



## Measuring Service Quality of Multispecialty Hospitals in Coimbatore City by using SERVQUAL Scale

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### ABSTRACT

*The study is about measuring service quality in multispecialty hospitals in Coimbatore city by using SERVQUAL scale. The perception and expectation of patients about the service quality are collected. The quality of a product can be measured by its dimensions and other tangible parameters. It is not so difficult for a product to fix a standard against which the quality is measured. Since services are intangible and inseparability, fixing standard is highly difficult one. SERVQUAL scale has come as a boom to measure the service quality. The respondents for this study are patients from multispecialty hospitals in Coimbatore city. 300 patients are selected based on judgment sampling. The data are collected by using structured and undisguised questionnaire. From the analysis it was found that the patients were not satisfied in all the 5 dimensions of service quality. The service quality gap between patients' perception and expectation is highest in reliability and empathy.*

**KEYWORDS : SERVQUAL Scale, Customer Expectation, Customer Perception, Service, Quality**

### Introduction:

As per the information provided by Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC), the Indian healthcare sector is expected to reach US\$ 100 billion by 2015 from the current US\$ 65 billion, growing at around 20 per cent a year, according to rating agency Fitch. Some of the major factors driving the growth in the sector include increasing population, growing lifestyle related health issues, cheaper costs for treatment, thrust in medical tourism, improving health insurance penetration, increasing disposable income, government initiatives and focus on Public Private Partnership (PPP) models. The industry is expected to touch US\$ 280 billion by 2020, on the back of increasing demand for specialized and quality healthcare facilities.

The Health Care Industry in Coimbatore has witnessed a tremendous growth in the last decade. With the increasing demand for best treatment and best facilities, the Coimbatore hospitals have established themselves. Coimbatore has the sophisticated large hospitals offering the world class quality treatments equivalent to the best hospitals around the world.

Heavy Competition and increased number of knowledgeable customers force hospitals to give more importance for quality. By maintaining high service quality hospitals can gain competitive advantage, customer loyalty and positive word of mouth.

The SERVQUAL methodology is an important tool for organizations to better understand what customers value and how well the organizations are meeting their needs and expectations. Originally developed by leading customer satisfaction researchers, namely Valarie Zeithaml, A. Parasuraman, and Leonard Berry, the assumption of the measurement was that customers can evaluate firm's service quality by comparing their perception with their expectations.

SERVQUAL is applicable to all service industries. The SERVQUAL scale includes five dimensions. Each dimension can have several items measured on a seven point scale varying from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Researchers have suggested a total of 22 items under the identified five dimensions.

The SERVQUAL scale is a useful tool to measure customers' expectations and customers' perceptions of service quality. It has five generic dimensions or factors which are stated as follows (Iwaarden et al., 2003):

1. **Tangibles:** Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel.
2. **Reliability:** Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
3. **Responsiveness:** Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
4. **Assurance:** (including competence, courtesy, credibility and security).

curity).

Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.

5. **Empathy:** (including access, communication, understanding the customer). Caring and Individualized attention that the firm provides to its customers.

### Objectives:

- ❖ To identify patients expectations on five service quality dimensions of SERVQUAL scale.
- ❖ To identify patients perceptions on five service quality dimensions of SERVQUAL scale.
- ❖ To find the level of service quality gap between patients expectation and perception.
- ❖ To identify the relationship between the socio economic status and service quality gap.

### Methodology:

The research design is descriptive. The respondents are patients from multispecialty hospitals in Coimbatore city. The sample size is 300. It is very difficult to define sampling frame during the collection of data in a hospital. So probability sampling can not be used to select the respondents. Judgment sampling method was used to select the respondents. Structured undisguised questionnaire was used to collect the data.

The questionnaire has two sections. In the first section the respondents are asked to rank all hospitals according to their expectations i.e. what they expect all hospitals to provide. In the second section they are asked to rank the hospital they chose for the treatment according to their experiences and perceptions. The rankings was done on a seven point scale varying from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The customer perceptions of quality are compared with customer expectations and subsequently, the gaps are studied. The negative gap score indicates the customer dissatisfaction in the service quality dimension.

### Limitations:

- ❖ This study was conducted only in Coimbatore city. So results do not have a Universal acceptance.
- ❖ The research is not a standard for all time period because the respondent's expectation and perception can change at any time.
- ❖ All the information given by the respondents are presumed to be true.

### Findings:

From the results obtained it is evident that the service quality gap between patients' perception and expectation is high in reliability followed by empathy, responsiveness and assurance. The service quality gap is negligible in tangible dimension of service quality.

The mean score of patients perception about service quality dimensions and mean score of patients expectation about service quality dimensions are listed in Table 1. The service quality gap in all the five dimensions of service quality is also tabulated in table 1.

**Table 1. Service Quality Gap**

	Tangibles		Reliability		Responsiveness		Assurance		Empathy	
	P	E	P	E	P	E	P	E	P	E
Mean	5.96	6.04	4.96	6.20	4.84	5.78	5.32	6.18	4.73	5.95
Mean Gap	-0.08		-1.24		-0.94		-0.86		-1.22	

P-Perception of patients E-expectation of patients

**ANOVA Test**

**Null Hypothesis 1 (Ho1)**

There is no significant relationship between the respondents’ educational qualification and service quality gap.

**Null Hypothesis 2 (Ho2)**

There is no significant relationship between respondents’ occupation and service quality gap.

**Null Hypothesis 3 (Ho3)**

There is no significant relationship between age and service quality gap.

**Table 2. ANOVA Test Results**

Factor 1	Factor 2	Calculated Value	Table value	Result
Age	Service quality gap	19.888	16.919	Ho1 is rejected
Occupation	Service quality gap	5.62	5.99	Ho2 is accepted
Educational qualification	Service quality gap	3.736	12.6	Ho3 is accepted

**From the ANOVA test it is found that**

Service quality gap varies with different age group of patients. There is no significant relationship between occupation and service quality gap. There is no significant relationship between educational qualification and service quality gap.

**Conclusion:**

Findings from this study reveal that the patients’ expectations are higher than the patients’ perception on reliability, empathy, responsiveness and assurance. The multispecialty hospitals in Coimbatore need to improve the ability to perform the promised service, caring and individualized attention, willingness to help customers and Knowledge and courtesy of employees. In services particularly in hospitals patients expect superior quality of services. Superior service quality helps in positive word of mouth which is an effective promotional toll for hospitals. Therefore the multispecialty hospitals in Coimbatore concentrate to improve the service quality which can be used as an effective differentiation strategy.

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