

## **The Argument Concerning the application of SERVQUAL Model Vs. SERVPERF model in measurement of quality in Higher Education Institutions**

Dr. Kirubashini., B<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Maria Josephine Williams<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Head, School of Commerce, PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore )

<sup>2</sup>(Programme Leader, DIC, (University of Hertfordshire, University of Chester), Singapore)

---

**Abstract:** *Understanding the expectations and perception of customers and responding to their needs promptly plays a major role in business and service industry. The organisation cannot boost its productivity unless and otherwise there is equilibrium between the quality services and quality products. Customers are considered to be the brand ambassadors for the products. This is in no exception to Higher Education, which in recent times has been shifted from service to business industry. It's of high significance with the measurement of this quality in higher education. Service quality has been developed, amended, modified and updated with regard to its measurement, dimensions and its variables. This study also focuses on the literature and arguments relating to the applicability of these service quality models in the context of Higher Education*

**Keywords:** *Business, Higher Education, Models, Service Industry, Service Quality*

---

### **I. Introduction**

The SERVQUAL literature has an interesting debate on the acceptance and rejection of the gap model. The SERVQUAL model which was considered to be the gap model was propounded by Parasuraman et al., (1985). This model was adapted and supported in various literatures also (Sasser et al., 1978; Gronroos, 1982 and Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1982). The service quality model was based on the difference between the perception and expectation of quality of service (Gronroos, 1982; Lewis & Booms, 1983). An attempt has been made to identify the appropriate model in measuring service quality in Higher Education Institutions.

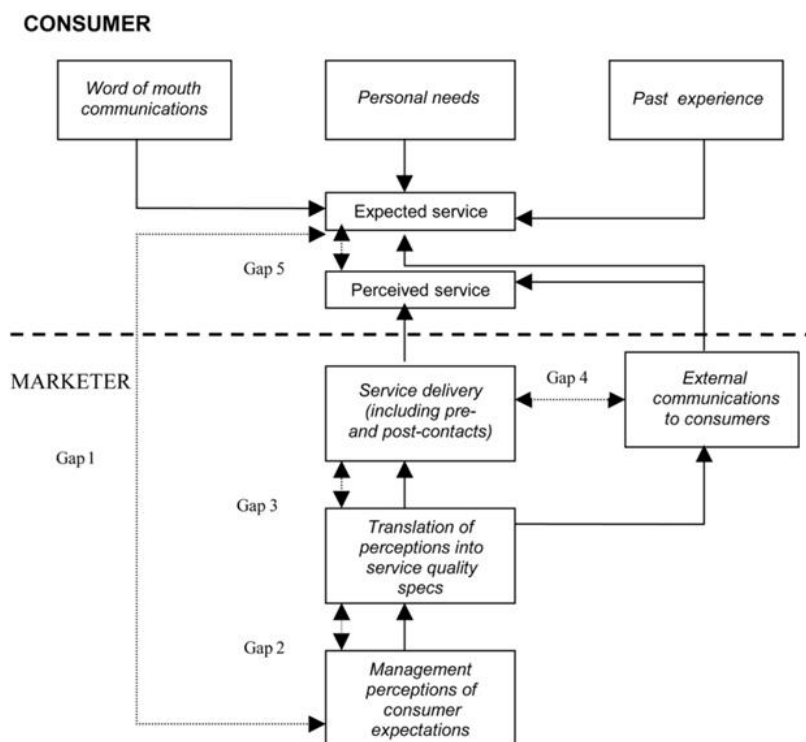
### **II. A Critical Evaluation**

Service quality measurement has extensively used SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al., (1985,1986,1991,1993,1994). This model has been used to compare customer expectations before a service encounter, and their perception after the actual service delivered. Berry et al. (1988) argued that customers are the sole judge of service quality, and that can be assessed by comparing expectations with their actual experience of the service. Zeithaml et al. (1990) also proposed that knowing what the consumer expects are an essential aspect for delivering good service quality. Parasuraman et al. (1990) suggested that in order to measure SERVQUAL, there is a need to find out the extent of discrepancy between customer expectations or desires, and their perceptions of the actual quality of performed service. Good service quality exists when customer expectations are met or exceeded.

This demonstrates the importance of understanding customer expectations, and their significance while managing service quality. Some researchers argue that measuring the gap between expectation and perception, psychometrically cannot obtain superior assessment of service quality. Therefore, in order to overcome this issue, Cronin and Taylor (1992) recommended the SERVPERF model that was based on the performance in service quality measurement. SERVPERF was inclusive more of variance in overall service quality measurement than SERVQUAL. In support of this argument, Hawkins & Hastie (1990), Appleton-Knap & Krentler (2006) suggested that the people generally did not recall the past correctly but rather allow their experience to shape what they claim to have believed initially. This ultimately results in biased expectations. Therefore, they argue that SERVPERF was a better model in measuring service quality than the SERVQUAL model. Many academics also had similar arguments that stating that using expectation scale may be a problematic of biased results (Buttle, 1994; Abdullah, 2006a, 2006b; Oldfield & Barron, 2000).

