Measuring Perceived Service Quality Using Servqual in Select Mall in Ahmedabad

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine customers expectations and perceptions of service quality in a select shopping mall in Ahmedabad. A Servqual scale was used to assess service quality perceptions from the perspective of mall visitors. Customers are becoming more aware of their requirements and thus Quality is defined by the customer. The study results indicate the high expectations of mall visitors regarding service quality. The results of the quantitative assessment of perceived service quality may provide some insights on how customers rate the service quality of the select mall. Consumer are now showing preference for shopping malls, which enable them to shop variety of products' under one roof and offer shopping experience in term of ambience and entertainment. Thus, the findings can be used as a guide for Mall managers to improve the crucial quality attributes and enhance service quality and business performance.

Keywords: Service Quality, Servqual, shopping mall

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of the history of shopping places, Journey starts from market to malls .The concept of the enclosed shopping mall attract attention of the urban civilians. Inside the walls a new city was created, where people shop, eat, entertain, and even sleep. Now as the Mall culture has pipelined in India,. The survey was conducted in the select mall of Ahmadabad, considered as the best city of Gujarat state. The city is associated with strong cultural & social influence and visited by many NRI's every year. Services are the activities of helping the customer attain value. Different customer may have different expectations of the same service or have different service priorities. There can be different expectations for different aspects of mall services. The efforts of service managers and academic researchers are directed towards understanding how customers perceive the quality of service. This is an interesting fact that shopping malls are profit-oriented private properties, on the other hand, one can spend a whole day in it without doing any shopping. So, that's why shopping malls are appreciated by people. And considered as a safe new place where a street-like atmosphere indoors is created.

AlphaOne Mall is a shopping mall opened in October 2011 and is the largest mixed used city centre in Ahmedabad. The mall has multiplex cinemas, best brands available, hotel, food zone etc. Customers were surveyed in this mall. To understand the concept of Indian consumer attitude Excellent service could be high profit strategy because it results in more new customers, more business with existing customers, fewer lost customers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Markovi'c and Raspor (2010) review the literature and suggest that Perceptions of hotel service quality are the degree to which hotel guests find various hotel attributes important in enhancing their satisfaction with the hotel stay. Their study was focused only on hotels at tourist destination in Croatia. Researchers were attempting to develop a questionnaire that addressed 29 hotel attributes to measure hotel guests' perceptions. The questionnaires were distributed during the summer months. The paper also reports several objectives such as to determine the level of perceived service quality in Croatian hotels, to establish the number of dimensions of perceived service quality in the hospitality industry, using the modified Servqual model and to test the reliability of the modified SERVQUAL model.

Tazreen (2012) point out the fact is that quality of services cannot be defined objectively. Their expectations and perceptions are continually evolving making it more difficult for the service providers to measure and manage services effectively and efficiently.

The SERVQUAL methodology is briefly demonstrated by a small survey conducted on a randomly selected bunch of customers regarding the service quality provided by a particular commercial bank. The author begin by describing that it is important to understand the customer-oriented business philosophies and quality management approaches in managing the business. In the review of studies of service quality, the authors assert that Implementation of total quality in the service industry is comparatively more complex.

Hirmukhe (2012) emphasized three very important characteristics of service quality ie.. Service quality is more difficult to evaluate than goods quality,. Quality perceptions emerge from the consumer's expectations and the perception of the actual service and Service quality is perceived from the" gap " between the expectations and the perception of the service experience .The author conducted an analysis of the responses of 33 Tehsildars to a SERVQUAL questionnaire and analyze the gap between expectations and perceptions with an aim to provide a small contribution towards improvement in these public services. This study is with special reference to the State of Maharashtra.

Ahuja et al. (2011) in their study demonstrates the usefulness of the SERVQUAL approach as a measure of service quality. The researchers found that there were clear predictors of important practical implications to management of quality of eye care services. The results of the study indicate that the SERVQUAL scale could make a valuable contribution by enhancing the understanding of the perceived quality of eye care services. Results discussed included that the management of GOVT/NGO's eye hospitals in Haryana could start by improving on staff training, especially to train their staff to be more professional and courteous when dealing with patients.

Yadav, Siraj & Arora (2012) reviews the extant literature which throws light on three categories of variables that affect customer patronage .This paper describes that accessibility, tenant mix, services capes (architect, & design of facility) & entertainment quotient of the mall affect consumer patronage. The authors of this article argue that not much work has been done in the area of mall management strategies and comparative analysis of the different mall management strategies with respect to mall patronage needs to be focused, although prior studies have dealt with mall attributes and entertainment as attractive variables for the choice of mall.

