Endowing Service Quality – A Critical Analysis of Public Sector Banks in India

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Abstract

Consumer behaviour has always been an interesting subject for marketers. With the constant increase of markets, banking sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in India. This study examines the satisfaction level of consumers of major nationalized banks in India and services provided by them. It also provides a functional comparison of the two different approaches in terms of SERVQUAL model. The study also analyzes the relationship between deliverance of services and actual customer expectations with the help of Factor Analysis and Mann - Whitney U-Test. The findings of the study indicate that service quality is a significant determinant of customer satisfaction in Indian banking industry irrespective of public sector banks. This study provides important insights to banks in redefining their corporate image to one that is customer-focused and driven by service quality. After analysis the findings of the study also suggest intrinsic and extrinsic cues of consumers from various cross sections differ in evaluating a bank's performance and expectations of the end users.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Service Quality, Public Sector Banks

Introduction

In the milieu of Service Quality, a significant issue in the current decade has arisen due to the unique quality gap between expectation of customers and performance of organization. Analysis about gap model of Service Performance (SERVPERF) is based on delivering quality banking services in Indian market. The intangibility dimensions of services are simultaneously associated with product features and services of banks (Gronroos C, 1984). Financial liberalization has led to application of concentrated viable pressure in banking industry due to structural and technological changes. Retail banking is directly unswerving its strategy for enhancing service quality by capturing new markets like M.P., providing zero balance facility, simplified account opening procedure, etc. has been reviewed by S. Arun Kumar (2010).

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Indubitably owing to the belief that delivery of higher service quality is a must for attaining behavioural outcomes, recent years have witnessed a flurry of changes in service quality which have made banks like State Bank of India, Union Bank of India, etc to provide benchmarking in few services like cheque clearance, ATM facility, etc. Apart from this, the banks should work on service quality from bottom line by retention of valuable customers with the improvement in speed of services, reducing time for monetary operations, having attentive, conversant and resourceful employees, offering convenient or more branch locations and creating a well designed as well as navigable website (Triplett Ted, 2009). As per Parasuraman A (1990) service quality gap arises on account of difference between Expected Services (ES) and Perceived Services (PS) leading to customer assessment of service quality.

Objectives of the Study

The study was undertaken with following objectives :

1. To divulge the dimensions of service quality.

2. To study the direct and indirect effects of service quality on customer satisfaction for public sector banks.
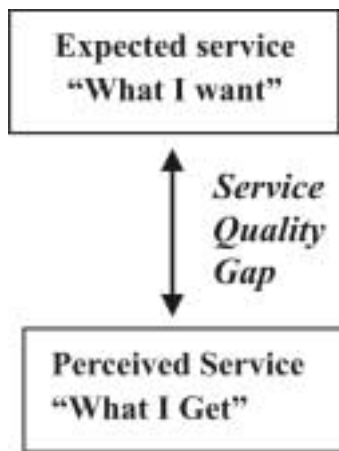
Figure 1: Service Quality Gap

3. To offer suggestions for improvement of service quality in public sector banks based on the analytical results of the current study.

Conceptual Framework and Review of Related Literature

Service providing organizations have in their possession kind of scrap heap that is why a customer does not come back. Being a service provider they should start measuring and reducing it, otherwise they would have to bear it as a high cost scrap. For that reason organizations should strive for "zero defections" because customers can be served profitably as suggested by Reichheld, F and W. Earl Sasser, Jr. (1990). Although State Bank of India (SBI) is the largest public sector bank of India, fully computerized since 1990, but at the same time they were losing their market share due to lack of high technological and more modern central core processing systems. SBI customized its services by taking the support of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) as a consequence to regain its losing market share in the Indian market. Through proper support of TCS, SBI achieved its goal of contributing its full range of products and services in all its branches and customers with the help of availability of banking services in more than 14,600 branches and nearly 10,000 ATM's. But due to cut throat competition in banking industry, the private banks are giving a tough time to public banks, which is attributable to the lack of enough service quality in market. Commencement about service quality was based on Japanese philosophy; according to which

quality is based on zero defects and doing it right the first time as suggested by Crosby, Philip B. (1979). The quality concept was followed by Gravin (1983), with the thought of quality as "conformance to requirements". As per Gronroos (1978), direction is required in service quality when; service provider knows how it will (service) be evaluated by consumer, according to that being an improver they will be able to influence its evaluation (Lewis and Booms, 1983).

