



## Service Quality Perception of Private Hospitals with Special Reference to Lotus Hospital in Erode

### KEYWORDS

Service Quality, SERVQUAL, Hospital, Problems

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**ABSTRACT** *Service quality and patients satisfaction have been extensively researched in the profit sector, but are also important in the non-profit sector. Specialty hospitals and health spas operate in the non-profit sector in Erode. Hospitals that work in the non-profit sector and especially those that see their future in the health tourism market need to pay attention to service quality and patients satisfaction. Although specialty hospitals are a vital segment of the Erode health system, there has not been enough research regarding service quality and patients satisfaction measurement in that sector. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the impact of service quality on patients' satisfaction in the healthcare sector with special reference to Lotus hospitals in Erode. For this 115 in-patients were selected in a random basis. From their opinion about the service quality of the Lotus Hospitals have collected and presented in a tabular form. Further, to examine the service quality perception, chi-square test and Henry Garrett Ranking Technique have been used for examine the problems faced by them. The researcher found*

### INTRODUCTION

For a long time, service quality and customer satisfaction have been in the spotlight of scientists as well as marketing professionals who are aware of their importance to the survival and success of a company in the market. The belief is that to gain competitive advantage it is necessary to take into account the quality of services which, in comparison with products, possess certain specific characteristics. In addition to the profit sector, customer orientation is increasingly being applied in the healthcare industry.

Service quality is a concept described as elusive and abstract by the researchers A. Parasuraman, V.Zeithaml and L.L.Berry in 1985. Reflecting this understanding they developed a conceptual model of service quality that includes the following dimensions : reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding and tangibles. This hypothetical model analyses service quality as a construct that is similar to a viewpoint that results from a comparison between consumers' service expectations and insights of the performance they have received on those dimensions.

In the last decades the concepts of service quality and customer satisfaction have also received increasing attention in the healthcare industry. However, because the healthcare industry has its own specific traits, its attitude towards clients and service quality differs somewhat to the attitude in other industries. In addition to certain specific circumstances determined by the healthcare system in which organizations operate in different countries, differences are evident in terms of healthcare products and healthcare consumers. First of all, the products and services that make up the healthcare products are unique and patients perceive them as a complex mix of services. Therefore, it is difficult to define and measure their quality. They are characterized by a lack of substitution, and healthcare organizations often provide only one type of service for a particular need. A big difference compared with other sectors is evident in defining the consumer. At the broadest level, all people represent a potential market for healthcare

products. Sooner or later everyone will need a particular medical service or product. Motives that encourage people to address healthcare institutions are diagnosis, prevention and treatment of disease, but also a desire to enhance well-being or quality of life. The new generation of healthcare consumers, such as patients, family of patients and potential consumers, demands improved quality of service, increased satisfaction, medical error reduction, and prevention of diseases. Therefore, in the present circumstances, more attention should be paid to service quality and customer satisfaction.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Sorab Sadri, (2015), it is found in the research that the rendering quality service is a key to survival and success today. There is a gap between the quality rendered by service provider and quality required by patient, which needs to be measured. Service quality can be described in terms of (i) objective characteristics such as service time, wait time etc. that can be easily quantified and (ii) perceptual characteristics of the patients, which includes various dimensions of service quality. In this paper, they were evaluating the requirements of Health Care Services as perceived by patients by developing a Questionnaire for measuring Service Quality on the basis of a hypothesized model. The responses will be evaluated using Factor Analysis to assess whether the factors identified in the model were significantly influencing Service Quality in Hospitals and to develop a working model which can also be used for developing necessary managerial strategies for achieving the ultimate objectives of Patient Satisfaction. Sreenivas and Srinivasa Rao, (2015) obtained in the research that the Physical evidence is important when consumers have little on which to judge the actual quality of service they will rely on these cues, just as they rely on the cues provided by the people and the service process. Physical evidence cues provide excellent opportunities for the hospital to send consistent and strong messages to the service utilisers. The broad objective for which the research have been undertaken is to investigate and compare the physical evidence in selected super-specialty hospitals and

making suitable suggestions on the basis of statistical analysis of perceptions collected from Doctors, Nurses and Administrative Personnel. The collected data is analyzed by applying descriptive and inferential statistical techniques such as Mean and Standard Deviation. The Mean scores were in the range of 2.03 to 2.26 and S.D. in the range of 0.26 to 0.47 in APOLLO and CARE respectively, on a 5 point scale indicating physical evidence of the sample hospitals is agreeable to the respondents.

