is important in banking, insurance services because customers feel uncertain about their ability to

evaluate outcome. In some situations like insurance, stock broking services firms try to build trust and loyalty between key contact persons like insurance agents, brokers etc and individual customers. In banking services "personal banker" plays the role of key contact person. This dimension focuses on job knowledge and skill, accuracy, courtesy etc of employees and security ensured by the firm.

**Empathy**

Another dimension of service quality is the Empathy dimension. It is defined as the caring, individualized attention provides to the customers by their banks or service firms. This dimension try to convey the meaning through personalized or individualized services that customers are unique and special to the firm. The focus of this dimension is on variety of services that satisfies different needs of customers, individualized or personalized services etc. In this case the service providers need to know customers personal needs or wants and preferences.

**Tangibility**

The fifth dimension of service quality is the Tangibility which is defined as the appearance of physical facilities, equipments, communication materials and technology. All these provide enough hints to customers about the quality of service of the firm. Also, this dimension enhances the image of the firm. Hence tangibility dimension is very important to firms and they need to invest heavily in arranging physical facilities.

**V.CONCLUSON**

In the increasing competitive market, especially services market, the focus on service quality is essential to service firms for their survival and success. The management of service quality helps the management to maintain consistency in

service delivery and to meet changing customer expectations more efficiently and effectively .

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