For conceptualization and measurement of service quality, Parasuraman, Zeithamal and Berry (1985) studied 22 items of service. According to authors, service quality can be measured by feedback on how well the level of service delivered matches with customer expectation (Lewis and Booms, 1983). Apart from measuring service quality, Gronroos (1978) has developed model in context of comparison of services with the expectation and perception of services that they receive in the form of evaluative service quality.

Study followed that satisfaction / dissatisfaction got revealed in confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations of customers. It was expanded by Sasser, Olsen and Wycloff (1978) who discussed three different dimensions of service performance levels namely – facility, material and personnel. These are involved in the manner in which services are delivered. Gronroos (1978) has postulated two types of services quality – technical service quality and functional service quality. Technical service quality includes services actually received by customers and functional quality involves the manner in which the services are

delivered. Cronin (1992) has focused on satisfaction which emerges to have a stronger and more dependable effect on purchase intention than service quality. This is justified as public sector banks strive to insist on overall customer satisfaction program in comparison to strategy focusing solely on service quality. Customer service satisfaction is determined using items like interest, enjoyment, surprise, wise choice and doing the right thing. Customer satisfaction has been substantial to affect on both loyalty and repurchase intention for a variety of products (Bitner, 1990). It is argued that satisfaction in service encounter impacts valuation of services quality and subsequent loyalty and switching behavior. Reichheld and Sesser (1990) have enlightened that consequently small reduction in customer defection rates can produce significant improvement in profitability. These improvements arise as a consequence of both cost saving and additional revenue generation. Therefore the existing link between retention and profitability can be derived from a simple cost benefit equation stating that the cost of customer acquisition is generally higher than cost of retention.

Research Methodology

Hypotheses

As per the prior discussion, the study accesses in detail the effects of endowing customer satisfaction in terms of service quality delivered to their valuable consumers. The study is based on the difference in the expectation and performance of public sector banks in Indian market. Satisfaction reveals to confirmation or disconfirmation in the expectations of customers. There may be a number of underlying reasons which may impact on valuation of services by consumers, specifically if we examine the effect of quality on customer retention in banking industry. According to the conceptual framework discussed previously, it can be concluded that service quality leads to customer retention. However, effective service quality leads to both customer acquisition and retention. Overall respondents have been categorized in gender, occupation, age and bank wise. Following hypotheses stem from the question areas that are based on the earlier research findings as:

H_{01}: There is no significant effect of overall service quality on customer satisfaction.

H_{a1}: There is a positive significant effect of overall service quality on customer satisfaction.

H_{02}: There is no significant contribution of service quality towards customer's perceptions.

H_{a2}: There is a significant contribution of service quality towards customer's perceptions.

H_{03}: There is no significant contribution of service quality attributes rating given by customers from different occupation groups

H_{a3}: There is a significant contribution of service quality attributes rating given by customers from different occupation groups

Satisfied verses Non–Satisfied Customers

Satisfaction is based on the consumer's continual interaction with the service facility. Results of the pilot study reveal that the average customer works with preconceived notion of quality which needs to be improved for customer retention.

Questionnaire Development

The survey instrument was self-administered consisting of a screening question i.e. "Deals with parameters of quality in relation to customer satisfaction" This question helped to identify and analyze the customer perception verses their expectations about quality. The target group consisted of customers of public sector banks. The research developed service quality criteria for customers of public sector banks and reflected the image of banks in the eyes of an average customer. Finally all information was obtained by 27 item index for service quality and service performance index which was developed by researchers keeping in view the past studies on SERVQUAL and SERVPERF model. Questionnaire responses were collected from businessman, college going students, professors and professionals from various industry availing services of public sector banks.