Sugandha Sirohi, and Rajendra Singh, (2016) examined in the research that the service Quality Evaluation had become a vital aspect of medical care. Hospitals have expanded in terms of availability of specialties, improved technologies, facilities and increased competition and the expectations of patients and their relatives have increased many fold. The patients and their relatives coming to the hospital not only expect world-class treatment but also other facilities to make their stay comfortable in the hospital. Knowledge of expectation combined with understanding of perceived service quality facilitates designing and implementing programs to satisfy patients. The study was conducted with an objective of measuring service quality of IPD patients in a private hospital of Indore District of Madhya Pradesh. Cross-sectional study was conducted by collecting primary data from 422 IPD patients on the day of discharge using SERVQUAL questionnaire developed by Parasuraman et al. As per the results of the study the major reason of choosing the hospital for treatment was good word-of-mouth from old patients and from senior consultants, infrastructure, proximity of hospital and expert clinical and non-clinical supportive staff. It was found that patients were highly satisfied with the basic amenities, behavior of doctors and staff of the hospital, timely medication, friendly hospital procedures and transparent billing system. Research findings discussed demonstrate that the more a patient is satisfied the more he/she is expected to recommend the hospital to other patients who need healthcare services. Therefore hospitals should implement patient satisfaction measurement as a quality indicator and thereby actively seek to improve the services provided. The main objective of the study is to measure the service quality of IPD (Inpatient Department) patients in a private hospital of Indore District of Madhya Pradesh.

Rabi Wada, et al., (2016) obtained in the research that the Nisa Premier Hospital (Nisa) is a private for-profit hospital established in 1996 in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja Nigeria. The main purpose of this work is to provide an efficient tool for determining the domains of SERVQUAL that influences patients return intentions in a typical privately owned hospital in Nigeria that is striving towards world class standard. The study adopted a cross-sectional and case study sample based survey design using a modified SERVQUAL structured questionnaire. A total of 205 questionnaires were analysed in this study, thereby yielding a valid response rate of about 46%. Results of the percentage distribution of items within each domain that influenced patients return intention were rated in the following order; Tangibles (83%), Assurance (77%), Empathy (72), Responsiveness (74%) and Reliability (66%). Binary logistic regression analysis following six-sigma quality improvement methodology enhanced the modelling approach and indicated two items within the five domains of SERVQUAL, i.e. reliability and empathy with p-values <.05 as responsible for the return intentions. The means by which patients finance their healthcare did not influence this. However, findings from the study indicated that the employees sympathetic, reassuring and putting patients' best interests at

heart were the key factors influencing patient return intention at Nisa. Suggested improvement strategy entails improving areas of shortfalls, fostering the domain items noted as point of strength, developing new items within the SERVQUAL domains and revalidate findings periodically. It is anticipated that findings from this study can be adapted to other similar business concern in the healthcare industry.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the socio-economic status of the selected sample respondents whose are getting treatment in Lotus Hospitals, Erode.
- To examine the service quality perception of the patients who enjoyed the services offered by Lotus Hospitals, Erode.

### METHODOLOGY

Empirical research is used to determine patients' perceptions and expectations of service quality in Lotus Hospitals for medical rehabilitation. SERVQUAL instrument was used to measure the service quality. The SERVQUAL questionnaire included an expectations and perceptions section, each consisting of 34 statements. In addition, the questionnaire contained an extra section relating to demographics and an overall question on the impression of quality of the service provided. One hundred and four (115) satisfactorily completed questionnaires were collected randomly.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table shows the socio-economic profile of the selected sample respondents.

