

Brand Enhancement and Service Quality Dimensions: An Analysis of Service Quality Models

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Abstract Service quality as a concept has aroused considerable interest and debate in the research literature and service organizations are realizing the significance of customer-centered philosophies and are turning to quality management approaches to help managing their businesses. The critical factor of business performance is customers' satisfaction that leads to loyalty, repurchase intention, and brand advocacy. Firms need to understand the experience of customers and their perception of the service used to provide better services in order to attain the satisfaction of current customers and acquire new customers. For these purposes, the firms need a comprehensive model to measure the customers' perception on the service quality. These models must be able to make tangible and measurable perception of the customers about an intangible service which requires such a hard work and needs strong theoretical and empirical researches. The present paper focuses on discussing and comparing the prominent service quality models and highlighting the most influential elements of the service quality which may act as crucial factors in strategizing appropriate marketing mix.

Keywords: Service Quality, SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, INTSERVQUAL, GAP Model, Consumer Perception

I. INTRODUCTION

During the recent decades and especially in the 2000s market dominance has been changed to services. Service businesses increase and dominate the market; therefore scientists developed new marketing strategies suitable for the market and customers. Customers' information and knowledge have eased during the recent years because of the media development and easy access to the information and this increases the necessity for the development in marketing strategies. From the 80s to recent years the dominance in the market has changed from the product to services and the marketing strategies turn to customer base and relationship that are the keys for service industries which are dominant in the market today. Increasing the service industry dominance in the market and variety of services raise the necessity of service quality to attain the customers' satisfaction in the customer relationship-based marketing today. Service quality can help service providers to find their weaknesses and advantages at the same time with customers' needs and desires.

Because of the changing in market and the needs of marketing development in the service industries, scientists and practitioners feel the need for a suitable model to measure service quality in order to be active in the competition and get the competitive advantages in high competitive market. Therefore, researchers introduced and developed some models for measuring service quality. Service quality literature is based on product quality

literature (Brady & Cronin, 2001a) but scientists introduced and developed lots of other models for service quality that are specifically for service industry. Although there is no general agreement on one particular model for measuring service quality, many of them are useful for industries and businesses in service categories. Scholars and practitioners are unanimous about the phenomenal role of service quality in the performance of firm and its strong impact on customers' satisfaction, loyalty, and repurchase intention (Brady & Cronin, 2001b; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). High level service quality has strong and positive impacts on the firm outcomes such as increasing customers' loyalty, high market share, and improving the profitability (Brady & Cronin, 2001a). In order to improve customers' loyalty and profitability, the firms must reach the customers' satisfaction as the first step which is necessary for keeping customers and attaining good reputation in public. Customers' satisfaction comes from the experience of the customers in using the services. Customers' perception on the service provided may lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction hence making the role of quality service crucial in this process.

There is a strong effect of customers' satisfaction on the firm performance and the effect of service quality on customers' satisfaction and profitability. Therefore, marketing managers need a tool to identify their advantages and weaknesses to consider and implementing strategic planning for improving efficiency, profitability, and overall

performance via improvement of service quality. As a result, the interest of the researchers increased in the recent years in finding the best and comprehensive model for measuring customers' perception on the service quality.

Quality is defined as fitness for use in user-based approach and conformance to requirements in manufacturing-based approach. There are five main approaches that identify the definition of quality:

- (1) the transcendent approach of philosophy;
- (2) the product-based approach of economics;
- (3) the user-based approach of economics, marketing, and operations management;
- (4) the manufacturing-based and
- (5) value-based approaches of operation management.

According to the transcendent view, quality means "innate excellence." It is a mark of uncompromising standards and high achievement, universally recognizable, and recognized only through experience. In product-based approach, quality is viewed as "a precise and measurable variable" and differences in quality reflect differences in the quantity of some ingredient or attribute so higher quality can only be obtained at higher cost. In user-based approach, quality is compared with the satisfaction. The highest quality means the best satisfaction of consumers' preferences. In manufacturing-based approach, quality is defined as "making it right the first time." It is supply based and concerned with engineering and manufacturing practice. In value-based approach, quality is defined in terms of cost and price. It is perceived as a function of price.

