

# Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction of Indian Railway

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**Abstract – In today's competitive market, businesses are increasingly realizing the value of cultivating and successfully maintaining customer relationships. Organizations must understand and fulfill the expectations of their customers in order to establish and maintain a good relationship with them. Today's businesses should concentrate not just on pleasing their customers, but also on delighting them. As a result, it has become critical for businesses to identify and assess the factors that lead to customer happiness or discontent in order to make the required adjustments based on consumer perceptions. Service quality, customer satisfaction, the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, service quality management (SQM) in Indian railroads, and the service quality gap are all discussed in this research. The study's emphasis is on service quality models.**

**Keywords – Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality Management, Service Quality Models**

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## INTRODUCTION

The industrialized nations' multi-dimensional advances in many sectors, particularly information technology, have paved the path for sophistication in virtually all areas. Organizations are placing a lot of faith in these advances, but they also need to know whether their services are better as a result of them. They need to know whether or not their consumers are pleased with them and how satisfied they are. The increasing expansion of service sectors throughout the globe, as well as the deregulation of many service industries, has prompted quality researchers to realize the significance of learning more about service performance. The number of companies operating and joining the services business is increasing as a result of a rise in the sector. Only those businesses that can better delight their customers and maintain the quality of their services will survive and thrive in an increasingly cutthroat competitive market. It is becoming more apparent that high-quality service is necessary for businesses to succeed (Parasuraman et al. 1988; Rust and Oliver 1994).

At this point, a thorough knowledge of the many variables that influence consumer assessment and satisfaction with a government service like Indian Railways is needed. Consumers' evaluations of a service, such as railroads, and therefore their happiness with it, are often based on their perceptions of the level of performance of a variety of variables. These variables need knowledge and

awareness, especially at a time when the competition for acquiring and keeping consumers is fierce. The goal of this research is to determine and analyze the value consumers place on different aspects of Indian Railways services. The research also seeks to determine how consumers' perceptions of these aspects' performance influence their overall satisfaction with Indian Railways services. As a result, the research seeks to highlight the areas where the Indian Railways administration should focus their efforts in order to improve consumer satisfaction.

## Service quality

Service quality is a key driver of corporate sustainability & critical to corporate achievement (Rust & Oliver, 1994). Many activities have been performed worldwide in research on service quality. Parasuraman's creation (1985, 1988, & 1994) of the original 22-item SERVQUAL instrument, 2, 3, 4. Investigators are provided with the opportunity to assess performance expectations of knowing, accurate, sensitive, confident & tangible five determinants. The three parts model Rust & Oliver (1994) includes service quality, product service deliveries to investigate quality of services but not a great number of investigators have utilized it, whereas the service product refers to technical quality. Rust & Oliver (1994), but support for similar models in the fields of retail and healthcare (Mc Alexandre, Kaldenberg & Koenig 1994), have not tested their conception. Moreover, the capability of

a service company is dependent on the consistent delivery of value to its customers, stated Kotler & Armstrong (1999). Satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure or disappointment from the comparison of perceived products with expectations.

The happiness of customers is thought to contribute from the point of view of the company to productive consumer behaviour. Several empirical studies have shown a link between quality of service & satisfaction (for example, Fornell, 1982; Taylor & Baker, 1994)[7]

### Customer satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction is the customer's primary mental status, consisting of two (1) pre-purchase perceptions (2) after purchase perception of results (Oliver 1997, Westbrook & Oliver 1991) . According to Levesque & McDougall (1996), however, the satisfaction of the customers with a service provider is conceived overall. Comparably, Andreessen et al. (1998) reported that satisfaction with customers is the accumulating experience in purchasing & consuming customers. Consequently, in this study the client satisfaction building is calculated by overall service satisfaction. Customer satisfaction generally refers to the above form of result in the literature on satisfaction. Moreover, this mental state, which researchers perceive as being cognitive, is thought to fall into a bipolar spectrum that is limited to low satisfaction at the bottom point of the image (expectations surpass performance perceptions) & high satisfaction at the higher end (perceptions of performance surpass expectations).