**Table 1 : Socio-Economic Profile of the respondents**

Socio-Economic Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Below 25 Yrs.	16	13.9
26 – 35 Yrs.	37	32.2
36 – 45 Yrs.	47	40.9
Above 45 Yrs.	15	13.0
Total	115	100.0
Gender		
Male	43	37.4
Female	72	62.6
Total	115	100.0
Occupation		
Govt. Employee	14	12.2
Private Employee	29	25.2
Agriculture	21	18.3
Business	39	33.9
Others (House wives, unemployed, students, etc.)	12	10.4
Total	115	100.0
Educational Status		
No Formal Education	32	27.8
School level	25	21.7
College Level	37	32.2
Professional	21	18.3
Total	115	100.0
Purpose of visit		
Medical and health programs	46	40.0
Preventive medicine and Wellness	69	60.0
Total	115	100.0
Frequency of coming		
First time visitor	39	33.9
Regular visitor	76	66.1
Total	115	100.0

It is found from the analysis that 13.9 percent of the respondents belongs to below 25 years aged, 32.2 percent of the respondents belongs to 26-35 years, 40.9 percent of

the respondents belongs to 36-45 years and 13.0 percent of the respondents belongs to above 45 years aged. It is noted from the analysis that 37.4 percent of the patients are male and 62.6 percent of the patients are female. In the case of occupational status of the respondents, 12.2 percent of the respondents are working as government employee, 25.2 percent of the respondents are private employee, 18.3 percent of the respondents are engaged in business and 10.4 percent of the respondents having some other status like housewives, unemployed, students, etc. While considering the educational status of the respondents, 27.8 percent of the respondents have no formal education, 21.7 percent of the respondents are having school level education, 32.2 percent of the respondents are having college level education and 18.3 percent of the respondents are professionally qualified. Around 40.0 percent of the respondents are visiting Lotus hospitals for the purpose of medical and health programs and 60.0 percent of the patients are visiting Lotus hospitals for the purpose of preventive medicine and wellness. Further, 33.9 percent of the patients are first time visitor and 66.1 percent of the patients are visiting the Lotus hospital regularly.

**SERVQUAL Model**

Descriptive statistic was applied to determine patient expectations and perceptions regarding service quality at the Lotus Hospitals, Erode. In addition, gap analysis between patient expectations and perceptions of service quality was performed. Results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 : Service quality gap between patients' perceptions and expectations in the Lotus Hospitals**

No.	Item	Expected Service Quality (E)		Perceived Service Quality (P)		SERV-QUAL Gap (P - E)	Paired samples t-test
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Modern-looking-equipment	4.23	1.27	4.12	1.31	-0.11	0.811
2	Visually appealing physical facilities	4.19	1.30	4.03	1.32	-0.16	1.037
3	Neat hospital staff	4.87	0.50	4.74	0.81	-0.13	1.400
4	Cost inventory and furniture	4.65	0.71	4.44	1.17	-0.21	1.829
5	Clean equipment and devices	4.93	0.35	4.63	0.93	-0.30	3.186*
6	Healthy and various food and drink	4.80	0.64	5.72	1.71	-1.08	6.296*
7	Clean and tidy hospital	4.93	0.38	4.58	1.08	-0.35	3,207*
8	Equipment and facilities in accordance with the service (pool, sauna...)	4.79	0.55	4.37	1.06	-0.42	3.536*

No.	Item	Expected Service Quality (E)		Perceived Service Quality (P)		SERV-QUAL Gap	Paired samples t-test
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
9	Appropriate location	4.61	0.83	4.74	0.81	0.13	1.316
10	Service without delays	4.80	0.58	4.36	1.22	-0.44	3.494*
11	Interest in solving patients' problems	4.77	0.58	4.48	1.12	-0.29	2.322**
12	Performing services right the first time	4.67	0.77	4.38	1.22	-0.29	2.205**
13	Performing service in the promised time	4.80	0.51	4.46	1.16	-0.34	2.932*
14	Knowing the exact time when service will be performed	4.82	0.53	4.33	1.23	-0.49	3.939*
15	Hospital staff provides prompt service	4.59	0.90	4.38	1.19	-0.21	1.407
16	Willingness to help patients	4.83	0.51	4.55	1.05	-0.28	2.485**
17	Hospital staff has time to answer patients' questions	4.74	0.72	4.55	1.01	-0.19	1.669
18	Hospital staff instills confidence	4.88	0.48	4.51	1.06	-0.37	3.341*
19	Courteous hospital staff	4.79	0.60	4.53	1.03	-0.26	2.271**
20	Hospital staff has knowledge to answer questions	4.76	0.63	4.54	0.97	-0.22	2.008**
21	Feeling safe and secure	4.84	0.50	4.64	0.80	-0.20	2.281**
22	Hospital provides its services without delay	4.51	0.93	4.22	1.29	-0.29	1.906