II. SERVICE QUALITY MODELS

Sasser et al. (1978) defined the factors that raise the level of service quality such as security, consistency, attitude, completeness, condition, availability, and training of service providers. Besides this, physical quality, interactive quality, and corporate quality also affected the service quality level. Grönroos (1984) developed the first service quality model (Figure 1) and measured perceived service quality based on the test of qualitative methods. Technical quality, functional quality, and corporate image were used

in the model as the dimensions of service quality. Technical quality is about customer evaluations about the service. Functional quality which is more important variable for consumer perceptions and service differentiation than technical quality refers how consumers take the service. Technical quality is interested in what was delivered whereas functional quality is interested in how the service was delivered. Corporate image has a positive impact on customer perceptions.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) analyzed the dimensions of service quality and constituted a GAP model that provides an important framework for defining and measuring service quality (Saat, 1999). They developed the GAP Service Quality Model (Figure 2) through the findings from exploratory research that contains indepth and focus group interviews. GAP Service Quality Model showed the key insights gained through the executive interviews and focus group interviews about the service quality concept. The gaps revealed by the executive interviews were shown in the marketer side (GAP 1, GAP 2, GAP 3, GAP 4), and the GAP 5 which was formed by the focus group interviews was in the consumer side of the model. The GAP relations and names were shown below (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011): GAP 1: Customer expectation-management perceptions gap, The Knowledge Gap. GAP 2: Management perception-service quality specifications gap, The Policy Gap. GAP 3: Service quality specifications-service delivery gap, The Delivery Gap. GAP 4: Service delivery-external communications gap, The Communications Gap. GAP 5: Expected service-perceived service gap, The Service Quality Gap.

Lovelock (1994) added the sixth gap to the model as GAP 6: Service Delivery and Perceived Service, The Perceptions Gap. According to the responses of focus group participants, the judgments of high and low service quality depended on how consumers perceived the actual service performance in the context of what they expected, and GAP 5 showed the expected service-perceived service gap. After the gaps modeling, the determinants of service quality that consumers used when interpreting the quality were described. The ten service quality determinants and their descriptions have been identified below.

1. **RELIABILITY:** consistency of performance and dependability, accuracy in billing, keeping records correctly, performing the service right at the designated time.
2. **RESPONSIVENESS:** willingness or readiness of employees to provide service, timeliness of service such as mailing a transaction slip immediately, calling the customer back quickly, giving prompt service.
3. **COMPETENCE:** possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service, knowledge and skill of the contact and support personnel, research capability of the organization.
4. **ACCESS:** approachability and ease of contact, the service is easily accessible by telephone, waiting time to receive service is not extensive, convenient hours of operation, convenient location of service facility.
5. **COURTESY:** politeness, respect, consideration, friendliness of contact personnel, consideration for the consumer's property, clean and neat appearance of public contact personnel.
6. **COMMUNICATION:** keeping customers informed in language they can understand and listening to them, explaining the service itself and its cost, assuring the consumer that a problem will be handled.
7. **CREDIBILITY:** trustworthiness, believability, honesty, company reputation, having the customer's best interests at heart, personal characteristics of the contact personnel.
8. **SECURITY:** freedom from danger, risk, or doubt, physical safety, financial security, confidentiality.
9. **UNDERSTANDING/KNOWING THE CUSTOMER:** understanding customer needs, learning the customer's specific requirements, providing individualized attention, recognizing the regular customer.
10. **TANGIBLES:** physical evidence and representations of the service, other customers in service facility.

Source: Parasuraman et al., 1985.

