



A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON REVIEW OF E-SERVICE QUALITY IN E-RETAILING

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ABSTRACT Measurement and improvement of e-service quality is important for sustaining competitive advantage of an e-retail web site. If online retailers understand what dimensions customers use to judge quality, they can take appropriate actions to monitor and enhance performance on those dimensions and remedy service failures. This paper focuses on exploring the effective factors in successful electronic retailing. Literature predicts that e-service quality measures in e-retailing have great importance in achieving high customer base. This paper proposes a conceptual model for measuring e-service quality in e-retailing. Eight dimensions Responsiveness, reliability, ease of use, security, website design, responsiveness, contact and fulfillment had been identified. The results of this paper may help to develop a proper scale to measure the e-service quality in e-retailing, which may assist to maintain and improve the performance.

KEYWORDS :

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Electronic Retailing

E-retailing is a division of e-commerce consists of selling of retail goods on the Internet. E-retail term has achieved a remarkable popularity as the starting of the internet revolution, all over the world. E-commerce usually stands for business-related transactions or interaction among the organizations and individuals virtually. Electronic Retailing is now quickly becoming a substitute or supplementary medium for the retailers as well as company to present and sell their products to the heavy number of potential clients. Even in its development form, e-retailing is bound to continue and catch stronger position in Indian economy because of the numerous benefits it offers to both the buyers as well as sellers in terms of flexibility of purchase timings and cost savings.

The growth of the internet has allowed the new retail format and motivated the existing retailers to add up at an e-retailing model as well. E-commerce and e-retailing from a business viewpoint offer an opportunity to cater to consumers across remote areas. These days, most of the conventional brick & mortar retailers, companies and service providers have undertaken into the field of e-retailing because of convenience and benefits offered like cater to consumers across distant geographies, no functioning timings, unlimited shelf space – by taking into consideration the rising inflation and depression in most of the economies, it is very necessary for the retailers to cut down their cost of operations and reduce the prices.

B. E-Retailing in India

Retail industry has observed major revolution in the changing technology oriented business scenario of 21st century in India. It is expected that online purchase are increased by 78% in 2016 from 66% in 2015 due to attractive deals and aggressive marketing of over expanding range of merchandise from cloths to jewellery, from books to electronics and about 55 million customer purchase something online in 2015 and expected to grow 80 million in this year with better infrastructure in terms of logistics, broadband and internet-ready devices (ASSOCHAM-PwC). With the growth of internet application by retail users in India, many online retailing companies have started their operations online instead of the traditional ways. The use of internet today has become necessary for every business activity.

Figure 1. Online retail in India



Source: Forrester research online retail forecast 2012-2018 (Asia Pacific)

Forrester expects the online buyer population in the country to grow from 19.9 million in 2012 to 53.8 million in 2015 and expected to grow 128.5 million in 2018. Research also reveals that online retail spending in India increased from \$1.3 billion in 2012 to \$5 billion in 2015 and anticipated to grow up to \$16 billion in 2018 (**India Online Retail Forecast, 2013 To 2018**).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Many researchers in the field of service quality have done various researches. As a result the literature is very rich in terms of model and measurement. But the subject matter of e-service quality is relatively new; efforts had been made for collection of the different measures of e-service quality.

A. E-Service Quality

Zeithaml et al. (2000) state that e-service is web services which are delivered through the Internet. Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra (2000) state that Internet service quality is the extent to which a web site facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery of products or services. In e-service customer's interaction or contacts with service providers is through technology, such as their web sites. Customers have to rely entirely on information technology in an e-service encounter. Rust and Lemon (2001) conceptualize e-service as information service or self-service since the primary value exchanged between the two parties (e.g. buyer and seller) is information.

B. E-Service Quality and Measures

There are number of methods that allow for the measurement of a company's e-service profile as perceived by its customers. The best-known methods are:

E-SERVICE QUALITY MEASURES

Sr. No.	Instrument	Developed by	E-service Quality Dimensions
1	WEBQUAL	Loiacono et al. (2000)	Information fit to task, interaction, Trust, Response time, Design, Intuitiveness, Visual appeal, innovativeness, Flow, Integrated communication, business processes and substitutability
2	e-SQ	Zeithaml et al (2000)	Reliability, Responsiveness, Access, Flexibility, Ease of navigation, Efficiency, Assurance, Security, price knowledge, Site aesthetics and personalization
3	SITE-QUAL	Yoo and Donthu (2001)	Ease of use, Processing speed, Aesthetic Design and interactive responsiveness
4	E-SQUAL	Zeithaml et al (2002)	Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, integration of communication, Assurance, Quality of information, Empathy
5	E-S-Qual & RecS-Qual	Parasuraman et al (2005)	Efficiency, System Availability, Fulfillment, Privacy & Responsiveness, Compensation, Contact

