IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE QUALITY IN RESTAURANT OPERATIONS: A REVIEW

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Abstract
Among all customer demands, quality service has been increasingly recognized as a critical factor in the success of any organization (Grönroos, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1988). The main function of a hospitality organization's members must perform is the delivery of quality service to their consumers. Service quality means how well the restaurant operation fulfill customer's needs, and delivered service to meets the customer's expectations (Lewis and Booms, 1983). Parasuraman et al. (1985) defined ''service quality'' as the degree and direction of discrepancy between a customer's perceptions and expectations, whereas ''perceived service quality'' is the gap between a customer's expectations and perceptions as a measurement of service quality. When the gap less the superior the quality of service and greater the customer satisfaction. Barsky (1996) stated that the consumers may be excellent sources of information for management on how the organization can provide quality service. According to Zeithaml et al. (1990), perceived service quality is the degree to which a firm successfully serves the purpose of customers. The restaurant customers' perception of service quality results from their evaluation of dining experience and expected service. There are many factors that may influence customers' assessments about the quality of restaurant. This paper highlights the important role of service quality in restaurant operations.

SERVICE QUALITY MEASUREMENT IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

Parasuraman et al. (1988) revealed in their research that the dimensions of service quality tangibles relate to equipment, physical facilities and appearance of employees. Reliability means the skill to do the promised services accurately and dependently. Responsiveness means ready to help the customers and provide quick service.

Assurance is defined as the knowledge and courtesy of personnel and their ability to express trust and confidence. Empathy means caring and personalized attention to customers. In the SERVQUAL instrument the service quality measurement is based on the comparison of customers' expectations and their perceptions of delivered service. The differentiation between expectations and perceptions scores is called the SERVQUAL gap. A negative gap shows that received service did not met customers' expectations. On the other side, a positive gap shows that customers perceived that service delivery exceeded their expectations.

Several researchers have applied SERVQUAL methodology in the restaurant operations, similarly (Yuksel and Yuksel 2002; Bojanic and Rosen 1994; Lee and Hing 1995; Andaleeb and Conway 2006). Stevens, Knutson and Patton (1995) formed an instrument called DINESERV to assess customers' perceptions of restaurant service quality. Originally DINESERV was modified from SERVQUAL and was proposed as a reliable and relatively simple tool for determining how customers view a restaurant's quality. DINESERV contained 29 items, and these items measured on a seven-point scale. DINESERV items involves into five dimensions of service quality. In the restaurant operation, tangibles mean physical design of restaurant's, appearance and cleanliness of staff. Reliability involves temperature and freshness of the food, receiving food which is ordered and correct billing. Responsiveness means prompt response to customers' needs and requests and staff assist with the menu or wine list. Assurance relates that restaurant customers trust the recommendations of staff and to feel sure that there is no contamination in food. At last, empathy relates to providing individualized attention to customers by anticipating special dietary requirements or by being sympathetic towards customers' problems.

Previous researches suggested that physical environment, food quality and service are the major components of overall restaurant service quality (Dulen 1999; Susskind & Chan 2000). Along with these attributes, food quality is the most important dimension of the restaurant experience (Sulek & Hensley 2004). Kim et al. (2009) Research showed that in restaurants, service quality is an essential determinant of customer satisfaction and return intention.

DIMENSION OF SERVICE QUALITY

Waters & Jennifer (1998) also supported this approach through defining service quality dimensions or attributes are those attributes that contribute to the creation of consumer expectations and perceptions of service quality.

Ten Dimensions of Service Quality

Dimensions	Description
Tangibles	Tangibles include the physical evidence of the service: physical facilities, appearance of personnel, tools or equipment used to provide the service, physical representation of the service, other customers in the service facility.
Reliability	Reliability involves consistency of performance and dependability: accuracy in billing, keeping records correctly, performing the service at the designated time.
Responsiveness	Concerns the willingness or readiness of employees to provide service. It involves timeliness of service: mailing a transaction slip immediately, calling the customer back quickly, and giving prompt service.
Communication	Communication means keeping customers informed in language they can understand and listening to them. It involves explaining the service itself, explaining how much the service will cost, explaining the trade-offs between service and cost, assuring the consumer that a problem will be handled.
Credibility	Credibility involves trustworthiness, believability, honesty. It involves having the customer's best interests at heart. Contributing to credibility are company name, company reputation, personal characteristics of the contact personal.
Security	Security is the freedom from danger, risk, or doubt. It involves physical safety, financial security, and confidentiality.
Competence	Means possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service. It involves knowledge and skill of the contact personnel, knowledge and skill of operational support personnel, research capability of the organization.
Courtesy	Involves politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness of contact personnel. It includes consideration for the consumer's property, clean and neat appearance of public contact personnel.
Understanding/Knowing the Customers:	Involves making the effort to understand the customer's needs. It involves learning the customer's specific requirements, providing individualized attention, recognizing the regular customer.
Access	Involves approachability and sense of contact. It means the service is easily accessible by telephone, waiting time to receive service, convenient hours of operation, and convenient location of service facility.

