Customers' attitude towards service quality – An Empirical study with reference to Indian Commercial Banks

Mr.L Shankara*

Abstract

In this electronic banking era, the three segments of banks in India namely, SBI and its Associates, Other Public Sector Banks & Private Sector Banks have been competing with each segment and service quality has become an indispensable weapon to have competitive edge. The author has made an attempt to identify various service quality factors using Factor analysis and ANOVA has been applied to know whether there is any difference in custormers' attitude with regard to service quality factors in the three segments of banks. The study is done in banks at Salem district, Tamil Nadu and the sample size of the customers is 895 and customers are chosen using stratified random sampling method.

Introduction

In this electronic era, the service sector has been showing promising signs across the globe. Competition and technological advancement are the twin factors that have brought about unimaginable changes in customer services. India is also sailing in accordance with the current global trend. In our country, the service sector's contribution to the national economy is to be perceived at the macro angle. The banking sector forms a key component of service sector. The shares of banking and insurance sector have increased from 2.78 % of GDP to 6.27% with in twenty years time (1980-2000). It has also been due to the increased significance of financial services in the post reforms era.

Banks in India-A snap shot

Banks in India are characterized by huge network of branches supported by strong banking system and their products and channel distribution capabilities can be matched with those of the leading international banks. Banks desiring to become global must have carved a niche for themselves in India and other well established markets, says a report of consultancy major Ernest and Young, as they would be major source of revenue generators of the financial system. Expansion of the middle income consumer group, increase in new generation private sector banks and the mind blowing growth of national economy-all would make the domestic market to grow from US$ 0.4 trillion in 2004 to US$ 23 trillion by 2050.With such a splendid scenario, India is poised to become the third biggest banking hub in the world by 2040 says a Price Waterhouse Coopers report.

* Head, Finance, Sona School of Management.

Current scenario

All banks are surging ahead to project themselves as the most preferred bank by customers as they are becoming more sophisticated in their needs and are increasingly demanding higher standard of service. To them service means customer satisfaction, customer delight, excellent service delivery and customer relationship etc. In recent years, a number of private players and foreign banks have entered the Indian market and made it more competitive .The survival and growth of a bank not only depends on its ability to provide qualitative service to its customers but in building a long term mutually beneficial and trust worthy relationship with its customers. In current scenario, the three major segments of the banking sector i.e. private, public and multinational/foreign banks are vying with each other to attract large clientele, through providing traditional and innovative value added quality services.

At this juncture, the researcher decided to undertake a research study with regard to association between personality of customers and the type of bank chosen by them and customers' attitude towards banking attributes.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the factors with regard to service quality
2. To analyze whether there is any significant difference in the attitude of the bank customers of three segments of the banks. with regard to service quality factors.

Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in the attitude of the customers of SBI and its associates, Other Public sector banks and private sector banks with regard to service quality factors.There is no significant difference in the attitude of the customers of rural and urban branches with regard to service quality factors.

Research methodology

For the purpose of collection of primary data structured questionnaire is used and stratified random sampling method is adopted for selecting the sample customers. There are 179 bank branches in Salem and branches are classified in to 3 strata, that is, SBI and its associates, Other Public sector banks and private sector banks. At random 50 branches are chosen and form each branch 20 customers are selected using judgment sampling. The sample size comes to 1000 and questionnaires are distributed to the customers and after editing the data the no of usable ones comes to 895.
For analysis of data, Chi square test, Factor analysis and ANOVA have been used.

Conceptual framework of external   Service Quality (ESQ)

External service quality, which refers to the quality of service delivered to the customers, has gained importance in the light of increasing customers' estimations, and changing customer preferences. External service quality offered to customers is generally referred to as service quality. Providing high quality services enhances customer retention rates, helps to attract new customers through positive word of mouth advertising, increase productivity, leads to higher market share, financial performance and profitability.

Different researchers have identified different dimensions to measure External service quality. Garnin (1984) measured the ESQ with the help of performance, features, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics and prestige. Driver and Johnson (2001)

estimated the ESQ with different dimensions namely alternativeness, care, courtesy, flexibility, reliability, competence, integrity, access, availability and functionality.

With the emergence of new generation banks, introduction of technology, competition, deregulation, etc., new dimensions to customer service have been added. In the present scenario, "customers delight", has been a buzzword in banking. The external and internal service quality in banks is a compulsory requirement for the survival of banks in the industry.

