



SERVICE QUALITY PERCEPTIONS OF BHARAT LPG (LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS) USERS IN SALEM CITY

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ABSTRACT

Bharath Gas is a clean and portable fuel. It provides heat and power in remote areas as well as in densely populated urban areas. The Bharath gas company reforms have deregulated the market to a great extent. It has become necessary to design and execute the best customer oriented practices and to internalize them for providing enhanced satisfaction to the customer through the employees. Customers' service is not merely the compliance with the government's policies or the mechanical adherence to the time frame of services. It is a philosophy and an attitude of professional commitment, which believes in the ultimate satisfaction or each customer 'wants'. Service marketers have really understood that competition can be well managed by differentiating through quality. Significance of service lies in customer service management. In this the complete environment, service quality has become the success mantra in all service sector. Keeping this in mind, this study has been conducted at Salem city to identify the service Quality perceptions of Bharath gas. The result indicates that customers are agreed with the service provided by the Bharath gas.

KEYWORDS : services, perception, quality, LPG

Introduction

LPG's domestic uses can never be ignored. It has played a revolutionary role when it comes to changing the face of domestic fuels used for heating and cooking. LPG for household consumption is nearly 89% of total LPG off-take in India. There are still many rural areas where they have no awareness on use of LPG for domestic purpose. The main domestic uses of LPG are with respect to lighting, refrigeration, cooking and most of all heating. The main reason behind this is easy accessibility, low cost per unit and the environment friendly properties of LPG. LPG, otherwise also known as Liquefied Petroleum Gas, is used as fuel for thousands of applications, in commercial business, industry, transportation, farming, power generation, cooking, heating and for recreational purposes. Liquefied Petroleum Gas is a vital source of energy for millions of people around the world. LP Gas consists mainly of propane and butane, which are gases at atmospheric temperature and pressure. When subjected to modest pressure or refrigeration, these gases liquefy making it possible to transport and store LP Gas as a liquid, yet use it as a gas. This requires pressurized cylinders and containers, which must be safely and carefully handled.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stafford (2004) Service quality has been viewed as a significant issue in the banking industry financial services are generally undifferentiated products, it becomes imperative for banks to strive for improved service quality if they want to distinguish themselves from the competition. Positive relationship between high levels of service quality and improved financial performance has been established by Roth and van der Velde (1991) and Bennet (1992). Similarly, Bowen and Hedges (1993) documented that improvement in quality of service is related to expansion of market share.

M. A. Al-Fawzan (2005) Service quality is defined as the degree of alignment between customers' expectations and their perceptions of the service received. In this paper, we have used SERVQUAL as a technique to measure service quality in a Saudi bank (SB), a typical service provider in Saudi Arabia. The aim is to explore the most important strength and weaknesses of SB. The analysis of this study showed that there are service quality gaps between customers' expectations and their perceptions in six dimensions. Hence, SB has to take improvement actions in these dimensions.

Parasuraman, A (2005) Approaches to the measurement of service quality have typically been either a simple comparison of mean

scores, extensive and detailed statistical model or more recently market research questionnaire. The current measurement of perceived service quality using the latter approach can be traced to this research.

Othman and Owen (2006) In a study conducted on Kuwait Finance House (KFH), applied this model to measure the importance of service quality in the Islamic banking industry. They found a positive link between quality, satisfaction and service encounter. The finding proved the validity of this model for measuring quality of services in Islamic banks. Furthermore, all of CARTER's six dimensions were rated highly by KFH customers.

Nalini Prava Tripathy (2006) in her study on "A Service Quality Model for Customers in Public Sector Banks" has remarked that the banks have shifted from "Product-centric Model" to a "Customer Centric model" because customer satisfaction has been considered as the key determinant of business growth. In this context, she has made an attempt to analyze the factors that are necessary in influencing the investment decision of the customers of the public sector bank and also suggested suitable marketing strategies to attract customers.

Kitisuda (2006) studied a survey of customer satisfaction with spa services at Sivalai Spa. Both first-time and repeated customers were satisfied with the spa services on a high level. They were satisfied with the following service dimensions: responsiveness, empathy, reliability, assurance, and tangibility of the service quality at Sivalai Spa. Most customers agreed that the location of the spa was the most important factor for the spa. They suggested that the food and beverage facilities should be improved. Moreover, the study showed that there were four demographic factors that influenced the service quality at Sivalai Spa which were gender, age, nationality, and income.