These arguments have consequently, resulted in different types of the measurement model in the service quality literature. Dabholkar, Thorpe, and Rentz (1996) tested SERVQUAL and reported that this measurement had not been adapted in areas like retail store environment. They proposed Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS). Brady and Cronin (2001) proposed Hierarchical and Multidimensional model for service quality. They combined three components model from Rust and Oliver (1994) and Multilevel model from Dabholkar et al. (1996). Ahmed & Shoeb (2009) argued that perception scores should not be relied alone to explain SERVQUAL of customer, because expectations of customer could be biased only on the memory of the user

and for that the results are bound to be biased. Sometimes respondents may not clearly visualise the difference between desired and expected services and consequently, gave the researcher a diluted report. In spite of the criticism in the applicability of the SERVQUAL model developed by the researchers, SERVQUAL model is the most acceptable model applied by many researchers (Danula Ann Nitecki, 1996; Robinson, 1999). This SERVQUAL instrument has been the predominant method used to measure consumer perception in order to assess SERVQUAL (Van Iwaarden et al. 2003). This model is an analytical tool, which can help the policy makers to identify the gap between the variables affecting the quality of the services offered by the organisation (Seth & Deshmukh, 2005). This is the most appropriate model used by the researchers, especially in the field of service marketing. Validity and reliability of this model have been tested and approved in different areas by marketing researchers. The service quality gaps model proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985) was the widely utilised model in the literature. They developed a service quality model based on gap analysis.



**Fig 1:** servqual framework, source: Parasuraman et al. (1988)

Gap 1: Customer expectation- Management gap. This gap addresses the difference between consumer's expectations and management's perceptions of service quality.

Gap 2: Management perception- service quality specifications gap. This gap addresses the difference between the management's perceptions of consumer's expectations and service quality specifications, i.e. improper service quality standards.

Gap 3: Service Quality specification- service delivery gap. This gap addresses the difference between service quality specifications and service actually delivered, i.e. the service performance gap.

Gap 4: Service delivery-external communication gap. This gap addresses the difference between service delivery and the communications to consumers about service delivery, i.e. whether promises match delivery.

Gap 5: Expected service- perceived service gap. This gap addresses the difference between consumer's expectation and perceived service. This gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer's side.

In addition to this, Arash and Monireh (2010), critically analysed, reviewed and developed service quality gaps in order to make it more comprehensive. They proposed additional five components and eight additional gaps.

Gap 2: Management perception versus Service quality strategy and policy

Gap 3: Service quality strategy and policy versus service specifications

Gap 4: Service specifications versus ideal standards

Gap 5: Service specifications external communication

Gap 11: Customer's perceptions versus management perceptions

Gap 12: The discrepancy between management perceptions and service quality strategy

Gap 13: Customer's perceptions versus employee perceptions

Gap 14: The discrepancy between employee's perceptions and management perception of customer. These studies suggest that the service quality gap affects service delivery, therefore the service providers must prevent, detect and eliminate the gap as early as possible in any service operation. The impact of service quality gap on strategy formation and implementation makes it significant for the service providers in order to overcome competitive situation as well as to survive in the market. The concept of measuring the difference between expectation and perceptions in the form of SERVQUAL gap score proved very useful for assessing the levels of Service quality (Ruby,1996; Ham & Hayduk, 2003; Markovic, 2006;Yang,2008). SERVQUAL has been faced with theoretical and operational criticism from scholars. Various studies have been and are still being carried in developing countries with strong conviction that SERVQUAL is a useful model for SERVQUAL evaluation in all the fields. Many authors have adopted and are still employing SERVQUAL as a benchmark for empirical assessment of the views of the customers for the services they receive (Brendan, Boniface, Jonaus, Cyprian & Ferdinand, 2014). According to the Lee (n.d) , Higher education institution in three countries revealed that SERVQUAL is rated as better than SERVPERF for measuring service quality. Based on the aforementioned arguments, the implementation of SERVQUAL for H.Ed study might be justified.

### III. Conclusion

Therefore, the studies pertaining to measurement of quality in Higher Education Institution can adopt the SERVQUAL model as a measurement of quality services. The studies relating to Higher education can identify the gap between the perception and expectation of the consumers, which, considered to be the Gap 5 in SERVQUAL. The studies can also implement the Gap 11, which was proposed by Arash and Monireh (2010), which identifies the gap between the perception of service providers and service recipients on service quality in higher education.