Operational Definitions

The SERVQUAL measurement model (Parasuraman et al. 1988) is based on this five dimensional model of Service Quality. Reliability refers to delivering on promises, Responsiveness means being willing to help the customer, Assurance refers to inspiring trust and confidence in customers by the employees of the service provider, Empathy means treating customers individually while Tangible represent the physical aspects of service.Questionnaire is designed based on these dimensions.

Review of literature

Vanniarajan, Prabadevi and Shankari (2008) in their study on "Relative importance of servqual dimensions in Indian service sector" threw light on the following findings: Reliability and responsiveness are the most important servqual dimensions in banks. The customers in the insurance sector treated all servqual dimensions in an equal manner. Reliability, responsiveness and tangibles are found to be most important servqual dimensions in hotel industry. Reliability, Tangibles and responsiveness are considered as the vital servqual dimensions in transport sector. In education sector, Empathy is said to be the key servqual dimension. Madhaviah (2007) in his empirical study evaluated the pros and con of the three SERVQUAL models namely, Perception minus Expectation model, the Ideal point model and the Performance based model and suggested the need for the development of an enhanced model for measuring service quality. Sureshchandar, Rajendran and Anantharaman (2003), have investigated the critical factors of customer perceived service quality in banks of a developing economy-India. Customers in developing economies consider "technological factors" of services such as core service and systematization of the service delivery as the key parameters in differentiating good and bad service while the "human factors" appear to play a lesser role in discriminating the three groups of banks. The service quality indices with respect to the three groups and the Indian banking industry as whole, offer interesting information on the level of service quality delivered by banks in India.

Arasli, Katircioglu and Mehtap-Smadi(2005), in this study,a total of 268 commercial bank customers responded to a Greek and Turkish translated version of the SERVQUAL instrument. Research results revealed that the largest gap was found in the empathy dimension. The assurance dimension had the largest influence on customer satisfaction and overall satisfaction of bank customers in both areas of Cyprus had a positive effect on their word-of-mouth.

Gadowska and Kud³a (2006), in their paper aimed at verifying the proposition about the identity of assessment of the service quality as perceived by employees and clients. The results indicate that some quality dimensions were equally perceived in the case of both the groups but, at the same time, some meaningful differences appeared. The employees, in general, differently perceived certain groups of questions, this probably resulting from their better knowledge of the bank's mode of operation. In addition, in their answers a certain reference to internal situation in the given bank's branch could be

observed, which was absent in the quality assessments gathered among the clients. Whereas, among the consumers of services a greater importance was attached to the bank's reliability and the history of the client's earlier contacts with the bank. This means that the exclusive use of employee polls is, in a certain way, imperfect, since it permits better to spot the problems of organization and management at the bank branch level, but at the same time to an insufficient degree recommends the way of treating the client by the bank.

Uppal (2008), the post-LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization) era and Information Technology (IT) era, transformation in Indian banks is taking place with different parameters and the contours of banking services are dynamically altering the face of banking, as banks are stepping towards e-banking from traditional banking. On the basis of five-point likert-type scale, this paper empirically analyzes the quality of e-banking services in the changing environment. With different statistical tools such as weighted average method and ranking, the paper concludes that most of the customers of e-banks are satisfied with the different e-channels and their services, but the lack of awareness is a major obstacle in the spread of e-banking services. The paper also suggests some measures to make e-banking services more effective in the future.

Singh (2008) has said, in banking, the quality of customer service holds primary significance, particularly in the context of sustained business growth. Unlike other industries engaged in the production of tangible goods, banks are unique in the sense that they produce and deliver the service at the delivery points—the branches. This has an overwhelming impact on the customers' psyche and makes them supersensitive towards the quality of service. The relationship between a bank and its customers is not a one-time affair, but a relatively permanent and enduring one, which requires to be nurtured with good quality of service. In such a situation, any bank not having a mind towards bettering the quality of customer service is almost certain to lose its business. In the present study, an attempt is made to study the quality of service provided by the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) to Small-Scale Industries (SSIs). The level of customer service and satisfaction is determined by the branch's location and design, variety of services, systems and procedures, delegation and decentralization, mechanization and computerization, complaint redressal; and skills, attitudes and responses of the staff.

The world's leading technology services and solutions company Unisys appointed Australia ACA Research to conduct a Customer Centricity in the Asia Pacific Retail Banking Market: Rewards and Sacrifices. The survey shows that retail banks now have the opportunity to convert customer satisfaction into long-term loyalty, and then convert this loyalty into a profitable long term relationship with customers, new Unisys research shows. The study focuses on the relationship between consumers and their primary bankers.