Source: Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implication for Future Research. Journal of Marketing, 49(3), 25-46.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) applied all the ten dimensions of service quality in assessing consumers. The study conducted in four selected segments retail banking, appliance repair and maintenance, credit cards and long-distance telephone. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) stated that SERVQUAL's five dimensions framework of service quality (three original and two combined dimensions) that encompasses reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance, and empathy to analyze service quality. The last two dimensions (assurance and empathy) representing seven original dimensions (credibility, security, competence, courtesy, communication, understanding/knowing customers, and access). The SERVQUAL instrument consists of five dimensions and separates with two sets of twenty-two item statements for the "expectation" and "perception" sections of the questionnaire.

Five Dimensions of Service Quality

Dimensions	Statements
Tangible	Physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel 1. Modern equipment. 2. Visually appealing facilities. 3. Employees who have a neat, professional appearance 4. Visually appealing materials associated with the service
Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately 5. Providing services as promised. 6. Dependability in handling customers' service problems. 7. Performing service right the first time. 8. Providing services at the promised time. 9. Maintaining error-free records.

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Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service 10. Keeping customers informed about when services will be performed. 11. Prompt service to customers. 12. Willingness to help customer 13. Readiness to respond to customers' requests.
Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence 14. Employees who instill confidence in customers. 15. Making customers feel safe in their transactions. 16. Employees who are consistently courteous. 17. Employees who have the knowledge to answer customer questions
Empathy	Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers 18. Giving customers individual attention. 19. Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion. 20. Having the customer's best interest at heart. 21. Employees who understand the needs of their customers. 22. Convenient business hours.

Source: Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L.L (1988). SERVQUAL: Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality. Journal of Retailing, 64(1), 12-40.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1993) the result of study shows that the gap of service quality may be calculated by using a style of questionnaire known as "SERVQUAL", in this questionnaire service customers scale first the quality expected from the particular service and then the perceived quality of the actual service performance and then subtracting the expectation score from the performance score. Teas (1993, 1994) revealed in his study that literature related to service marketing, perception means the customers' beliefs about the service received or experienced service, and expectations are defined as desires or wants of consumers. Lewis and Klein (1988) also explained in their study that customer satisfaction affected by perceived service quality.

REVIEW OF LITRATURE
Lam and Zhang (1999) conducted a study to assess customers' expectations and perceptions of service quality, and identified a gap between the two. Their findings indicated that ''reliability'' and ''responsiveness and assurance'' are the most significant factors in predicting customer satisfaction. Soriano (2001) analyzed in his study that attempts to examine four attributes namely quality of food, quality of service, cost/value of meal and the place which influence customers' decisions to make a revisit for another meal in Spanish restaurants. Quality of food was the most important factor followed quality of service, cost/value of meals and then the place to return to a restaurant. Rust and Oliver (1994) in their study proposed service quality model includes three factors: customer– service environment, employee interaction and service outcome. Interaction quality is measured by attitude, behavior, and expertise; physical environment quality is measured by design, ambient conditions and social factors; outcome quality is measured by waiting time and tangibles.

Summarized Literature Review of SERVQUAL

Authors	Industry	Instrument	Dimensions/ Attributes	Finding
Yu, chang & Huang (2006)	Leisure Industry	SERVQUAL	Five Dimensions Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibility,Assurance, Empathy21 Attributes	Tangibles, Reliability and Assurance represented the contents of service quality and related to loyalty. Significant correlation between overall satisfaction and loyalty.
Lee & Hing (1995)	Fine dining Restaurant	SERVQUAL	Five dimensions Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibility,Assurance, Empathy22 Attributes	The respondent perceptions of the service quality dimensions of French restaurant were assurance, reliability and responsiveness respectively. The respondent perception of service quality of Chinese restaurant were Tangibles, reliability and assurance dimension respectively.