C. E-Service Quality in E-Retailing

Various researchers have been conducted studies regarding different issues covering to e-service in E-retailing. Some of such studies have been discussed:

Parasuraman et al. (2005) conceptualized, created, purified and examined a multiple-item scale (E-S-QUAL) for measuring the service quality delivered by Websites which provide products online. According to the study two different scales were required for analysing e-service quality. These two scales are E-S-QUAL and E-RecS-QUAL. The E-S-QUAL scale consist of four dimensions: system availability, fulfillment, privacy and efficiency and second scale, E-RecS-QUAL scale consists of three dimensions: compensation, responsiveness, and contact. Second scale is suitable only for the customers who are not regular user of websites. Further Kim et al. (2006) extended the dimensions developed by Parasuraman et al. into a 9 dimensions scale in e-service quality in order to use them for content analysis and evaluation of web sites in the apparel retailing sector. The study modified the E-S-QUAL and e-RecSQUAL scales by increasing extra three dimensions that are: information, graphic style and privacy and separated the compensation factor. They developed nine dimensions to measure the service quality of internet apparel retailers. Zeithaml et al. (2002) conducted a critical review of extant literatures on the internet service quality literature and identified seven factors of the internet service quality: efficiency, reliability, fulfillment, responsiveness, privacy, compensation and contact. These seven dimensions were further classified into two categories: a core service scale for measuring the customers' perceptions of the e-retailers' service quality while customers experienced no problems with the site (efficiency, fulfilment, reliability and privacy) and a recovery service scale for assessing the e-retailers' service recovery when problems occurred (compensation, responsiveness, and contact).

Kim and Lennon (2006) identified online service attributes that facilitates efficient and affective shopping, purchasing and delivery based on the modified E-S-QUAL scale and to evaluate the degree to which current online retailers provide such service attributes as an objective measure of service performance. Ruyter et al. (2001) stated that the e - service procedure is based on information flow via information quality and information technology is vital in formulations of customer's satisfaction.

Zeithaml et al. (2000) uncovered 11 dimensions of the online retailing service quality in a sequence of group-focused interviews, which were the efficiency, access, reliability, ease of navigation, flexibility, personalization, responsiveness, security/privacy, site aesthetics, assurance/trust, and price knowledge. After that Barnes and Vidgen (2001) provided the SERVQUAL model in order to create a group of quality items. Overall, the developed WebQual scale emphasis on technical quality characteristic like ease of use and is thus more important for the field of interface design than for holistic quality measurement.

Yoo and Donthu (2001) developed and validated a psychometrically accurate instrument to measure the perceived quality of an e-retail site called SITEQUAL. This scale can be useful to assess the quality of internet site quality affects customer behaviour, such as site patronization, search patterns and buying decision. Wolfenbarger and Gilly, (2003) developed a scale called e-tailQ. The study was based upon online and offline focus groups, an online survey of a customer panel and a categorization task. The analysis suggested that there are four dimensions which are strongly analytical of customer judgments of service quality and satisfaction, customer loyalty and behaviour toward the website. These variables are fulfillment/reliability, website design, privacy/security and customer service.

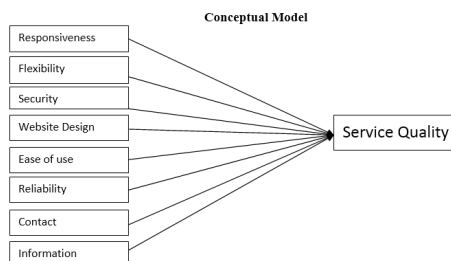


Figure 2. Proposed Framework for E-service Quality in E-Retailing

Responsiveness refers to a capacity to deal efficiently with complaints and promptness of the service (Santos 2003). According to Janda et al. (2002), customers expect Internet retailers to respond to their inquiries quickly. Customers also want confirmation of each transaction, relevant and accurate Emails' responses quickly handle customer complaints, e-mail for special offers, fair Compensation for problems.

Flexibility is considered as Choice of ways to pay, ship, buy, search for, and return (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra's 2000). It refers to various mode of payment such as credit card, debit card, net banking and cash on delivery. Flexibility in terms of searching product category wise, brand wise, price wise, etc. Also refers to clear policies of return payments.