The Unisys research found

83% of respondents would move their business to a bank that rewards loyalty;
91% of respondents want unique banking experiences;
94% of respondents said it was important that their bank developed new technologies to facilitate electronic transactions. However, 95% are concerned about fraud and identity theft.
74% of respondents said they'd welcome more biometric technologies, to protect their identity and their transactions. This is another high area of sacrifice for customers across Asia Pacific, where banks are not meeting expectations.

50% of customers are satisfied with their banks, only 10% consider themselves to be loyal.

Demographic details of the customers

Age   83 customers are young

387 customers are between 25 and 40 years of age

The rest are above 40 years

Sex   643 customers are males and 252 are females

Native place 461 customers are natives of rural area and 434 belong to urban area.

Occupation   186 customers are in government service,282 are employed in private sector, 343 are business men and 84 are professionals.

Monthly Income 318 customers have income below Rs.10,000,214 have income between Rs 10,000 –Rs 20,000,136 have income between Rs. 20,000-30000 and 227 have income above Rs.30,000.

Customers' attitude towards Service quality

Initially the scores of the forty six variables of banks have been taken for validity of data for factor analysis. The Kaiser Meyer Olin measures of sampling adequacy and Barklett's test of Sphericity have been tested. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy of 0.754 is greater than the required minimum of 0.5 and the zero percent level of significance of chi-square value satisfies the data validity for factor analysis.

Then the scores of the forty six variables of banks are taken for factor analysis in order to narrate the attributes into meaningful attributes. The factor analysis results in eleven important attributes in banking. The attributes of banking, number of variables in each attribute, its reliability co-efficient and Eigen value and the percent of variance are illustrated in the following Table 1.1.

Table 1.1
Factors influencing customers' attitude towards Service quality

SI no	Attributes in banking	Number of Variables	Reliability Co-efficient	Eigen value	Percent of Variance	Cumulative Percent Of variance
1	Credibility	5	0.79	8.252	17.940	17.940
2	Customization	5	0.83	5.294	11.509	29.449
3	Service consistency	5	0.67	4.112	8.938	38.387
4	Access	2	0.89	2.613	5.680	44.067
5	Service components	5	0.75	1.912	4.157	48.224
6	Tangibility	6	0.74	1.854	4.030	52.253
7	Innovation	3	0.68	1.710	3.716	55.970
8	Employee behavior	5	0.83	1.525	3.316	59.285
9	Record maintenance	4	0.65	1.459	3.173	62.458
10	Responsiveness	3	0.72	1.430	3.108	65.566
11	Reliability	3	0.80	1.344	2.922	68.488
KMO Measure of sampling adequacy:0.754	Bartlett's test of Sphericity: Chi-square :915.41*					

Narrated eleven dimensions explain the variables in bank service quality to the extent of 68.48 percent. The first two important service quality factors in banking are credibility and customization, which consist of five variables in each with the reliability co-efficient of 0.79 and 0.83 respectively. The Eigen value of these are 8.252 and 5.294 respectively. The percentage of variance explained by these two factors is to the extent of 17.940 and 11.509 percent respectively. The next two important service quality factors are service consistency and access, which consist of five & two variables respectively with the reliability co-efficient of 0.67 and 0.89 respectively. The other important service quality factors in banking are service components, tangibility, innovation, employee behavior, record maintenance, responsiveness and reliability.

Variables in Credibility and Customization

The variables in credibility and customization of banking service with its factor loading and the communality are shown below:.

Table 1.3
Customization

Variables	Factor loading	Communalities
Individual attention problem	0.826	0.800
A bank employee is always at the information	0.659	0.712
Prompt service by bank	0.639	0.837
Sufficient cash at the centre	0.563	0.765
Bank staff Providing necessary information	0.514	0.666

The variables namely proper security arrangement at the bank, confidentially of A/c details, satisfaction locker service, good image of the bank, updating information are included in the name 'credibility; since the factor loading of the above said variables are identified as higher in the 'credibility' attribute than in the other attributes. The 'customization' factor consists of six variables namely Individual attention problem, bank employee is always at the information, prompt service by bank, sufficient cash at the centre, bank staff providing necessary information.