Haywood-Farmer (1988) discussed a service quality model including three basic attributes as physical facilities, processes and procedures, people behavior and conviviality, and professional judgment. The service quality attributes of

Haywood-Farmer were associated to service quality determinants of Parasuraman et al. (1985). This model and its association with Parasuraman et al.'s Service Quality Determinants (1985) was shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Haywood-Farmer Service Quality Model

Haywood-Farmer Service Quality Attributes	Parasuraman et al.'s Service Quality Determinants
1. Physical facilities, processes and procedures: location, layout, size, decor, facility reliability, process flow and flexibility, capacity balance, control of flow, range of services	Tangibles
2. People behavior and conviviality: timeliness, speed, communication, warmth, friendliness, attitude, tone of voice, dress, neatness, politeness, anticipation, handling complaints, solving problems	Reliability, Responsiveness Access, Courtesy, Communication
3. Professional judgment: diagnosis, advice, guidance, innovation, honesty, confidentiality, discretion, knowledge, skill	Competence, Credibility, Security, Understanding consumer

Source: compiled from Ghobadian et al., 1994; Dotchin and Oakland, 1994.

The models mentioned above focused on the qualitative research more than quantitative research which is empirically and psychometrically tested. Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed SERVQUAL which is an advanced model for measuring service quality. In SERVQUAL model (Table 3), there are 5 dimensions and 22 items

presented in seven-point Likert scale. They measured especially functional service quality through empirical studies in banking, credit card, repair and maintenance, and long-distance telephone services.

Table 3: SERVQUAL

Dimensions	Items
Tangibles: physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel	1. should have up-to-date equipment
	2. physical facilities should be visually appealing
	3. employees should be well dressed and appear neat
	4. appearance of physical facilities should be in keeping with the type of services
Reliability: to perform the promised service dependably and accurately	5. should do things by the time they promise
	6. when customers have problems, they should be sympathetic and reassuring
	7. should be dependable
	8. should provide their services at the time they promise
Responsiveness: to help customers and provide prompt service	9. should keep accurate records
	10. should not be expected to tell customers when services will be performed*
	11. not realistic for customers to expect prompt service*
Assurance: courtesy knowledge, ability of employees to inspire trust and confidence	12. employees do not always have to be willing to help customers*
	13. is OK if they are too busy to respond to requests promptly*
	14. customers should be able to trust employees
	15. customers should feel safe in their transactions with these stores' employees
Empathy: caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers	16. the employees should be polite
	17. employees should get adequate support to do their jobs well
	18. company should not be expected to give customers individual attention*
	19. employees cannot be expected to give customers personal attention*
	20. unrealistic to expect employees to know what the needs of their customers are*
	21. unrealistic for them to have customers' best interests at heart*
	22. should not be expected to have operating hours convenient to all customers*

* reverse coded

Source: compiled from Parasuraman et al., 1988; Finn and Lamb, 1991.

Service quality can be measured by the performance-based SERVPERF scale as well as the gap-based SERVQUAL scale. Cronin and Taylor (1992) developed SERVPERF which is a performance-only model for measuring service quality with empirical studies in banking, pest control, dry cleaning, and fast food sectors. They have developed a service quality scale in respect to the dimensions of expectation (22 items-same as SERVQUAL), performance (22 items-same as SERVQUAL), importance (22 items-same as SERVQUAL), future purchase behavior (1 item), overall quality (1 item), and satisfaction (1 item) which were measured by seven-point semantic differential scale. This study showed that service quality was measured as an attitude, the marketing literature supported the performance-based measures, and the SERVPERF explained more of the variation in service quality than SERVQUAL. SERVQUAL had a good fit in banking and fast food sectors whereas SERVPERF had an excellent fit in all four industries-banking, pest control, dry cleaning, and fast food. Brady et al. (2002) mentioned that SERVPERF was the most superior model among all service quality models and they performed a replication and an extension of SERVPERF and supported the results of Cronin and Taylor (1992) in different sectors such as spectator sports, entertainment, health care, long-distance

carriers, and fast food. Stafford et al. (2011) assessed the fit and stability of service quality models, and emphasized that service quality can be measured using both expectations and perceptions (SERVQUAL) or perceptions alone (SERVPERF).

