RESEARCH PAPER

Service quality and customer satisfaction in organised and unorganised food service sector

■ **Mohd. Abdul Muqeet Maaz, Arif Abad and Rais Ahmad**

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted with twin objectives of exploring the gaps between perceived service quality and expected service quality in organised and unorganised food service sector and to study the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in organised and unorganised food service sector. The study was conducted at Hyderabad city with a sample size of 267 respondents using systematic sampling technique. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire from organised and unorganised food joints. The results reveal that there is a gap between perceived service quality and expected service quality in organised food service sector. But in case of unorganised food service sector, there is no gap between perceived service quality and expected service quality. The service quality score is negative for organised food service sector and positive for unorganised food service sector. The study concludes that there is linear relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Assurance is the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction in organised food service sector while tangibles are the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction in case of unorganised food service sector.

KEY WORDS : Service quality, Customer satisfaction, Perceptions, Expectations, Gaps, Food service sector

Restaurant is a service business and it is a place where people pay for sitting and eating meal. The restaurant business cannot run until the customers are satisfied (Gerson and Richard, 1993). Customer satisfaction can be explained as an evaluation of the performance of service with respect to the demands of customers (Raza *et al.*, 2015). Kotler and Armstrong defined customer satisfaction as the extent to which a product's perceived performance matches a buyer's expectations (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). Satisfaction takes place only when the customers get more than their expectations (Gronroos, 2000) and it is a tool for customer retention (Lin and Wu, 2011).

There are many factors that satisfy customers in a restaurant industry. Irawan reported that Service Quality, Emotional Factor, Ease of acquiring a product or services influence customer satisfaction (Irawan, 2008).

─── **MEMBERS OF THE RESEARCH FORUM** ───

Correspondence to:
Mohd Abdul Muqeet Maaz, Department of Agricultural Economics and Business Management, Aligarh Muslim University, **Aligarh (U.P.) India**
Email: mamaaz@myamu.ac.in

Authors' affiliations:
Arif Abad and Rais Ahmad, Department of Agricultural Economics and Business Management, Aligarh Muslim University, **Aligarh (U.P.) India** (Email: arsalanarif119@gmail.com; drraisahmad@gmail.com)

In restaurant sector, the most important factors of satisfaction are food quality, service quality, food service timing, waiter staff behaviour (Bateson and Hoffman, 2000)

Customers become loyal when they are happy with the service (Shah *et al.*, 2018) and Customer satisfaction is dependent on service quality (Taylor and Baker, 1994), hence the restaurant industry must focus on service quality, price and food quality if customer satisfaction is to be treated as a strategic variable (Andaleeb and Conway, 2006). Organisations must pay attention to improving service quality which will lead to customer satisfaction and build loyalty (Bismo *et al.*, 2018).

A service is any act or performance one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to physical product. Services are characterised by intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability (Kotler *et al.*, 2009).

Services can be defined as a process or performance (Lovelock, 1980) include value-added economic activities as non-physical, consumed when produced and convenient to the recipient, entertainment, comfort and health (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003).

Quality is an elusive and indistinct construct. Quality is often understood inaccurately as "goodness, or luxury, or shininess, or weight" (Crosby, 1979). According to Japanese philosophy, quality is "zero defects-doing it right the first time."

Service quality is "the difference between the perceived service and expected service" (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Service quality is the measure of delivered service level compared to customer expectations. A quality service is delivered when the service is in conformance with customer expectations on a consistent basis (Lewis and Booms, 1983). Tjiptono defined service quality as the level of quality expected and how does it satisfies customer needs. Service quality is evaluated by the firm's ability to fulfil the needs and wants of the customer based on their expectations (Tjiptono, 2007).

Parasuraman, Zeithamal and Berry proposed variables to measure service quality called the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988).

The variables in SERVQUAL are

Tangibles:
It includes physical appearance of the service facility, the tools, the workers, and the company's communication material.

Reliability:
The ability of the service provider to deliver the services precisely as promised.

Responsiveness:
The willingness and ability of the service provider in helping their customer on channelling the money given properly.

Assurance:
It is related to the workers' knowledge and politeness and their ability in building trust and confidence with customers.

Empathy:
It shows how the service provider understands the objectives on giving donation, and gives personal affection to the givers.