Ree & McLennan (2006) emphasized on the measurement problems. This paper examines the problem with services is that most of the qualitative inputs and outputs are intangible and the intangible aspects of service delivery processes requires customers involvement. This paper describes that to improve service delivery focus on cleaning, catering and security, would be an important quality dimensions for supplier performance and customer satisfaction. The Results indicated a gap between supplier's perceptions and customer's desires.

Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml (1994) describes Service is a key component of value that drives any company's success. Quality service helps a company maximize benefits and minimize non-price burdens for its customers. The authors reports that one of the most common service improvement mistakes that companies make is to spend money in ways that do not improve service. The authors summarizes in the Service quality ring. Listening is positioned on the outer ring because listening has an impact on all the other lessons. Reliability is pictured in the center, as reliability is the core of service quality.. The authors conclude that Listening to employee and addressing their concerns promotes teamwork between management and service personnel.

NOTE WORTH CONTRIBUTION:

Parasuraman Berry and Zeithaml and Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985,1988) presented the servqual scale, which most popular instrument for measuring service quality. The model has been applied in various became the service industries such as health care, education, banking, insurance, hotels, transport, restaurant, tourism. In most of the researches the instrument was modified to suit the features of a specific service.

The model contains 22 items for assessing customer perceptions and expectations regarding the quality of service. A level of agreement or disagreement with a given item is rated on a seven point Likert-type scale. The level of service quality is represented by the gap between perceived and expected service. The SERVQUAL model is based on five service quality dimensions, namely tangibles (physical facilities, equipment and personnel appearance), reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees

and their ability to gain trust and confidence) and empathy (providing individualized attention to the customers). SERV QUAL method is more or less suitable for most of the service sectors

Parasuraman argued that, with minor modification, SERVQUAL can be adapted to any service organization. Information on service quality gaps can help managers diagnose where performance improvement can best be targeted. The largest negative gap, combined with assessment of where expectations are highest, facilitates prioritization of performance improvement. Equally, if gap scores in some aspects of service do turn out to be positive, implying expectations are actually not just being met but exceeded, then this allows managers to review whether they may be "over-supplying" this particular feature of the service and whether there is potential for re-deployment of resources into features which are underperforming. (Tazreen, 2012)

METHODOLOGY

As a foundation for questionnaire development, the SERVQUAL model was used. The original items were slightly modified to suit the requirement of mall. For example, instead of 'xyz Company has up-to-date equipment,' the statement was modified to the 'Mall has up-to-date equipment'. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part measured mall customers expectations and second part measured customer perceptions of mall attributes using a modified servqual model. Service quality perceptions were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree.'

OBJECTIVE

To measure the service quality of the select shopping mall on the basis of customer expectations and perceptions.

The Study:

The study is exploratory in nature. Customers were surveyed in mall and interactive conversation was done with the mall visitors of the select Mall.

The Sample

The sample of the study constituted of 100 respondents of the select Mall which were selected through convenience sampling method.

Tools for Data Collection

The primary data were collected through a questionnaire by using the Servqual scale.

The secondary data collected from well-known articles and on internet.

Tools for data Analysis

Microsoft office excel 2007 is used and Graphical analysis of the collected data and bar chart has been applied.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Showing Mean score of mall customers expectations & perceptions of Tangiblility Dimension

TANGIBILITY	EXPECTATION	PERCEPTION
T1	6.2	5.24
T2	5.28	4.58
T3	5.69	5.1
T4	6.02	5.05
AVERAGE TANGIBLE SCORE	5.7975	4.9925

Statements from 1 to 4 refer to the tangibles dimension of service quality. The dimension obtained an average score of -0.81. The expectations of the customers are high in case of tangibles but the perceptions are low. The result indicates that there should be more investment on improvement in the infrastructure and equipment. Physical facilities,cleanliness and infrastructure are a need of the time.

Table 2: Showing Mean score of mall customers expectations and perceptions of Reliability Dimension

RELIABILITY	EXPECTATION	PERCEPTION
RE5	5.29	5.22
RE6	5.97	4.63
RE7	5.61	4.68
RE8	5.68	5.1
RE9	5.1	3.84
AVERAGE RELIABILITY SCORE	5.53	4.694

Statement from 5 to 9 discuss about the reliability dimension. It has received an average score of -0.84. This is the second largest gap score among all the dimensions. The expectations of the mall visitors are high regarding the reliability of the service but their experience says otherwise. The highest score indicates that the mall visitors expect their services to be delivered at the right time The gap score of -0.84 indicates a scope for improvement. The Mall Management must seriously consider the possibility of investment in training and resources so that the promised deadlines can actually be adhered to. This may be an indication that reliability is the most important dimension for the Mall management as they want their customers to repeatedly visit the mall.