### Relationship between service quality & customer satisfaction

Suresh Chandar et al. (2003) discovered strong connections between service quality and customer satisfaction, while emphasizing that the two concepts are conceptually distinct from the viewpoint of the customers. Spreng and Mackoy (1996) showed that service quality contributes to customer satisfaction while working on Oliver's model (1997). This link was found by Ribbink et al. (2004) in the e-commerce industry as well.

### Service quality management (SQM) in Indian railways

Allen & DiCesare (1976) considered that public transport service quality had two categories: user & non-user. It is made up of speed , reliability, comfort , convenience, protection, special services & inventions under the category of users. It includes system efficiency, pollution & demand for the non-user category. As a measure of accessibility , reliability, comfort , convenience & protection, Sillock(1981) developed service quality for the public transport industry. The quality and effectiveness metrics for public transport are generally divided into two groups. In the category of quality, the metrics

apply to the method of delivering services while the category of quality is used to assess how well the services delivered are related to their goals (Pullen 1993). The gap model of quality of service & transport quality definition demonstrated that quality of service must be assessed multidimensionally. Although the measures applied in the public transport industry are more humanistic or customer-related, most are far more mechanistic, have a more technological emphasis, or take more objective measures. Thus the researcher has updated and introduced three new dimensions to the attributes in the SERVQUAL model – the Service Product, Social Responsibility & Service Delivery for the development of the SCM model for calculating passenger services by rail. Research was conducted to assess railway passenger service quality by finding perceived customer loopholes.

### Service quality models

Many models to measure the quality of service provided by companies in many companies have been created. Due to its relationship to customer satisfaction, it is essential to analyse service quality models. Through its effect on customer satisfaction, customer loyalty &, of course, business profitability, quality of service has therefore become an important subject of concern for professionals , managers and investigators. The short debates on the models are as follows:

#### • Technical and functional quality model (Gronroos, 1984)

The perceived standard of service means that the organisation must match the service it is supposed to deliver & perceive to satisfy the needs of the customer. Three components of service quality were identified, namely: technical quality; quality functional & images.

1. Technical quality is the quality of what the customer receives as a consequence of contact with the service provider and it is essential for him & for his assessment of the quality of service.
2. How he / she achieves the technical result is functional consistency. For him and his / her opinions on service that he / she received this is important.
3. The image is very important to service companies, & expected primarily through technical & functional service quality, including other factors (tradition, ideology, speech, pricing & public relations).

- **Attribute service quality model (haywood-farmer, 1988)**

This model states that a service organization has - high quality! if it meets customer preferences and expectations consistently. In this model, each set of attributes forms an apex of the triangle. Even more attention on one of the components, excluding another, may be ideal for tragedy. For example, too much emphasis on procedures could give the consumer the idea that he is being processed in compliance with his sequence. The author tried to map various types of service settings to this model, depending on the level of touch & interaction, the intensity of work and the degree of customisation. For eg, services low on customer interaction and work intensity (services, freight transportation, etc.) are closer to the model's physical facilities & process characteristics. The model therefore suggested that careful attention should be paid at this moment to ensure equipment is efficient & easy to utilize for the consumer.

- **Synthesized model of service quality (brogowicz et al., 1990)**

Even if a consumer does not yet encounter the service but learns through word of mouth, publicity or other media communications, a service quality gap can occur. The prospective customers' expectations of service quality as well as the real perception of service quality encountered by the consumer must also be included.

This model seeks to integrate the conventional system for management, service design, operations & marketing. In a conventional management system, the aim of this model will be to define the dimensions related to service quality. Three considerations are considered for the synthesised model of service quality: business image, external pressures & conventional marketing as factors that affect technological and functional demands for quality

- **Performance only model (cronin & taylor, 1992)**

You contrasted measured discrepancies with the perception that expectations are only the best indicator of the quality of service. They argued that, within the Parasuraman et al. (1985) context, only measuring the quality of the service is conceptualised & calculated by means of performances that SERVPERF is used as a means to measure the quality of services so the performance alone is a means to measure the quality of the service. SERVQUAL confuses happiness & conduct, they argued. They also confirmed that the standard of service could be planned as an attitude!, & adequacy-importance model could be operationalized. In specific, instead of -performance-standards, they sustained this performance! Defines the quality of operation. Quality of service is

measured as per perceptions only with no standards and no weights of significance:

