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Applicability of Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) in India

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to find out the applicability of Retail Service Quality scale (RSQS) in the departmental stores of TamilNadu.

In the study a sample of 250 shoppers from one established department store were surveyed to find out the applicability of Retail Service Quality. Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to explore the retail service quality factor structure. The data is analysed using SPSS 16.0 and the results were compared between two branches. The factor analysis reveals the determinants of service quality in the departmental store setup.

Keywords : Retail Service Quality, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Reliability

A satisfying exchange relationship between the consumer and the provider must, from the consumer perspective, provide customer satisfaction. Boulding, Kalra, Staelin and Zeithaml (1993), and Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) described customer satisfaction as the difference between observed and expected quality. The difference is described as the "disconfirmation" or "quality gap." A positive gap suggests the product exceeds expectations while a negative gap suggests the product quality does not meet expectations.

Service quality increase customer retention and leads to repeat customer purchase behaviour (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) which ultimately increases the market share of the retailer. Research indicates that customers' satisfied with service quality are most likely to remain loyal (Wong and Sohal, 2003). Because of change in business environment, Indian customers are expecting more quality service (Angur, Natarajan and jahera, 1999) and retailers can no longer afford to dissatisfy the customers in service issues (Firoz and Maghrabi, 1994). Service quality is considered as a tool to increase the brand image of the store and act as a positioning tool (Mehta, Lalwani and Han, 2000).

According to Gagliano and Hathcote (1994), retail services are classified into "Store Services", the extent to which variety, quality and dependability of service can be obtained, and "Sales Service", the extent to which prompt and individual service attention can be achieved. So it is imperative that retailers should concentrate on both store and sales service to get an overall service quality objective.

Service Quality Models

In the literature review of service quality the SERVQUAL model was mentioned as the fundamental method and instrument to measure service quality. The SERVQUAL model is used as a diagnostic tool for the measurement of customer service and identifies the customer satisfaction towards the service offers. Parasuraman et.al (1985) developed the conceptual framework for the SERVQUAL model and the model was refined in 1985, 1991, 1993 and 1994 (Parasuraman et.al., 1988, 1991, 1993, 1994).

SERVPERF Model

Cronin and Taylor (1992) developed a "performance-based" service quality measurement scale called SERVPERF. The

major difference between SERVQUAL and SERVPERF is that SERVQUAL operationalizes service quality by comparing the perceptions of the service received with expectations, while SERVPERF maintains only the perceptions of service quality. The SERVPERF scale consists of 22 perception items excluding any consideration of expectations.

Retail Service Quality Model

Service quality in retailing is different from other service environments (Finn and Lamb, 1991; Gagliano and Hathcote, 1994). Since the retail service is unique in nature, measuring retail service quality will have to be different from the conventional service quality measurement. To overcome the above mentioned constraint in service quality model, Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz (1996) developed the retail service quality scale (RSQS) for measuring service quality in the retail setup (Table 1).

Table 1
Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS)
"Table 1 about here"

S. No	Dimensions	Definitions
1	Physical aspects	Retail store appearance and store layout
2	Reliability	Retailers keep their promises and do the right things
3	Personal interaction	Retail store personnel are courteous, helpful, and inspire confidence in customers
4	Problem solving	Retail store personnel are capable to handle returns and exchanges, customers' problems and complaints
5	Policy	Retail store's policy on merchandise quality, parking, operation hours, and credit cards

Source: Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz. A Measure of Service Quality for Retail Stores: Scale Development and Validation, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Winter 1996

Table 4
Factor Analysis
“Table 4 about here”

S.No	Factor Name	Factor Description	Rotated Component Matrix					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Keeping Promises	Returns and Exchanges	0.856					
		Store Promises	0.817					
		Handle Customer Complaints	0.786					
		Solving Interest	0.765					
2	Personal Interaction	Employees Never Too Busy		0.835				
		Safe Transactions		0.778				
		Materials Associated		0.629				
		Individual Attention		0.592				
3	Service Ability	Exact time of Service			0.707			
		Employees Courteous			0.654			
		Prompt Service			0.579			
		Promised Service			0.556			
4	Physical Evidence and ServiceScope	Physical Facilities				0.782		
		Store public Areas				0.620		
		Modern Outlook				0.601		
		Store Move Around				0.494		
5	Creating trust	Store Performance					0.658	
		Error Free Transaction					0.628	
6	Convenience	Convenient Parking						0.716
		Operating Hours Convenient						0.543

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

The Exploratory factor analysis indicates that the retail store's service quality depends more on human factors. Out of 6 factors influencing the Retail Service quality, 3 factors are based on employees' service ability and it shows that the service parameters are dominant in retail service quality setup also.

Since the retail environment consists of both goods and services, the retail store has to give equal importance to both products and providing better service in the store. The analysis shows that the service quality in a retail environment is a combination of both pure service and providing better products and is based on Stores' interior and layout. The Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) used extensively in Western

countries for understanding the customer opinion on retail store's service quality found to be useful in Indian retail store environment also.

Conclusion

RSQS helps the retailers to detect most needed areas within the store and focus its resources on improving the service quality. Retailers applying multi-dimensional service quality scale developed and used internationally to Indian retail settings need to understand the model factor structure and scale adaptation. Since the organized retail stores are growing in India, the focus should also on finding the customer preferences towards store, products, employee involvement, stores' perceived image in the minds of the customer.

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