Variables in Service Consistency, access, service components and tangibility factors

The variables involved in the attributes namely service consistency, access, service components and tangibility with its factor loading and the communality values are illustrated below:

Table 1.4
Factor loading of Variables in Service Consistency

Variables	Factor loading	Communalities
Consistency in staff performance	0.800	0.793
Honest bank staff	0.719	0.698
Easily approachable manager	0.620	0.718
Extension of banking hours	0.585	0.702
Sufficient parking space	0.545	0.767

Table 1.5
Access

Variables	Factor loading	Communalities
Easily accessible ATM	0.767	0.744
Early accessible bank	0.669	0.724

Table 1.6
Service Components

Variables	Factor loading	Communalities
No queues in ATM	0.816	0.659
Polite and Courteous bank staff	0.700	0.622
Prompt reply of telephone cells	0.586	0.663
consistency in the computer operations	0.582	0.821
Punctuality in opening the branch	0.343	0.749

The variables in service consistency are consistency in staff performance, honest bank staff, easily approachable manger, extension of banking hours and sufficient parking space of 0.793, 0.698, 0.718, 0.702 and 0.767 respectively. The 'access' attributes consist of easily accessible ATM and Early accessible bank. The factors namely service components consist of no queues in ATM, polite and courteous bank staff, prompt reply of telephone cells, consistency in the computer operations, and punctuality in opening the branch of 0.659, 0.622, 0.633, 0.821 and 0.749 respectively.

Variables in Innovation and Employee Behavior

The variables in 'innovation' and employee behavior attribute with its factor loading and the communality values are shown in the following Table

Table 1.7
Variables in Innovation and Employee Behavior

Variables	Factor loading	Communalities
Excellent output from ATM	0.760	0.756
Immediate rectification of ATM	0.724	0.764
Clear and Good quality output form ATM	0.418	0.761

Table 1.8
Employees' behavior

Variables	Factor loading	Communalities
Clear answer for question	0.769	0.702
Willingness to help	0.696	0.787
Regular in sending bank statements	0.627	0.750
Availability of bank staff for needs	0.586	0.741
Listening	0.343	0.785

The variables in 'innovation' are excellent output from ATM, immediate rectification of ATM and clear and good quality output form ATM of 0.756, 0.764 and 0.761 respectively. The 'employee behaviour' consists of variables namely clean answer for question, willingness to help, regular in sending bank statements availability of bank staff for needs and listening of 0.702, 0.787, 0.750, 0.741 and 0.785 respectively.

Variables in Record Maintenance, Responsiveness and Reliability

The variables in the factors namely record maintenance, responsiveness and reliability with its factor loading and the communality values are presented in below.

Factor loading of Variables in Reliability, Responsiveness and Record Maintenance

Table 1.9
Reliability

Variables	Factor loading	Communalities
Clarity of communication by bank	0.816	0.745
Staff displaying discreet	0.700	0.702
Trusting	0.582	0.697

Table 1.10
Responsiveness

Variables	Factor loading	Communalities
Competent service	0.834	0.669
Understanding specific need	0.719	0.706
Bank staff encouraging	0.513	0.688

Table 1.11
Record Maintenance

Variables	Factor loading	Communalities
Simple and easy to operate procedure	0.772	0.676
Good quality of banking stationery	0.600	0.745
Well trained staff in computer	0.531	0.805
Maintenance of records	0.444	0.776

The variables in the record maintenance are simple and easy to operate procedure, good quality of banking stationery, well trained staff in computer and maintenance of records of 0.676, 0.745, 0.805 and 0.776 respectively. The responsiveness consists of three variables namely competent service, understanding specific need and bank staff encouraging of 0.669, 0.706 and 0.688 respectively. The reliable employees are identified in the clarity of communication by bank, staff displaying discreet and trusting of 0.745, 0.702 and 0.697.

Variables in Tangibility

The variables in the attributes namely record tangibility with its factor loading and the communality values are presented in Table

Factor loading of Variables in Tangibility

Table 1.12
Tangibility

VARIABLES	FACTOR LOADING	COMMUNALITIES
Neat and comfortable interior of the bank	0.800	0.757
Well dressed staff	0.719	0.797
Appealing promotional brochures	0.620	0.746
Positive attitude towards customers	0.585	0.800
Neat and comfortable interior of the bank	0.545	0.607
Attractive form outside	0.477	0.762

The variables namely neat and comfortable interior of the bank, well dressed staff, appealing promotional brochures, positive attitude towards customer and attractive form outside of 0.757, 0.797, 0.746, 0.800, 0.607 and 0.762 are included in the attributes namely tangibility.