Reliability and Validity

The study was aimed at understanding the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction, acquisition and retention in case of public sector banks. For this purpose, 522 respondents were selected from Indore,

Bhopal, Gwalior (M.P. region), Agra, Allahabad (U.P. region) and Ranchi (Jharkhand region). The respondents were screened as customers who met the following criterions:

- The respondents were randomly approached in the area where branches of public sector banks were located and asked if they had maintained account with any of the four banks under study [State Bank of India (SBI), Punjab National Bank (PNB), Bank of India (BOI) and Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC)] and had availed the services of their bank for at least past one year from the same place.

- Testing the Reliability and Validity of scale is an important step in the scale development process. Therefore, a pilot study was conducted on 60 respondents for purification of the scale. The data collected through the pilot study was presented and analyzed using reliability test to identify uni-dimensionality of the item used in the scale. In order to prove the internal reliability of the items used in the scale, Cronbach's Alpha Test of

Reliability was performed. Cronbach (1951) introduced a method that is equivalent to splitting data into two parts in every possible way (Cronbach's α). The method is the most common measure of scale for reliability testing (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) and Garson (2002). Only those items were finalized in the scale, which exceeded a value of 0.700 Cronbach's alpha numerically (Nunnally, 1978).

- Calculated value of Cronbach's alpha came out as 0.779 which was more than 0.700 hence the scale used was reliable.

Variable Operationalization

Data Collection and Samples

As the study was exploratory in nature, the sample of the study was non-probabilistic convenience sample comprising of 522 respondents. Respondents from 6 cities in (India) were requested to respond to the questionnaire. The resulting sample consisted of 54 per cent females and 46 per cent males. The demographic profile of the sample is given in **Table 1.**

Table 1: Showing Demographic Profile of Sample

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age (In Years)		
16-20	254	48.66%
21-25	169	32.38%
26-30	65	12.5%
31-35	12	2.25%
Above 35	22	4.21%
Occupation		
Student	319	61.11%
Job	203	38.89%
Gender		
Male	241	46%
Female	281	54%
Bank		
SBI	309	59.20%
PNB	195	37.35%
BOI	10	1.92%
OBC	08	1.53%

Statistical Analysis

1. Data on service quality was first analyzed by factor analysis KMO and Bartlett Test. Bartlett (1938), Bartlett (1951) as factor analysis is a means of examining and describing the internal structures of variables (Lawley and Maxwell, 1926).

2. The data was also analyzed with the help of Mann- Whitney U-Test (Mann and Whitney, 1947). For all analyses, authors used SPSS (version18), setting = 0.05.

Results and Analysis of Data

Factor Analysis

The Kaiser Mayer- Olkin (Table 2) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.702 and the Bartlett tests of sphericity were found to be significant at p< 0.001.

Analysis

According to the scale used the maximum score to be received was 135 if all the 27 items were rated at 5. However the mean score 90.0931 indicated that 66% of the constructs are explained by items. It indicates that service quality in performing better as per customer aspect in banking is moderate in industry. **(Refer Table 3)**

Factors

1. Service Interaction
2. Reliability
3. Responsiveness
4. Tangibles
5. Product Convenience
6. Customer Satisfaction

Factor 1: Service Interaction

The most important factor Service Interaction was having value of 4.820 and explains 17.852% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from 0.420 to 0.608. The factors covered here were – Caring and individual attention of customers, Never Busy (availability of service provider), Convenient operating hours and Understanding specific needs of customer. These are the components which affect the overall service quality in banking industry and it contributes towards gap between expectation and performance in terms of Service interaction, because it can reduce and increase gap between expectation and performance.

Factor 2: Reliability

The second most important factor Reliability having value 1.876 explains 6.948% of the total variance. The loadings ranged from 0.397 to 0.705. The factors covered here were – Right service for the first time, Safe and secure in dealing with bank, Service as per promised schedule, Competitive Interest Rates, Hassle free and error free processing, security messages, etc. These are the components which affect overall service quality in banking industry and it contributes towards gap between expectations and performance in terms of reliable parameter. Reliability is very important parameter of expectation and performance gap between customer aspects.