- **Ideal value model of service quality (mattsson, 1992)**

Most research on the quality of service – standards are viewed as proof that they have desired qualities as the criterion for assessment. Conversely, in the light of other criteria like knowledge, ideal, minimum tolerability & desirability, this problem should be discussed. The model encourages a value approach to quality of service and models it as a result of the satisfaction process. This value-based service quality model implies that the experience is compared to the expected ideal level. The implied negative dissatisfaction in a pre-conscious value is then believed to assess a higher degree of satisfaction! Degree of atmosphere. Cognitive mechanisms by which consumer service concepts are developed & modified must be given more attention

- **It alignment model (berkley, 1994)**

Investments in IT typically seek to boost efficiency quality with little focus on enhancements to customer service & long-term customer efficiency. This model connects the organisation's resources and information strategies. It explains the use of IT to enhance the quality of services through a number of case studies in a variety of fields (banking, messaging, transportation, production & services).

This model explains in depth the utilize or use of information technology to enhance particular dimensions of service quality including reliability, reactivity, competence, access, communications, protection, customer understanding and knowledge. Some studies have also shown the use of IT for quality management (client data collection, tracking and service facilitation). It is also important to organise & align strategies on the quality of service & information system (IS) according to the model. The model outlines the service alignment mechanism & strategies.

- **Attribute & overall affect model (Dabholkar, 1996)**

For technology-based self-service options, the Author suggested two alternative model of service quality. The high cost of labour in service deliveries is making self-service a popular one day at a time. The model of attributes is based on the preferences of the customers. It is based on the cognitive method to decision-making, where customers utilize a compensatory mechanism to determine the characteristics to technology-based self-service to shape service quality expectations. The model's ultimate effect is focused on the consumer's sense of technology.

It is focused on an effective policy approach where customers use overall predispositions to shape self-service expectation quality for an autonomous service choice based on technology. The anticipated level of service would impact the purpose for both models to utilize the self-service approach based on technology.

#### **Model of perceived service quality & satisfaction (Spreng 1996)**

This model aims to increase awareness of the quality of service & customer satisfaction perceived in buildings. This model is a change to the Oliver model (1993). The model underlines the impact on the overall quality of service & consumer satisfaction of desires, perceived performance wishes, desired concordance & expectation discredit. These are assessed by 10 counselling features (comfort in appointing, friendliness for the staff, advisor listening to my questions, the advisor provided reliable details, the counsellor's expertise, continuity of counselling, long term planning assistance for the consultancy, the counsellor assisted in choosing the right courses to pursue, & advisor took a personal interest.

#### **PCP attributes model (Philip 1997)**

In the context of a hierarchical framework, based on 3 key attribute groups – pivotal, centre, & peripheral – the authors propose the model. Every service, according to the model, consists of three regions, that overlap, in which the vast majority of the dimensions & definitions utilised to describe the standard of service. These classifications are classified as — pivotal (outputs), core (inputs and processes) & peripheral (too).

The end product is established! Or output from the service encounter; in all other words, what the user wants and gets, if the service process is properly performed, or even take it away. The core attributes of customer engagement and/or negotiation could best be defined as the combination of individuals, processes & organisational structure of services, so as to achieve the pivotal attribute.

The third model level focuses on the attributes peripheral to which-incidentals extras can be calculated! Or frills to add the rhythm! for the service meeting and make the whole experience a total pleasure for the user. As a customer assesses a service meeting he is pleased that the key attributes are accomplished but the core & peripheral attributes will begin to gain value when the service is more frequently utilized.

- **Retail service quality & perceived value model (sweeney et al., 1997)**

The effect of quality of service on value & ability to engage through two alternative models in a given service meeting. The value may be considered as a

measure of what customers get & offer, implying a measure of advantages and sacrifices. (Network and other magazines, 1988). In this model, the value construct utilized is — money value!.

Model 1: This model highlights that both quality of service expectations affect the perception of value directly in addition to product quality & price expectations.