### References

- [1] Abdullah, F. (2006a). Measuring Service Quality in Higher Education: H.Ed PERF versus SERVPERF. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 24(1), 31-47.
- [2] Abdullah, F. (2006b). Measuring Service Quality in Higher Education: three instruments comparison. *International Journal of Research & Methods in Education*. 29(1), 71-89.
- [3] Ahmed Zabeed S.M., & Shoed, H. Zahid. (2009). Measuring SERVQUAL of a public university library in Bangladesh using SERVQUAL. *Aslib proceeding: Performance Measurement and Metrics*, 10(1), 17-32.
- [4] Appleton-Knap & Krentler. (2006). Measuring student expectation and their effects on satisfaction: The importance of managing student expectations. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 12, 254-264. Doi: 10.1177/0273475306293359.
- [5] Arash Shahin & Monireh Samea. (2010). Developing the Models of Service Quality Gaps: A Critical Discussion. *Business Management and Strategy*, 1(1), 1-11.
- [6] Berry, L.L., Lefkowitz, E.F., & Clark, T. (1988). In services, what's in a name? *Harvard Business Review*, 66, 28-30.
- [7] Brady, M.K., & Cronin, J.J. (2001). Some new thoughts on conceptualising perceived service quality: a hierarchical approach. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(3), 34-49.
- [8] Brendan E. Asogwa, Boniface U. Asadu, Jonaus U. Ezema, Cyprian I. Ugwu, Ferdinand C. Ugwuanyi (2014). Use of SERVQUAL in the evaluation of SERVQUAL of Academic libraries in developing countries. *University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Library Philosophy and practice*, 1-26.
- [9] Cronin, J.J., & Taylor, S.A. (1992). Measuring Service Quality: a re-examination and extension. *Journal of Marketing*, 6(7), 55-68.
- [10] Dabholkar, P.A., Thorpe, D.L., & Rentz, J.O. (1996). A Measure of Service Quality for Retail Stores: scale development and validation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 24, 3-16.
- [11] Danula Ann Nitecki. (1996). An assessment of the applicability of SERVQUAL dimensions as customer-based criteria for evaluating quality of service in an academic library. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, college park, The University of Maryland.
- [12] Gronroos, C. (1982). An applied service marketing theory. *European Journal of Marketing*, 16(7), 30-41.
- [13] Ham, L., & Hayduk, S. (2003). Gaining Competitive Advantages in Higher Education: Analyzing the Gap between Expectations and Perception of Service Quality. *International Journal of Management*, 16(3), 223.
- [14] Hawkins, S.A., & Hastie, R. (1990). Hindsight: Biased Judgments of past events after the outcomes are known. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107, 311-327.
- [15] Lee, J. (n.d). SERVQUAL vs. SERVPERF: Round 2 in a Multi-Cultural setting. [http://thefreelibrary.com/SERVQUAL vs. SERVPERF: Round 2 in a multi-cultural setting a0172010692](http://thefreelibrary.com/SERVQUAL%20vs.%20SERVPERF:Round%20in%20a%20multi-cultural%20setting%20a0172010692).
- [16] Lehtinen, J.R., & Lehtinen, U. (1982). Service Quality: A study of quality dimensions, unpublished working paper, Service Management Institute, Helsinki.
- [17] Lewis, R.C., & Booms, B.H. (1983). The marketing aspects of SERVQUAL, in Berry L., Shostack, G. & Upah, G. (Eds), *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing*. American Marketing Association, Chicago, IL, 99-107.
- [18] Markovic, S. (2006). Expected service quality measurement in tourism higher education. *Nase Gospardarvo*, 52(1/2), 86-95.
- [19] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L.L. (1985). A conceptual model of SERVQUAL and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(4), 41-50.
- [20] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L.L. (1986). SERVQUAL: a multiple-item scale measuring consumer perceptions of SERVQUAL. Report No.86-108, *Marketing Science Institute*, Cambridge, MA.
- [21] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L.L. (1988). SERVQUAL: a multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of SERVQUAL. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12-40.
- [22] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L.L. (1990). *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions & Expectations*. New york: The Free Press.
- [23] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L.L. (1991). Refinements and Reassessment of the SERVQUAL scale, *Journal of Retailing*, 67, 420-450.
- [24] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L.L. (1994). Reassessment of expectations as a comparative standard in measuring of

- SERVQUAL: implications of Future research. *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 111-124.
- [25] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L.L. (1997). Multiple-method listening: The building of a service quality information system. *Sloan Management Review*, 65 (76).
- [26] Robinson, S. (1999). Measuring SERVQUAL: Current thinking and Future requirements. *Market Intelligence & Planning*, 17(1), 21-32.
- [27] Ruby, C. (1996). Assessment of student satisfaction with selected student support services using the SERVQUAL model of customer satisfaction. Ohio University.
- [28] Sasser, W., Earl, Jr., R., Paul Olsen & Daryl Wyckoff. (1978). *Management of service operations: Text and Cases*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- [29] Seth, N., & Deshmukh, S.G. (2005). Service Quality Models: a review. *International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management*, 22(9), 913-949.
- [30] Van Iwarden, J., Vander Wiele, T., Ball, L., & Millen, R. (2003). Applying SERVQUAL to websites: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 20(8), 919-935.
- [31] Yang, L.M. (2008). An Examination of Education Service Quality at Collegiate Physical Education Departments in Taiwan: Using a Gap Analysis Approach. *United States Sports Academy: Daphne, Alabama*.
- [32] Zeithaml, V.A., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L.L. (1990). *Delivering Quality service*, New York: The Free Press.