Factor 3: Responsiveness

The third most important factor Responsiveness having value 1.737 explains 6.432% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from 0.270 to 0.518. The factors covered here were – If in problem bank is willing to discuss, helping nature and ready to respond to request, well handling during peak hours, efficient services and Knowledge about bank's new products. These are the components which affect the overall service quality in banking industry and it contributes towards gap between expectation and performance in terms of responsiveness parameter. Reasons about responsiveness is that if service provider will not give response in time, then customer expectations cannot be fulfilled and it can increase or decrease gap between expectation and performance of banks.

Factor 4: Tangibles

The fourth most important factor Tangibles having value 1.612 explains 5.971% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from 0.230 to 0.646. The factors covered here were – Variety and features for saving, ample parking space, visually appealing signs, symbols and advanced computer / IT to serve the clients. These are the components which affect overall service quality in banking industry and it contributes towards gap between expectation and performance in terms of tangible parameters. Tangibles cover some extra features in current scenario as competition level

Table 2: Showing values of KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.702
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3.214E3
	Degree of Freedom	351
	Significance	0.000

Table 3: Showing 27-Items for Service Quality with their Mean and Standard Deviation

Sr. No.	Item Description	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
1	Variety features for Cards	3.5019	1.29514
2	Easy use of cards (debit / credit)	3.2179	1.20395
3	Interest in solving problems	3.1304	1.25366
4	Excellent Quality	3.2743	1.15159
5	Ample Parking Space	3.3132	1.23983
6	Variety and features for Savings Account	2.4416	1.39251
7	In case of problem, bank is willing to discuss	2.8560	1.28672
8	Helping nature and readiness to respond to request	3.2549	1.27627
9	Tell the customer exactly when the service will be performed	3.5875	1.16190
10	Visually appealing signs, symbols etc.	3.0467	1.34851
11	Safe and secure in dealing with Bank	3.0895	1.14613
12	Always meets my expectations	3.5331	1.07600
13	Well handling during peak hours	3.8813	0.99879
14	Efficient Services	3.8054	1.00926
15	Knowledge about the Bank's new products	3.4786	1.14134
16	Advanced Computer / IT to serve the clients	3.6226	1.01526
17	Caring and individualized attention	3.4494	1.24188
18	Services as per promised schedule	2.6673	1.15817
19	Never Busy	3.2101	1.09696
20	Competitive Interest Rates	3.3268	2.08077
21	Convenient operating hours	3.1984	1.10797
22	Hassle free and error free processing	3.3482	1.08027
23	Up to date equipments	3.4630	1.00467
24	Right service for the first time	3.3541	1.05738
25	Recommend this Bank	3.4961	1.11563
26	Understanding specific needs	3.7160	1.00537
27	Encourage friends and relatives	3.8288	0.88184

N= 522, **Mean Total** = 90.0931, **SD**= 31.827, **Variables** = 27

Table 4: Showing Results of Factor Analysis

Sr. No.	Questions	Service Interaction	Reliability	Responsiveness	Tangibility	Product Convenience	Customer Satisfaction
1	Variety features for cards					0.646	
2	Easy use of cards (debit/ credit)					0.612	
3	Interest in solving problem		0.567				
4	Excellent Quality						0.566
5	Ample Parking Space				0.564		
6	Variety and features for savings				0.564		
7	If in problem, the bank is willing to discuss			0.518			
8	Helping nature and ready to respond to request			0.516			
9	Tell the customer exactly when the service will be performed		0.506				
10	Visually appealing signs, symbols etc.				0.501		
11	Safe and secure in dealing with Bank		0.493				
12	Always meets my expectations						0.491
13	Well handling in peak hours			0.387			
14	Efficient services			0.371			
15	Knowledge about the Bank's new products			0.270			
16	Advanced Computer / IT to serve the clients				0.642		
17	Caring and individualized attention	0.608					
18	Service as per promised scheduled		0.537				
19	Never Busy	0.535					
20	Competitive Interest Rates		0.705				
21	Convenient operating hours	0.420					
22	Hassle free and error free processing		0.397				
23	Up to date equipment				0.230*		
24	Right service for the first time		0.537				
25	Recommend this bank						0.123*
26	Understanding specific needs	0.466					
27	Encourage friends and relatives						0.448