Rust and Oliver (1994) proposed a three-dimensional non-tested model that included service product, service delivery, and service environment. The Service Quality Ring showed ten lessons that improve the service quality (Berry et al., 1994). These lessons are listening, reliability, basic service, service design, recovery, surprising customers, fair play, teamwork, employee research, and servant leadership. These factors should be developed by service organizations to improve the service quality. Retailers offer a mix of goods and services rather than pure service (Berry, 1986). Since retail stores offer products and services together, measuring service quality in retailers requires different models. Dabholkar et al. (1996) developed empirically validated multilevel model called Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) that has 5 dimensions, 6 subdimensions, and 28 items. The scale was viewed as a general model to measure service quality of retailers such as department and specialty stores. The details of the scale and the comparison of RSQS and SERVQUAL were shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Retail Service Quality Scale

Dimensions	Subdimensions	Items	SERVQUAL Dimensions
1. Physical aspects	1. Appearance	1-3, 4	Tangibles, NA
	2. Convenience	5-6	NA
2. Reliability	3. Promises	7-8	Reliability
	4. Doing it right	9,10,11	Reliability, NA, Reliability
3. Personal interaction	5. Inspiring confidence	12-14	Assurance
	6. Courteousness	15-17,18,19,20	Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance, NA
		21,22,23	NA, Reliability, NA
4. Problem solving			
5. Policy		24-25, 26, 27-28	NA, Empathy, NA

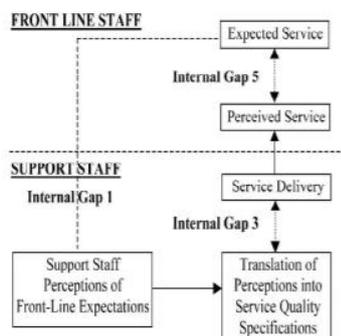
NA = Not Available in SERVQUAL Model
Source: Dabholkar et al., 1996.

Philip and Hazlett (1997) proposed a hierarchical structure model called P-CP for measuring service quality in service organizations. They adopted the scale of Webster and Hung (1994) one-to-five point scale from -2 to 2 and associated P-C-P model with SERVQUAL. The model was based on pivotal, core, and peripheral attributes. Pivotal attributes which were the most important attributes that affect service quality were seen as end product or output, whereas; core and peripheral attributes were seen as inputs and processes. These attributes were shown in a triangle. Pivotal attributes were at the top, core attributes were at the second stage, and peripheral attributes were at the bottom side of the triangle. The degree of importance decreased from top to bottom of triangle. Frost and Kumar (2000) developed an internal service quality model called INTSERVQUAL (Figure 3) based on the adaptation of the GAP Model (Parasuraman et al., 1985) and the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The model measures the service quality of internal customers such as front-line staff and support staff in airline industry. As a result of the study, it was found that

internal service quality was affected by responsiveness mostly, however; reliability was found as the most important influencer in SERVQUAL.

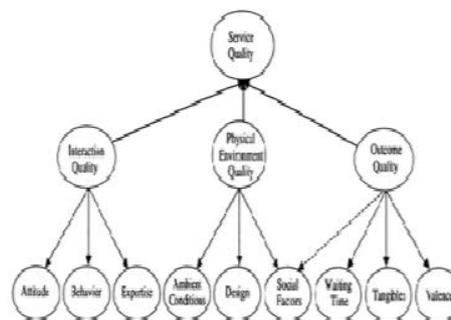
Brady and Cronin (2001) developed a model for measuring service quality (Figure 4). According to the model; interaction quality that was formed by attitude, behavior, and expertise; physical service environment quality that was constituted by ambient conditions, design, and social factors; and outcome quality that was formed by waiting time, tangibles, and valence affect service quality. They used a seven-point Likert scale from to measure the consumers' attitudes towards the items under the dimensions. Martinez Caro and Martinez Garcia (2007) used this model in their empirical research for measuring perceived service quality in urgent transport service industry and they emphasized this hierarchical conceptualized and multidimensional model was a combining of Rust and Oliver model (1994) and Dabholkar et al.'s hierarchical RSQS model (1996).

Figure 3: Internal Service Quality Model



Source: Frost and Kumar, 2000.