Customers are satisfied with empathy, tangibles and assurance and dissatisfied with responsiveness and reliability in Arabic restaurants (Omar *et al.*, 2016).

There is gap between expectations and experience in fast food services (Patabandige and Yapa, 2016) and assurance and reliability have highest negative service quality scores (Saneva and Chortoseva, 2018).

Food quality and service quality both positively influence customer satisfaction and service quality is the stronger predictor of customer satisfaction in Chinese restaurants of Malaysia (Shariff *et al.,* 2015).

The most significant factor influencing customer satisfaction buffet restaurants is food, price, ambience and service quality in restaurants (Hanaysha, 2016).

Service quality and customer satisfaction have positive effect on customer loyalty in fast food restaurants (Rashid *et al.*, 2015) and Good service quality results in higher customer satisfaction which leads to customer loyalty (Cheng and Rashid, 2013).

Better service quality leads to higher customer satisfaction which results in positive behaviour and brand image (Rana *et al.*, 2017) and there is no direct path between service quality and behavioural intentions because the behavioural intentions are enhanced through customer satisfaction which is in turn enhanced by service quality dimensions (Namin, 2017).

Few researchers have found Tangibles and responsiveness as the strongest predictors of customer satisfaction (Aftab *et al.*, 2016 and Al-Tit, 2015). While few other researchers have concluded Responsiveness and assurance to be the biggest factors in customer satisfaction and A. Namin has found Reliability as the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction (Namin, 2017).

Statement of the problem and research gap:

In order to be successful organisations must keep abreast with the consumers, the most important stakeholders. Offering quality products and services is key to customer satisfaction (Ahmed *et al.*, 2010). But with ever changing consumer preferences, the marketers are now finding it difficult to attain long term customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction depends on price, food quality and service quality; hence service quality must be treated as strategic tool to satisfy customers. (Andaleeb and Conway, 2006). Service quality has received considerable attention of the researchers in the past few years because of its importance in satisfying customers. The food service being economically important industry, it is imperative to understand the perceptions and expectations of service quality in food service industry. Although, various studies have been conducted on service quality, the literature on service quality in food service industry lacks an understanding on unorganised sector.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on primary data collected through self administered questionnaire from organised and unorganised restaurants in the city of Hyderabad. The collected data is analysed quantitatively through descriptive and inferential statistics. A pilot study of 20 respondents was conducted and the questionnaire was modified based on the data. The final questionnaire has 24 variables.

Target population:

The population under study constitutes the customers visiting the restaurants for the lunch and dinner.

Sample size:

A total of 300 respondents were selected to fill the questionnaire. After final editing, 267 questionnaires were found valid and 33 questionnaires were discarded because of missing values and ineligible entries.

Sampling technique:

Systematic sampling technique was used for the collection of the data. The respondents interviewed in pilot study were asked to list 5 restaurants of their choice from each category of fine dining, casual dining, Pub bar lounge and club (PBCL), Quick service restaurants (QSR), cafes and frozen desserts as well as restaurants from the unorganised sector. The list of the restaurants under each category was listed in alphabetical order. The first restaurant from each category was selected at random and the subsequent restaurants were selected at equal intervals from the first restaurants. Using this technique, 5 restaurants from each category of organised sector were included in the sample and 10 restaurants from unorganised sector were included in the sample.

Collection of data:

A well formulated structured questionnaire was used for the collection of the data. The questionnaire was designed in simple and easy language that could be easily understood by the respondents. The questionnaire was designed based on the SERVQUAL model given by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988). The five dimensions of SERVQUAL model include the tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The questions were designed based on these five dimensions. The questionnaire was divided into seven sections. The first section covered the general and demographic profile of the respondents. The second section measured the perceptions and expectations of tangibles of the restaurants, the third section measured the perceptions and expectations of reliability of the restaurant in delivering the promised services, the fourth section measured the perceptions and expectations of responsiveness of the employees in solving the problems of the customers, the fifth section measured the perceptions and expectations regarding assurance of the restaurants in terms of trustworthiness, monetary transactions, process of the food and knowledge of the employees, the sixth section measured the perceptions and expectations of empathy of the employees in treating customers and the last section measured satisfaction levels of the customers visiting the restaurants.