* Item has been dropped because its factor loading is less than 0.3

Table 5: Showing Results of Mann-Whitney *U* Test (Significance of Difference between occupation Groups in their Importance Rating of Selected Service Quality in Public Banks)

Item Description	Occupation	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Up to date Equipment	Students	319	262.33	3.113E	0.643
	Employee	203	260.19		
Easy use of cards (Debit / Credit)	Students	319	254.13	32088	0.325
	Employee	203	273.07		
Interest in solving problem	Students	319	263.03	50744	0.606
	Employee	203	259.10		
Excellent Quality	Students	319	262.21	29036	0.075
	Employee	203	260.39		
Ample Parking Space	Students	319	267.09	31905	0.244
	Employee	203	252.72		
Variety and Features for Savings	Students	319	255.83	33764	0.977
	Employee	203	270.41		
If in problem, Bank is willing to discuss	Students	319	261.01	31305	0.130
	Employee	203	262.27		
Helping nature and ready to respond to request	Students	319	256.60	33225	0.735
	Employee	203	269.20		
Right service for the first time	Students	319	262.33	30542	0.046
	Employee	203	260.19		
Visually appealing signs, symbols etc.	Students	319	260.73	32226	0.471
	Employee	203	262.71		
Safe and secure in dealing with Bank	Students	319	261.72	33436	0.820
	Employee	203	261.15		
Always meets my expectation	Students	319	264.63	33646	0.921
	Employee	203	256.59		
Well handling during peak hours	Students	319	264.94	33244	0.735
	Employee	203	256.09		
Understanding specific needs	Students	319	259.62	31866	0.243
	Employee	203	264.45		
Service as promised	Students	319	256.63	33237	0.731
	Employee	203	269.16		
Advanced Computer / IT to serve the clients	Students	319	267.30	31713	0.205
	Employee	203	252.39		

Item Description	Occupation	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Competitive Interest Rates	Students	319	265.59	32756	0.522
	Employee	203	251.15		
Never Busy	Students	319	264.80	3.332E4	0.769
	Employee	203	256.31		
Caring and individualized attention	Students	319	257.30	31629	0.178
	Employee	203	262.91		
Knowledge about the Bank's new products	Students	319	262.31	33809	1.000
	Employee	203	260.23		
Hassle free and error free processing	Students	319	250.58	31512	0.167
	Employee	203	278.66		
Convenient operating hours	Students	319	258.45	31208	0.200
	Employee	203	266.30		
Efficient services	Students	319	265.00	33368	0.787
	Employee	203	256.00		
Recommend this Bank	Students	319	271.13	32109	0.167
	Employee	203	246.36		
Encourage friends and relatives	Students	319	265.92	31488	0.151
	Employee	203	254.55		
Service will be performed	Students	319	262.40	31913	0.248
	Employee	203	260.08		
Feature of cards	Students	319	258.81	31779	0.224
	Employee	203	265.73		

in market is high, so apart from basic expectations, banks should provide some other services also which cover tangibles parameters.

Factor 5: Product Convenience

The fifth most important factor Product Convenience having value 1.296 explains 4.799% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from 0.612 to 0.646. The factors covered here were – variety and feature for cards, easy use of cards (debit / credit cards), etc. These are the components which affect overall service quality in banking industry and it contributes towards gap between expectations and performance in terms of product convenience parameters. Product is very essential part of service quality, because it will be the basis of quality and in current scenario for providing value to the customers.

Factor 6: Customer Satisfaction

The sixth most important factor Customer Satisfaction having value 1.257 explains 4.654% of the total variance. The factor loadings ranged from 0.448 to 0.556. The factors covered here were – excellent quality, always meets my expectation and encourage friends and relatives. These are the components which affect overall service quality in banking industry and it contributes towards gap between expectations and performance in terms of satisfaction parameter.