Service Quality

Service quality is an overall evaluation or performance of any sector. It can be said that the satisfaction of a consumer. The high quality of satisfaction serves the service quality in the best and the service quality can be achieving success among competing services. There are several models used to measure service quality. The most frequently used service quality scales are SERVQUAL and SERVPERF measure the functional quality. Functional quality includes qualification of human relations in organizations and a keyword of this relation is communication.

Scope of the Study

The study helps the respondents to disclose their perception of the Bharat LPG service. Previous researchers' studies have focused on customers' perception and expectation of service quality dimensions in different sector and no research study has focused on Bharat gas. Hence the current study explores service quality perception of Bharat LPG gas from customer point of view of in Salem city.

Objectives of the Study

- To study perception of users towards Bharat LPG in Domestic.
- To analyze the problems faced by the customers.
- To know the customer suggestions to improve the quality of service.

Methodology of the Study

In this study, in order to know the service quality perception of Bharat gas services primary as well as secondary collected. The questionnaire was used to collect the data from 150 users of Bharat Gas in Salem city through Simple random method.

Results and Discussion

An attempt has been made to study the perceptions of user and problems faced by the users. The Average scores have been adopted to know the problems of users related to the services.

Table- 1 Perception of Services Provided by the Agencies

SL. NO.	PARTICULARS	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
1	Providing service as Prompt	31	60	40	9	10
2	Response to your queries	8	45	72	11	14
3	The sincerity of solving your problem	10	29	51	54	6
4	The willingness of employee to help you	11	20	53	57	9
5	Personal attention received from the employee	17	65	48	9	11
6	The ability of employee to understand your specific needs	12	39	78	6	15
7	Telling when the service will be exactly performed	9	58	35	36	12
8	Giving customer individual attention	15	65	54	10	6
9	Maintaining error free records	20	64	49	12	5
10	Employees who are consistently courteous	14	69	47	16	4

(Source: primary data)

Interpretation:

From the above table mentioned that the 60 respondents are agreed with prompt services of agencies, 72 respondents are Neutral with responses of customers queries, 54 respondents are disagreed with agency's sincerity to solving the problems of users, 57 respondents are disagreed in willingness of employee's help to users, 65 respondents are agreed in personal attention received from employees, 78 respondents are neutral with understand specific needs of customers, and 69 respondents were agreed with consistently courteous. It is concluded from the above table, majority respondents are agreed towards the perception of service provided by the agencies.

Table – 2 Problem of Service

SL. NO.	PARTICULARS	High	Medium	Low
1	Problems with gas booking	67	59	24
2	Poor communication on gas booking & delivery time	56	64	30
3	Irregularity of increasing price	90	42	18
4	Delayed supply of refilled cylinders	48	63	39
5	Waiting time to get the new LPG connection and additional	49	76	25
6	Door delivery	59	64	27

(Source: Primary data)

Interpretation:

From the above table shows that the majority of the respondents feel that they have high level problems in gas booking, getting new connection, prompt delivery, irregularity of price, door delivery etc. Some of the respondents said that they have faced medium level problems in poor communication in gas booking and delayed in refilled cylinder, waiting for new connection and door delivery. Hence, the results concluded that out of 150 respondents, majority of users have high problems in various aspects.

Findings

- The rural and illiterate people having a problem with booking of a gas.
- The Refilling the cylinder is over delay.
- The customer often seeing leakages on cylinder while delivery.
- The irregularity in increasing the price of the LPG.

Suggestions

- The company should concentrate to reduce its price on both Domestic and Commercial cylinders.
- The agencies should make easy towards new connection or reconnection process according to the users convenience.
- Agencies should give online facility for booking the gas.
- Some of the respondents gave suggestion regarding Company should provide pipe line LPG underground facility. It will save a lot of money, time.

Conclusion

The customer is the king of every business organization and the service quality is the main motive of the service sector industries. Hence the researcher has conducted study on service quality perceptions of Bharat LPG users in Salem City. The study indicates that the customers of Bharat LPG agencies are agreed with their services. The researcher gives suggestions on behalf of the customer for further improve the services of Bharat LPG agencies. Hence the agencies should take necessary actions to improve the quality of the service to customers.

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