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Analysis of the data:

The data is presented through descriptive statistics and analysed through inferential statistics. Simple statistical measures like percentage and means has been used to represent the data. The service quality scores have been calculated based on the equation S= P-E., where S is Service quality, P is perceived service quality and E is expected service quality. Statistical tools like paired t-test has been used to compare the perceptions and expectations of the customers regarding different variables of service quality and Regression has been used for testing the linear relationship between independent variable service quality and dependent variable customer satisfaction. The data is analysed using the SPSS software.

Objectives:

– To measure the perceptions and expectations of the customers regarding the service quality of organised and unorganised food service sector.
– To measure the gaps between perceptions and expectations of the customers regarding the service quality of organised and unorganised food service sector.
– To study the relationship between independent variable service quality and dependent variable customer satisfaction in organised and unorganised food service sector.

Hypotheses:

H01.1:

There is no linear relationship between tangibles and customer satisfaction in organised food service sector.

H01.2:

There is no linear relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction in organised food service sector.

H01.3:

There is no linear relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction in organised food service sector.

H01.4:

There is no linear relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction in organised food service sector.

H01.5:

There is no linear relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction in organised food service sector.

H02.1:

There is no linear relationship between tangibles and customer satisfaction in unorganised food service sector.

H02.2:

There is no linear relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction in unorganised food service sector.

H02.3:

There is no linear relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction in unorganised food service sector.

H02.4:

There is no linear relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction in unorganised food service sector.

H02.5:

There is no linear relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction in unorganised food service sector.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study as well as relevant discussion have been summarized under the following heads :

Reliability analysis:

The data was analysed to check for the internal consistency through cronbachs' alpha. The value of cronbach alpha must be greater than 0.7 to be considered as good for internal consistency (Olorunniwo *et al.*, 2006). The value of the cronbach alpha was greater than 0.70 for all the variables. Hence all the variables have good internal consistency.

Sample characteristics:

In terms of age, the highest numbers of the respondents are in the age group of 20 to 30 and the respondents aged above 50 constitute the smallest age group with only 4.11 per cent. Respondents in the age

group of less than 20 constitute 10.11 per cent of the sample, age group of 30 to 40 constitute 33.33 per cent and age group of 40 to 50 constitute 13.85 per cent of the sample. The gender distribution is slightly even with 54 per cent male respondents and 46 per cent female respondents. The majority of the respondents in the sample are well educated with around 43 per cent graduates and 39 per cent post graduates. The respondents with education level less than 10th form only 4.11 per cent of the sample and the respondents with education of 12th or below form 5.24 per cent of the sample. The percentage of doctorates in the sample is 8.61 per cent. Majority of the respondents in the sample are private employees with 34 per cent followed by students with around 27 per cent and house wives being the smallest group with only 2.62 per cent. There are 21.34 per cent self employed respondents in the sample and 15.35 per cent government employees.

Gaps between perceived service quality and expected service quality:

The mean scores of perceived service quality and expected service quality are given in this section for organised food service sector and unorganised food service sector separately. Paired t-test has been used to test if there is significant difference between the perceptions and expectations of service quality in

organised and unorganised food service sector.

The Table 1 represents the gap between perceptions and expectations of the consumers in organised food service sector. All the dimensions of service quality have negative scores. It indicates a gap between the consumers' expectations regarding the service quality and what they actually experience. The largest gap between perceptions and expectations is found in reliability of the restaurants in delivering the promised services; hence the service quality score is lowest for reliability. The smallest gap between perceptions and expectations of consumers is found in tangibles; hence the tangibles have highest service quality score. Average service quality score is -0.268 indicating a negative service quality in organised food service industry. The t values for reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are less than 0.05 and indicate that there is significant difference between the perceptions and expectations of consumers regarding the delivery of services.