Table 3: Showing Mean score of mall customers expectations & perceptions of Responsiveness Dimension

RESPONSIVENESS	EXPECTATION	PERCEPTION
RES10	4.34	4.85
RES11	5.34	4.3
RES12	4.66	4.75
RES13	4.52	4.39
AVERAGE RESPONSIVENESS SCORE	4.715	4.5725

The responsiveness dimension is discussed in the statements from 10 to 14. The dimension has received an average gap score of -0.14 which is the least gap score among all the five dimensions. This is an indication that the perceptions are close to the expectations and the mall visitors are quite satisfied with the prompt service of the mall.

Table 4: Showing Mean score of mall customers expectations and perceptions of Assurance Dimension
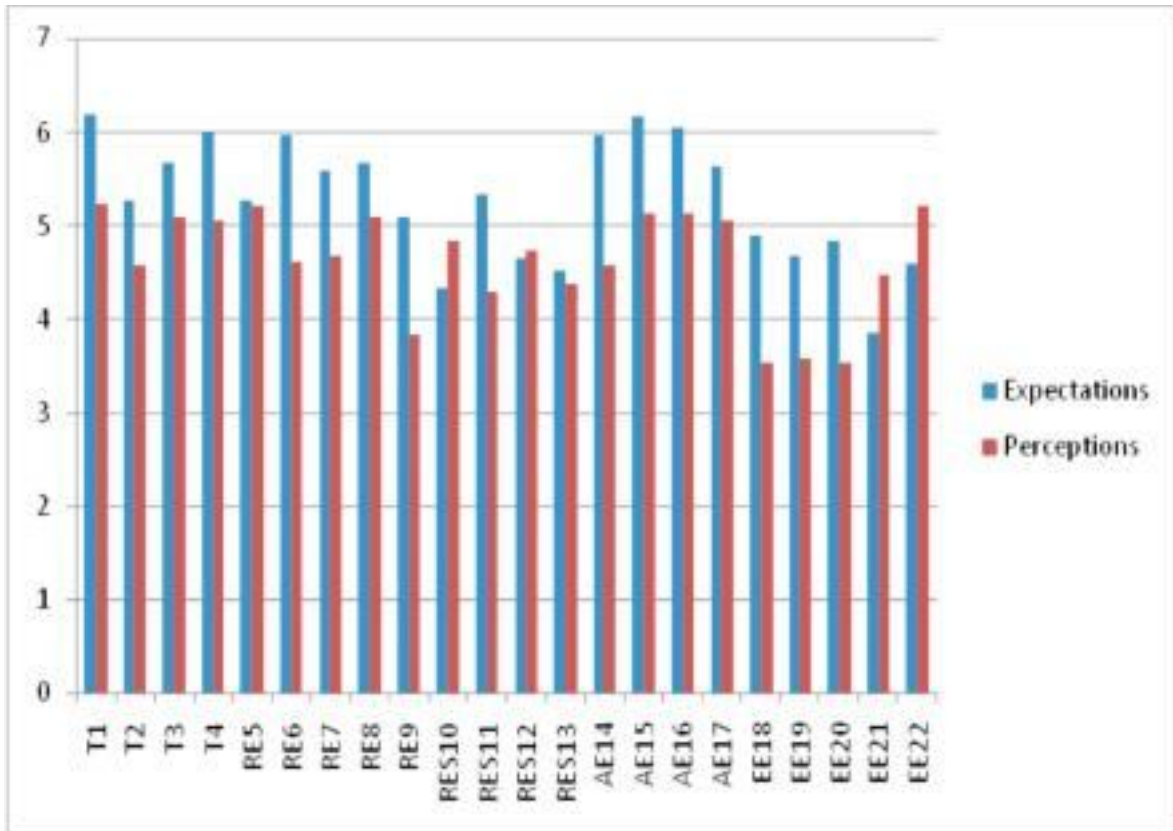
ASSURANCE	EXPECTATION	PERCEPTION
AE14	5.97	4.58
AE15	6.18	5.13
AE16	6.07	5.14
AE17	5.64	5.05
AVERAGE ASSURANCE SCORE	5.965	4.975

Statements from 14 to 17 refer to the assurance dimension. It has received a gap score of -0.99, the largest gap among the five dimensions. This dimension relates to the feeling of safety and security in the mind of the citizens while experiencing the service. A negative gap suggests that this dimension is important to the mall visitors and the organization needs to take serious measures for employee awareness about their job and behaviour. All the questions indicating a feeling of insecurity in the minds of the mall visitors which is reflected in the responses. The need of a highly sophisticated secure service experience is expected by the customers and the organization has to consider this aspect seriously.