Model 2: the model stresses that practical service expectations often impact the willingness of the customer to buy. Functional service quality perceptions also influence perceptions of technical service quality, that, in turn, influence perceptions of product quality & have no direct impact on perceptions of value. An analysis of the model 2 adjustment index (superior than model 1) will substantially enhance the model by directly influence the perceived value of technical service quality.

- **Antecedents and mediator model (Dabholkar et. al., 2000)**

In order to provide a better understanding of philosophical problems relevant to service quality, a detailed service quality model requires an analysis of its contexts, implications, & mediators. This model explores such conceptual problems in the quality of service as: the related variables contributing to the better formulated quality of service as components or antecedents & relationship between consumer satisfaction & behavioural intentions.

- **Internal service quality model (Frost 2000)**

A quality model was developed by the authors on the basis of the GAP model principle (Parasuraman et al . 1985). This model assessed the size & relationship between internal customers (front-line personnel) & internal suppliers (support staff) within a large service organisation & calculated service quality.

The internal divide 1 indicates a disparity in the interpretation by support workers (internal provider) of the perceptions of primary staff (internal customers). Internal gap 2 is the crucial difference between quality of service & actual service, which contributes to an internal performance gap. Internal divide 3 is the divide centred on front-line workers (inner clients). The disparity is based on the difference in the quality of support staff (interior service provider) between the standards & perceptions of the front-line staff.

- **Internal service quality DEAmode (Soteriou, 2000)**

Service quality needs to be taken into consideration when determining the efficiency of a bank branch. The Branch may record high volumes of offered products & services and profit, but loses its long-term benefit due to the reduced quality of service. The authors presented a model of quality services that could be utilized for the best use of capital by a branch of the bank. The model does not seek to create quality-of-service initiatives, but rather guides how these measures can be taken to improve quality of service.

The model demonstrates resources not being used properly. There are two types of inputs to the model: consumables such as workers, time, space etc. & number of accounts in various categories. The model's performance is the level of service quality that the branch workers perceive. The Data Envelope Analysis model (DEA) compares how well these tools (inputs) are converted to achieve a customer base level of service (output). The DEA model recognises performer impairments and suggests ways to enhance them.

The DEA model for input minimum consumable resources would provide information about how much could be decreased with same service quality, while the DEA model for production maximisation provides information on how the quality of service may be increased by using the same customer resources.

- **Internet banking model (Broderick 2002)**

As a service provider, one of the big problems for the internet is how service companies should control service quality because remote formats change the contact and actions of their customers considerably. This study proposes and tests an Internet banking service quality model. The study explores how Internet banking custodians perceive & elements of this model through the participant observation & narrative analysis from the UK website culture. In the context of the internet, the five main characteristics of the service are considered to be central factors on perceived service quality: they are: the customer's views on the service; the image & credibility of the service organisation.

- **IT-based model (Zhu et al., 2002)**

This model highlights the importance of information technology (IT)-based service options. Service providers are using IT to reduce costs and create value-added services for their customers.

The IT-based service constructs is linked to service quality as measured by SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988, 1991). Several key variables affecting customers' views of IT-based services are identified.

- **Model of e-service quality (Santos, 2003)**

Quality of service is a primary determinant of electronic trade performance or failure. The role of e-service in cyberspace (Rust & Lemon, 2001) can be described. This research proposes an e-service quality conceptual model with its determinants. It is suggested that the standard of e-service should be incubative (correct website design, utilize of technology to provide customers with easy access, understanding & attractiveness to the website) & active (good help, quick speed & customer care) to improve hit rate, stickyness & customer retention.

### **Service quality gap**

In this research, perceived service quality model, which is the difference between customer's expectation and satisfaction, is used as a research strategy. One category asks questions based on their perception or expectation of a service delivered to them and another category asks them some questions based on their satisfaction or experience.

### **CONCLUSION**

Rail services are exposing airlines, comfortable buses, customised transportation, & better public transport to long term competitive challenges. Low-cost airlines are offering high-class passenger carriers a tough rivalry. Although rivalry exists for different transport modes, the railway has its own unique features & offers passengers more services. It is unavoidable for railways to accelerate passenger origin in order to be competitive with other modes of transport. Furthermore, as socio-economic features vary, passengers' views on Indian Railway services would be very different.

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