The Table 2 represents gaps between perceptions and expectations of service quality in unorganized sector. Three dimensions of service quality, namely responsiveness, assurance and empathy have positive service quality score and two variables namely the tangibles and reliability have negative service quality score. Reliability has lowest service quality score and

Table 1 : Perceptions and expectations of the consumers in organised food service sector					
Indicators	N	Perceptions	Expectations	Service quality score	t-value
Tangibles	151	3.26	3.31	-0.05	-0.451 (.652)
Reliability	151	2.88	3.26	-0.38	-3.977 (.000)
Responsiveness	151	2.91	3.22	-0.31	-2.993 (.002)
Assurance	151	2.92	3.15	-0.23	-2.353 (.020)
Empathy	151	2.88	3.25	-0.37	-4.150 (.000)
		2.97	3.238	-0.268	

Source: Field survey
The figures in the parenthesis are p values at 5 per cent level of significance

Table 2 : Perceptions and expectations of the consumers in unorganised food service sector					
Indicators	N	Perceptions	Expectations	Service quality score	t-value
Tangibles	116	2.76	2.87	-0.11	-1.179 (0.241)
Reliability	116	2.44	2.71	-0.27	-1.993 (0.049)
Responsiveness	116	3.21	2.87	0.34	3.211 (0.002)
Assurance	116	3.03	2.96	0.07	0.881 (0.380)
Empathy	116	3.16	3.05	0.11	1.432 (0.0155)
		2.92	2.89	0.028	

Source: Field survey
The figures in the parenthesis are p values at 5 per cent level of significance.

responsiveness has highest service quality score. The average service quality score is 0.028 indicating that consumer perceptions are marginally higher than expectations.

Regression analysis:

The linear regression has been performed to establish the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Before performing the linear regression to obtain an equation, the variables were tested for, normality, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity. The normality was tested using the normality probability plot. The data on the normality probability plot was spread around the diagonal line and it can be concluded that the data fulfils normality assumption. For homoscedasticity, scatter plot chart diagram was used and the dots on the chart were spread across all the axes, hence the data is free of heteroscedasticity. The variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were used to interpret whether the model suffers from problem of multi collineatity. All the VIF values were below 10 and hence there is no problem of multi collinearity (Testing Assumptions of Linear Regression in SPSS). With the above assumptions, the regression model is eligible to be used.

The regression equation is set as:

$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5$

where,

Y = Customer satisfaction

X_1 = Tangibles

X_2 = Reliability

X_3 = Responsiveness

X_4 = Assurance

X_5 = Empathy

b = Regression coefficients

a = Intercept

Based on the model summary from Table 3, it can be concluded that dimensions of service quality significantly impact customer satisfaction. The value of R square is 0.779 which means that 77.9 per cent of the changes in customer satisfaction are explained by the independent variables namely the tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

The model is statistically significant because the value of the F is 102.096 and p-value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. There is evidence of linear relationship between dependent variable and independent variables. It can be concluded that the service quality affects customer satisfaction significantly.

The t-test shows whether the service quality affects customer satisfaction individually. As shown in the table, the p values of assurance, empathy and tangibles are all below 0.05 and it can be concluded that these three dimensions of service quality significantly affects customer satisfaction. Assurance is the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction followed by empathy and tangibles, respectively. The hypothesis H01.1, H01.4 and H01.5 is rejected and H01.2 and H01.3 is accepted.

From the results obtained, the regression equation is obtained as:

$Y = 0.224 + 0.110X_1 + 0.016X_2 + 0.032X_3 + 0.542X_4 + 0.292X_5$

It can be interpreted from the above equation that if all the independent variables have a value of zero (0), then the value of dependent variable would be 0.224. If the tangibles are increased by 1 unit, then customer satisfaction will increase by 0.11 units. Similarly, an increase in 1 unit of reliability will increase customer

Table 3 : Model summary of regression analysis for organised food service sector				
Indicators	Customer satisfaction			Inference
	Beta	t-value	P value	
Tangibles	.110	2.026	.045*	Hypothesis H01.1 is rejected
Reliability	.016	.254	.800	Hypothesis H01.2 is accepted
Responsiveness	.032	.786	.433	Hypothesis H01.3 is accepted
Assurance	.542	8.069	.000*	Hypothesis H01.4 is rejected
Empathy	.292	4.541	.000*	Hypothesis H01.5 is rejected
R: 0.882				
R-square: 0.779				
Constant: 0.224				
F- value: 102.096 (0.000*)				

Source: Author's Calculations based on data collected
*indicates significance of value at P=0.05 level of significance

satisfaction by 0.016 units; increase in responsiveness by 1 unit will increase customer satisfaction by 0.032 units, increase in assurance by 1 unit will increase customer satisfaction by 0.542 units and increase in empathy by 1 unit will increase customer satisfaction by 0.292 units.