Overall analysis about bank performance is moderate. That's why H_{01} and H_{02} were accepted but apart from it banks should focus to reduce the gap because

information of new products, as at times up to date information about new products is not made available to customers in banks. Due to this reason the customers of bank hesitate in recommending their banks to others. Recommendation is very useful factor for banks for achieving their targets. These factors are very important for both students and customers from different segments.

Mann Whitney U Test

Mann Whitney U-Test was used to analyze 'Occupation' and 'Service Quality of Banks' (Table 5), as the data did not comply with the prerequisites of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov = 0.100, p<0.000) and in case of demographic variable–occupation, where P value of these pre tests were below 0.05.

Mann-Whitney U-Test shows that out of the twenty seven variables rated by respondents concerning to their bank, the difference between the mean ranks of student is higher than employee category in the variable. Higher mean value in up to date equipment (3.11E), interest in solving problem (50744), excellent quality (29036), ample parking space (31905), variety and features for savings (33764), if in problem bank is willing to discuss(31305), helping nature and ready to respond to request (33225), right service for the first time(30252), safe and secure in dealing with bank (33436), always meets my expectation(33646), well handling during peak hours, understanding specific needs (33244), advance computer / IT to serve the clients(31713), competitive interest rates (32756), knowledge about the new products of bank(33809), hassle free and error free processing (31512), convenient operating hours(31208), efficient services(33368), recommend this bank (32109) and feature of cards (31779) and remain higher in the category of employees. Calculated value of all items was more than to p value that's why H_{03} was rejected because p>0.05. Highest value for the Mann Whitney U was 50774 for interest in problem solving and other values was varying from 29036 to 33764 in all items. That was giving support to alternate hypothesis.

Discussion and Conclusion

Consumer behavior pertaining to one of the fast growing service sector i.e., banking has been investigated in past as suggested by the review of literature. However, lack of sufficient research in India on this account encouraged this research. The purpose of this study was to advance the understanding about service quality in public sector banks in India. This was done by assessing whether persons with different occupations differ in their perception and attributes about public banks in India. Currents students will be future employee in corporate and that's why bank should work more on them. The results suggest that the highest factor affecting the customer satisfaction was service quality. The bankers cannot afford the risk of losing the side of "service quality". It is vital that banks monitor service quality in retail banking as perceived by customers on a regular basis. Only then will they know if strategies in place to improve customer service levels are in fact effective. Further, the results are in tune with the findings of Triplett, Ted. (2009) who also suggested that ATM facility and fast cash deposit by card, online security were very important aspects of service quality from a customer satisfaction perspective level.

The nature and frequency of studies in India concerning service quality / customer service in banks is extremely limited. These limited studies of academicians and practitioners have reported very poor service quality mostly in public sector banks (Brahmanandam and Narayana, 1990; Elias, 1982; Nageshwar and Promod, 1990; Nageswar, 1987; Sesha Sai, 1999; Sundaram, 1984). The present study confirms such findings. However, it brings to light that poor service quality among Indian banks is mostly because of deficiency in the factors related to tangibility and responsiveness. Public sector banks meet nearly 90% banking needs of the country (Srivastava, 1994) and retail banking constitutes eighty percent of their total banking business. Investment in relevant banking technology particularly ATM's and internet facility will take care of most of their retail banking and help in reducing customer grievances also stated by previous studies.

Research Implications and Directions for Future Research

The service sector is leading the growth in India. The stride towards opening of retail banking sector to the

world is opening up new opportunities to entrepreneurs, consumers, researchers etc. The present study, explorative in nature, tries to discover the preferences of customer expectation and bank performance in India. As the study has been done in cities belonging to B+ category, the external validity of the study could also be tested in cities belonging to other categories. Customer is the epic centre of marketing. They could be served better when their needs are understood and customers are segmented accordingly. In future research related to linkage between determinants of service quality and customer satisfaction and its consequents like customer retention, word-of-mouth, perceived service quality, security etc. could be studied in Indian context.

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