Security According to Davis and Benamati (2003), security is a set of techniques, procedures, and safeguards designed to protect hardware, software, data and other system resources from unauthorized access, modification, use or theft. In addition, consumers are concerned about online payment security, privacy policy and reliability of the online store (Gefen, 2000) because all these factors will influence the consumers perceived quality of online purchase (Yoo and Donthu, 2001).

Website design In the virtual environment of e-service, the tangible elements should be concentrated on the website design since it constitutes the main access to organizations and to a successful purchase process. The deficiency of website design can result in a negative impression of the website quality to the customers and customer may exit the purchase process. Website is the starting point for customers to gain confidence.

Ease of use refers to a consumers' belief that no effort will be required to use a system; the effort includes both physical and mental effort and how easy it is to learn and use the system (Davis,1989). According to Jun (2004), ease of use will influence the consumers' perception in service quality. Ease of Use has been studied comprehensively in the framework of information technology acceptance and diffusion (Davis et al. 1989) and it is one of the vital measures for system adoption, user satisfaction, or IS success (Moore and Benbasat 1991).

Reliability Santos (2003) refers to reliability as the ability to perform the promised service consistently and accurately, including regularity of being up to date the web site, and accuracy of online shopping and billing. It also can be used to measure customer perceptions of e-service quality (Voss 2003). According to Zeithaml (2002), reliability is associated with the technical functioning of the website, particularly the level to which it is available and operation properly.

Contact is becoming more important to e-service quality. The availability of assistance through telephone or online representatives is known as Contact. Voss (2003) found that even though online buyers expect quick email responses from e- retailers, less than half the email responses were within one day and more than 40 percent took over one week to respond or did not respond at all.

Information Information is also an important factor of e-service quality (Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 2003. In addition, due to the absence of salespeople to answer shoppers' questions, it is particularly essential for online retailers to have needed information available on the web site (Kim and Stoel, 2005). Both verbal and visual information are used by consumers to form product suggestion (Smith, 1991).

Dimensions of E-retail Service Quality

Factors	Definition	Researchers
Responsiveness	Customer perception of getting the help when needed by computerized or human factors	Persuramen, Zeithml (2005), Samar I, Swaid, Rolf T Wigand(2007), Hongxiu li Rema suami (2009),Li et al (2009), Cheunh&lee (2005), Kithnger&lee(2005), Kim et al (2006)
Flexibility	Flexibility is considered as Choice of ways to pay, ship, buy, search for, and return.	Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Malhotra's (2000), Cox and Dale (2001)

Security	Security means freedom from danger, risk or doubt. Factors included are: physical safety, financial security, privacy and confidentiality.	Wolfinbarger and Giffy (2003), Bressolles (2006) Hongxiu li Rema suami (2009), Yoo & Banthu (2001), Anand (2007), Janda et al (2002), Gummerus et al(2004)
Website Design	Customer perception of the level the website interface is visually pleasing and well designed	Persuramen, Zeithml (2005), Jeo E collier (2006), Wolfinbarger and giffy (2003) Hongxiu li Rema suami (2009), Anand(2007)
Ease of use	The extents to which the website is easy to use and helps consumers complete their tasks easily.	Persuramen, Zeithml (2005), Boshoff(2007), Kim et al(2009), Gefen and Straub (2000) Janda et al. (2002) Kaynama and Black (2000) Kim and Lim (2001)
Reliability	Customer perception of reliability of the site (e.g., confirmation emails, order tracking functions) and accuracy of service promises(e.g., delivering what is ordered)	Samar I, Swaid, Rolf T Wigand(2007), Wolfinbarger and giffy (2003) Bressolles (2006) Hongxiu li Rema suami (2009), Yanget al(2003), Wolfinbager & giffy (2003)
Contact	The availability of assistance through telephone or online representatives is considered as Contact	Persuraman et al (2005) Kim et al(2006), Santo(2003), Li & Suomi (2009),
Information	Correct and accurate information related to products and services available on website	Bressolles (2006) Banes and vidgen (2002)

predicting etail quality Journal of Retailing, Volume 79(3), pp 183–198

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III. CONCLUSION:

A conceptual model is proposed for measuring the e-service quality in E-retailing after the focused group discussion. The dimensions in the proposed model are based on the literature and the earlier researches in the related Field. The proposed dimensions may have influence on e service quality. Determining the significant dimensions can help the e-retailer to improve the e-service quality, especially the validation of these dimensions is considered from both users and employees' point of view. The findings will lead to build a proper scale to measure the e-service quality in e-retailing, which will further help to improve the concert and efficiency of e-service quality to achieve the satisfaction of users. Consequently, it will lead to attain a competitive advantage for the E-retailer in their respective target markets.

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