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Tomes & Ng. (1995)	Hospital Industry	SERVQUAL	Eight dimensions Empathy, understanding relationship between patients and health care, staff, dignity, communication, reliability, courtesy, food, physical environment49 Attributes	The highest expectation was communication and the second expectation was reliability dimension. The highest perception score was relationship between patients and health care staff. The patients' perception was higher than the patients' expectation.
Bojanic & Rosen (1994)	Chain Restaurants	SERVQUAL	Six dimensions Tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, knowing the customer, access.	The result showed that knowing the customer has the smallest gap and followed by reliability and assurance.
Mersha & Adlakha (1992)	Five service types Physical service, retail banking, Auto maintance, Colleges, Fast Food restaurant	SERVQUAL	Five Dimensions Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibility, Assurance, Empathy 12 Attributes	The finding results showed that the top three attributes for good service were: 1) The knowledge of the service 2) Thoroughness/ accuracy 3) Consistency/ reliability The most three attributes for poor service quality were: 1) Lack of knowledge about the service 2) Employee indifference 3) Reluctance to correct errors.
Persuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1988)	Four service types Bank, credit card company, Appliance repair maintenance services, long distance telephone company	SERVQUAL	Ten Dimensions Tangiblereliability, responsiveness, ommunication,credibility, security,competence, courtesy,understanding/ knowing the customer, access. 97 attributes 07 dimensions 37 attributes	First stage: The deletion of certain items and the final result was 34 items representing seven dimensions. Second stage: The final procedure resulted in refined scale SERVQUAL with 22 items spread among five dimensions(tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.
Lau, Akbar & Fie(2005)	Hotel industry	SERVQUAL	Five Dimensions Reliability,Responsiveness, Tangibility,Assurance, Empathy25 Attributes	Tangible dimension was the most importance perception of customers.
Lee & Lin (2005)	E-Service Industry	SERVQUAL	Five dimensions Web Site Design, reliability, responsiveness, trust, personalization 15 attributes	Trust, reliability, responsiveness and web site design had affected overall service quality and customer satisfaction in on line. Personalization was not a significant prediction of overall service quality and customer satisfaction for on line stores.
Landrum & Prybutok (2004)	Information service industry	SERVQUAL	Five Dimensions Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibility, Assurance, Empathy 21 Attributes	Reliability and responsiveness were the most important of SERVQUAL. Tangible and Empathy were the least important of SERVQUAL.

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Johnson & Mathews (1997)	Fast food restaurant	SERVQUAL	Ten Dimensions Ten Dimensions Tangible, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/ knowing the customer, access.	Security was the highest service quality dimension of should expectation. Access was the highest service quality dimension of will expectation.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) developed SERVQUAL in First stage; the researchers used ten service-quality dimensions and generated ninety-seven items. The questionnaire devides in to two-part consisted of a ninety-seven statement expectations part followed by a ninety-seven statement perceptions part.

Mersha and Adlakha (1992) also adapted SERVQUAL instrument of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) and the result of study shows that the top three attributes for good service were: 1) the knowledge of the service, 2) thoroughness/accuracy, and 3) reliability and consistency. The attributes for poor service quality were: 1) lack of knowledge about the service, 2) employee indifference or "I don't care" and 3) reluctance to improve error. The findings of this study showed that the good service quality was knowledge of service and the poor service quality was lack of knowledge. For auto-maintenance service, retail banking service and colleges/universities, respondents considered willingness to correct errors for good service quality and reluctant to correct error for poor service quality. For fast food restaurants, the result of the study shows that the attribute of poor service quality was not getting help in time/slowness and the attribute of good service quality was timely/prompt service.

Bojanic and Rosen (1994) applied the SERVQUAL instrument to a chain of restaurants in South Carolina and Columbia. Finding of research showed that the restaurants those who knowing their customer did well and these establishment had the minimum gap, and was followed by assurance and reliability.

Lau, Akbar, and Fie (2005) conducted a study in 300 hotel customers in Malaysia's four and five star hotels to assess the expectations and perceptions of service quality by applying a modified version of the SERVQUAL model. The results revealed that hotel customers' perceptions were consistently not meeting their expectations and tangibles dimension was the utmost importance for both four and five stars hotels.

Yu, Chang, and Huang (2006) also supported this approach by using modifying version of SERVQUAL scale of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, (1988) in the leisure industry surveyed 200 visitors. The finding results showed that three dimensions of SERVQUAL: tangibles, assurance and reliability represented the contents of service quality of leisure industry and clearly related to loyalty. The results also showed that there were significant correlation between overall customer satisfaction and loyalty

CONCLUSION
The restaurant industry is one of the most competitive industries in the world today. Casual dining is the fastest-growing segment of the restaurant industry. With rising consumer expectations of quality and increased competition the restaurant operation cannot be free from other increased competition. The service quality issues in restaurant industry constantly to grow. The guest who wishes to take meal in restaurant, there are so many choices when dining out in restaurants. To make differentiation among competitors' and to retain customers, customer satisfaction and service quality play a crucial role.

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