No.	Item	Expected Service Quality (E)		Perceived Service Quality (P)		SERVQUAL Gap	Paired samples t-test
23	Hospital staff provides services professionally	4.83	0.58	4.66	0.89	-0.17	9.342*
24	Hospital provides individual attention	4.41	0.98	4.30	1.25	-0.11	0.742
25	Hospital staff provides personal attention	4.41	0.98	4.38	1.22	-0.03	0.270
26	Patients' best interests at heart	4.68	0.80	4.34	1.15	-0.34	2.819*
27	Understanding patients' specific needs	4.41	1.14	4.41	1.02	0.00	0.000
28	Quickly resolving problems of patients	4.55	0.87	4.41	1.06	-0.14	1.032
29	Ease of finding one's way around the hospital	4.79	0.58	5.85	1.69	-0.94	5.255*
30	Available and clear information at the hospital	4.85	0.46	4.09	1.47	-0.76	5.023*
31	Various medical programs are provided	4.74	0.59	4.27	1.20	-0.47	4.209*
32	Various entertainment programs and social activities are provided	4.28	1.07	4.50	2.18	-1.78	7.529*
33	A choice of sports and recreational programs are provided	4.27	1.15	4.86	2.12	-1.41	6.347*
34	Hospital offer adapted to the contemporary trends and needs of patients	4.55	0.88	5.48	1.64	-1.07	5.969*

Note : \* - Sig. at 1% level; \*\* - Sig. at 5% level

It is noted from the above table the respondents had high expectations as all mean values were above 4. Even though the patients were on the whole satisfied with the level of service quality at the Lotus hospitals, a negative SERVQUAL gap was evident, which means that perceived service quality

was lower than expected. The paired t-test was used to assess the significant mean difference (gap) between patients' expectations and perceptions of service quality (SERVQUAL gap). A slightly significant difference was present in all dimensions of the adapted SERVQUAL scale.

However, the largest and statistically significant gap exists among attributes relating to other services that enable the lotus hospital to provide services in the health market: healthy and various food and drink ( $t = 6.296$ ), various entertainment programs and social activities ( $t = 7.529$ ), a variety of sports and recreational programs ( $t = 6.347$ ) and offer adapted to market trends and needs of patients ( $t = 5.969$ ).

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The following findings were found from the analysis.

It is found from the analysis that majority of the patients belongs to 36-45 years aged, female respondents, business people, educated at the college level, taking treatment for preventive medicine and wellness and they are regular visitor for the Lotus Hospitals, Erode.

From the SERVQUAL Model, it is found that that factors like healthy and various food and drink, various entertainment programs and social activities, a variety of sports and recreational programs and offer adapted to market trends and needs of patients are having maximum gap and the selected patients are highly expected the services from the Lotus hospitals, Erode.

The results have practical implications and suggest some recommendations to the Lotus Hospital management. Patients attach considerable importance to the cleanliness and neatness of the facility and equipment, the professionalism of staff, their attitude towards patients and the reliability of service delivery. However, in order to gain competitive advantage in the health market, specialty hospitals must improve the quality of services that come out of the field of medical services, such as hospitality services, sports and recreation, entertainment and social programs, and they should meet the expectations of patients in accordance with market trends. Therefore, in order to improve service quality of the Lotus Hospitals, Erode, it is necessary to understand the importance of additional services, as well as to continue the survey of patient satisfaction and service quality.

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