**Table 5: Showing Mean score of mall customers expectations & perceptions of Empathy Dimension**

EMPATHY	EXPECTATION	PERCEPTION
EE18	4.9	3.54
EE19	4.69	3.57
EE20	4.84	3.54
EE21	3.86	4.48
EE22	4.61	5.23
AVERAGE EMPATHY SCORE	4.58	4.072

Statements from 18 to 22 discuss about empathy dimension of service quality. It has received the gap score of -0.51. This indicates that the mall employees do not believe in a personal service but they believe in equal service to all. This is a welcome sign as it indicates that most of the employees are unbiased towards the customers. The expectation score of this dimension suggests dissatisfaction about punctuality and availability of the staff at the time of need. The results indicate a need to inculcate the importance of punctuality and customer understanding among the employees.

Figure 1: Dimensional Average Expectations & Perceptions of Mall Customers.

Table 6: Showing Mean Gap score of mail customers expectations and perceptions.

Dimension	Customer Expectation	Customer Perception	Servqual Gap Score
Tangibility	5.8	4.99	-0.81
Reliability	5.53	4.69	-0.84
Responsiveness	4.71	4.57	-0.14
Assurance	5.97	4.98	-0.99
Empathy	4.58	4.07	-0.51
Unweighted Avg Servqual Score	5.318	4.636	**-0.658**

 The overall SERVQUAL gap average for all the five dimensions was -0.658. All the questions corresponding to the entire five dimensions without an exception have received negative gap scores. As discussed by (Parasuraman et al., 1984, 1988., Berry et al., 1994) these gaps suggest a need for improved vertical and horizontal communication, better customer understanding, proper management commitment, good team work. The results indicate a great opportunity for the Mall management to improve the entire service providing mechanism.

Figure *2:* Dimensionwise Mean Gap Score of Expectations & Perceptions of Mall Customers
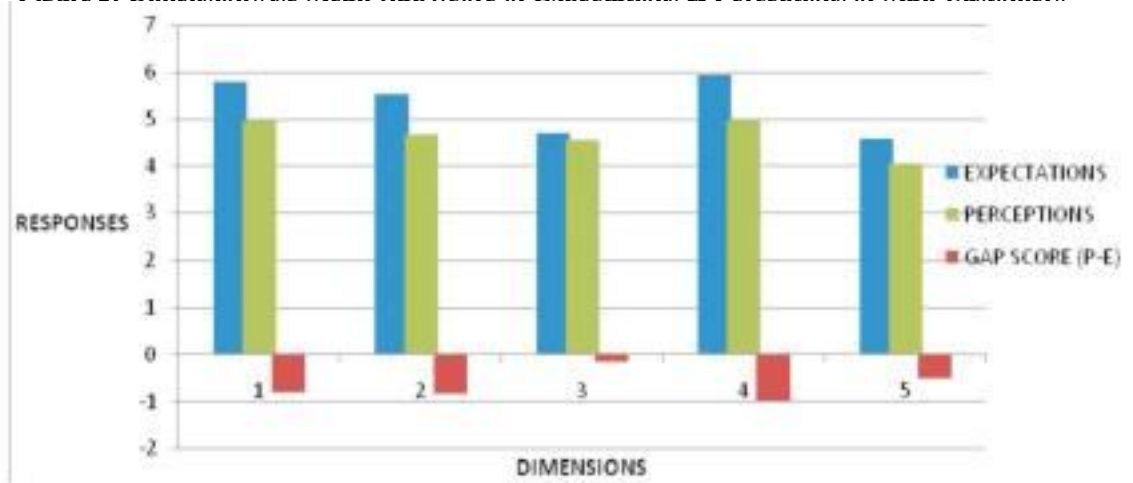
CONCLUSION:

It is interesting to study the expectations of the customers about the Mall services and their perceptions about the same as their lookout towards the services is completely different. The negative average gap scores of all the dimensions indicate a discrepancy between the expectations and perceptions. The scientific methods used, a quantitative research method based on SERVQUAL survey instrument and supported by qualitative data, provided conditions to carry out this research. The results generated from the study provided insight into the quality of services provided by the select Mall with a considerable degree of applicability for the Mall Management.

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