From the model summary Table 4, it is evident that service quality impacts customer satisfaction. 50.1 per cent of the changes in customer satisfaction are explained by service quality.

The F- value is 22.065 and the p value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05; hence the model is statistically significant. There is evidence of linear relationship between dependent variable and independent variables. It can be concluded that the service quality affects customer satisfaction in unorganised service sector.

The t-test shows whether the service quality affects customer satisfaction individually. As shown in the table, the p values of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness and assurance are below 0.05. These four variables of service quality individually affect customer satisfaction significantly. Tangibles are the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction followed by assurance, reliability and responsiveness respectively in unorganised food service sector. The hypothesis H02.1, H02.2 and H02.3 is rejected and H02.4 and H02.5 is accepted

From the results obtained, the regression equation is obtained as:

$$Y= 1.122+0.477X_1+0.193X_2+0.150X_3+0.203X_4+0.091X_5$$

The value of the constant is 1.122 which means if all the independent variables have a value of zero (0), then the value of dependent variable would be 1.122. The value of $0.477X_1$ indicates that if tangibles are

increased by 1 unit, customer satisfaction will increase by 0.477 units. Similarly, an increase in 1 unit of reliability will increase customer satisfaction by 0.193 units; increase in responsiveness by 1 unit will increase customer satisfaction by 0.150 units, increase in assurance by 1 unit will increase customer satisfaction by 0.203 units and increase in empathy by 1 unit will increase customer satisfaction by 0.091 units.

Conclusion:

Service quality is a strategic tool to achieve customer satisfaction. In this study gaps between perceptions and expectations of customers as well as the relationship between service quality as independent variable and customer satisfaction as dependent variable has been determined. The organised and unorganised food service sector has been separately studied to understand the service quality perceptions and factors impacting customer satisfaction in these two sectors individually.

In the organised food service sector tangibles are perceived to be above average, whereas reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are perceived to be below average. All the dimensions of service quality have negative service quality scores and the average service quality score is -0.268 indicating a low service quality compared to consumer expectations.

Contrary to the negative service quality in organised sector, the customers seem to perceive service quality in unorganised food service sector at par with their expectations. Except for tangibles and reliability, the customers have perceived the service quality to be better in unorganised food service sector as compared to organised food service sector. Though the average score

Table 4: Model summary of regression analysis for unorganised food service sector				
Indicators	Customer satisfaction			Inference
	Beta	t-value	P value	
Tangibles	.477	6.356	.000*	Null Hypothesis is rejected
Reliability	.193	2.610	.010*	Null Hypothesis is rejected
Responsiveness	.150	2.107	.037*	Null Hypothesis is rejected
Assurance	.203	2.536	.013*	Null Hypothesis is rejected
Empathy	.091	1.218	.226	Null Hypothesis is accepted
R: 0.708				
R-square: 0.501				
Constant: 1.1224				
F- value: 22.065 (0.000*)				

Source: Author's Calculations based on data collected
* indicates significance of value at P=0.05 level of significance

of perceived service quality is marginally higher in organised food service sector, the gap between perceived service quality and expected service quality in unorganised food service sector is positive indicating quality of service as expected by the consumers.

The five dimensions of service quality namely the tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy explain 77.9 per cent of the changes in customer satisfaction in organised food service sector, where as these five dimensions of service quality explains 50.1 per cent of the changes in customer satisfaction in unorganised food service sector. The five dimensions influence customer satisfaction in organised food service sector to a large extent, however some other factors, other than these five dimensions may be operating in unorganised food service sector.

In organised food service sector, assurance is the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction, followed by responsiveness and empathy. In case of unorganised food service sector, tangibles are the biggest factor affecting service quality followed by assurance and reliability.

It can concluded from the results that there is high scope in the unorganised sector to improve service quality and to do so the unorganised sector must focus on improving their tangibles in the form of better seating arrangements, proper lighting and suitable means to communicate with the customers. In case of organised food service sector, the staff must be courteous and must have knowledge to all the queries made to them. The customer satisfaction in the organised food service sector can also be improved by giving individual/personal attention to the customers and personally attending to the problems of the customers.

There are few limitations in this research. This research is confined to only one city and the results may be not be universally applicable. There may be bias in respondents' responses which might have changed the results. Cost was another constraint in conducting this study smoothly.

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