Figure 4: Brady and Cronin Service Quality Model



Source: Brady and Cronin, 2001.

Service quality models were analyzed in four groups (Table 5). The first group was formed by Grönroos (1984) and Philip and Hazlett (1997) models. They determined the service quality dimensions according to the classifying the services such as technical or functional services, and pivotal attributes having primary importance that affect

quality, core attributes having secondary importance, and peripheral attributes having significant tertiary. Since the first group did not clearly reveal the dimensions of service quality, it was eliminated from the other parts of the study. The second group represented the SERVQUAL model. Since Table 2 above showed the relationships

among the dimensions of Haywood-Farmer Service Quality Attributes (1988) and Parasuraman et al.'s GAP Model (1985), Haywood-Farmer's model was included to the second group. In 1988, SERVQUAL model summarized all

these dimensions in five dimensions such as Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. SERVPERF and INTSERVQUAL models have used the same dimensions of SERVQUAL.

Table 5: Dimensions of Service Quality Models

Study	Model	Dimension
Grönroos, 1984	Service Quality Model	Technical quality, Functional quality, corporate image.
Philip & Hazlett, 1997	PCP Model	Pivotal, Core, Peripheral attributes
Parasuraman et al., 1985	GAP Model	Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, Access, Courtesy, Communication, Credibility, Security, Understanding/ Knowing the Customer, Tangibles
Haywood-Farmer, 1988	Service Quality Attributes	Physical facilities, processes and procedures, People behavior and conviviality, Professional judgment
Parasuraman et al., 1988	SERVQUAL	Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy
Cronin & Taylor, 1992	SERVPERF	Same as SERVQUAL but with performance only statements
Frost & Kumar, 2000	INTSERVQUAL	Reliability, Tangibles, Assurance, Responsiveness, Empathy (SERVQUAL)
Dabholkar et al., 1996	RSQS	Physical aspects, Reliability, Personal interaction, Problem solving, Policy
Brady & Cronin, 2001	Service Quality Model	Personal interaction quality, Physical service environment quality, Outcome quality

The third group consisted of Retail Service Quality Scale's dimensions which can be used for measuring department and specialty stores' service quality. It showed the service

quality model for retail industry had another five dimensions such as Physical aspects, Reliability, Personal interaction, Problem solving, and Policy.

Table 6: Service Quality Dimensions and Services Marketing Mix

	Physical Environment	People	Process
Group 2: SERVQUAL Dimensions	Tangibles	Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy	Reliability
Group 3: RSQS Dimensions	Physical Aspects	Personal interaction, Policy	Reliability, Problem solving
Group 4: Brady & Cronin Service Quality Model Dimensions	Physical service environment quality	Personal interaction quality	Outcome quality

The fourth group was comprised of Brady and Cronin Service Quality Model (2001). They developed SERVPERF dimensions and revealed three main service quality dimensions such as Personal interaction quality, Physical service environment quality, and Outcome quality. The last three groups were attained from different service quality models such as SERVQUAL, RSQS, and Brady and Cronin service quality model. The dimensions of these models were classified according to the three elements of services marketing mix (7P) such as physical environment, people, and process (Table 6).

People: Interactions between customers, service providers, and also other customers. This element strongly influences customer perceptions of service quality. Process: How firm delivers services. According to the exploratory findings of this study; tangibles, physical aspects, and physical service environment were related to the Physical Environment element. Responsiveness, assurance, empathy, personal interaction, and policy were associated to the People element. Reliability, problem solving, outcome quality were related to Process element.

III. CONCLUSION

Measuring the quality of service effectively requires understanding the nature of services. Services are distinguished from goods due to their natures and characteristics. Service providers should pay attention to marketing tools to develop services offered and increase the quality of services. In order to manage services provided, practitioners need to pay attention on services marketing mix. In this study, it was found out that to gain the optimal service quality that customers expect, practitioners should increase employee satisfaction and enhance interactions

between employees and customers (People element), design physical environment tools according to the target market customer expectations (Physical element), manage the process in pre-sale, service encounter, and after-sale stages (Process element).

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