Customers' Attitude towards Banking in different groups of banks

The customers' attitude towards the eleven factors in bank service quality is computed from the mean score of the variables involved it. The mean score of the factors among the customers in State Bank Groups, OPSB and Private Sector Banks have been calculated separately to compare the level of importance given by the customers in three groups of banks. The test for mean score analysis (ANOVA) test procedure is used to compares mean scores of more than two groups. The procedure assumes that the variances of the groups are equal and it was tested with Levene's test statistics. The significant difference between the mean scores is tested with respect to the Sector, Group of bank, Sex, Age, Education, Native, Occupation, Income, Yrs of Service, Location of Bank, Nature of account, Type of Account, Duration of customer and No of visits.

Test for mean scores of attitude and type of bank

In order to analyze the significant difference among the customers belonging to three groups of banks regarding the eleven attributes in banking, the one-way analysis has been administered and the resulted mean score of each attributes in banking and its respective 'F' statistics are shown in the following Table .

Null Hypothesis: H_0: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of attitude among the customers of three groups of banks.

The table displays the descriptive statistics of the sample size, mean, standard deviation. The table also shows that the F statistics, calculated as the ratio of the variances. The column P value shows the probability value from the F distribution. Since the P value is less than 0.05 for the dimensions of credibility, we reject the hypothesis. Hence there is significant difference in the mean scores of the customers 'attitudes towards bank service quality factors with respect to the three groups.

Table 1.13
Significant Difference in customers' attitude on Service quality dimensions

Service quality Dimensions	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	p
Credibility	SBI Group	150	21.11	1.610	5.126	0.006**
	OPSB	500	21.00	1.382		
	PSB	245	20.73	0.759		
Customization	SBI Group	150	20.78	1.492	10.382	0.000
	OPSB	500	20.77	1.475		
	PSB	245	20.27	1.444		
Service consistency	SBI Group	150	20.65	1.524	6.042	0.002**
	OPSB	500	21.00	1.508		
	PSB	245	21.17	1.313		
Access	SBI Group	150	8.50	1.022	0.939	0.391
	OPSB	500	8.58	0.928		
	PSB	245	8.62	0.638		
Service components	SBI Group	150	21.11	1.761	9.393	0.000**
	OPSB	500	21.49	1.616		
	PSB	245	21.80	1.247		
Tangibility	SBI Group	150	25.28	2.089	13.602	0.000**
	OPSB	500	25.84	2.060		
	PSB	245	26.38	2.056		
Innovation	SBI Group	150	11.84	1.147	1.728	0.178
	OPSB	500	12.03	1.071		
	PSB	245	11.93	1.261		
Employee behavior	SBI Group	150	20.88	1.356	10.796	0.000**
	OPSB	500	20.81	1.373		
	PSB	245	20.34	1.442		
Record maintenance	SBI Group	150	16.74	1.755	78.942	0.000**
	OPSB	500	17.72	2.071		
	PSB	245	19.14	1.765		
Responsiveness	SBI Group	150	11.83	1.444	0.244	0.784
	OPSB	500	11.91	1.172		
	PSB	245	11.89	0.867		
Reliability	SBI Group	150	12.46	1.267	4.076	0.017*
	OPSB	500	12.68	1.265		
	PSB	245	12.83	1.192		
	Total	895	12.68	1.250		

* Significant (at 5 %) ** Highly significant (at 1 % & 5 %)

The highly viewed factor of service quality among the customers in SBI group banks are reliability, credibility and service consistency are responsiveness since the respective mean scores are 12.46, 21.11 and 20.65. Among the customers in OPSB, the service quality factors are reliability and credibility and service components since the mean scores are 12.68, 21 and 21 respectively. In the case of private sector banks, these service quality factors are employee behavior, customization and service consistency since the respective mean scores are 2034, 20.27 and 21.17. In total, the customers in private sector banks viewed more on attributes in banks compared to the customers belonging to other two groups of banks. The significant difference among the three groups of customers is identified in viewing on few attributes of banking namely customization, service consistency, tangibility, innovation, employee behavior and reliability since the respective 'F' statistics are significant at five percent level.

Attitude towards various Bank service quality factors between Urban and Rural Customers

Since the study covers equally the urban and rural branches in the study on service quality, it is imperative to analyse the level of attitude towards each bank service quality factor among urban and rural customers separately. In order to examine the significant difference between the two groups of customer regarding their attitude towards bank service quality, the 't' test has been administered. The calculated mean score of each facotr among rural and urban customers and the respective 't' statistics are presented in Table below.

Table 1.14

Customers' attitude with regard to service quality factors between Rural and Urban Customers

Dimensions	Native	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
Credibility	Rural	20.83	1.391	2.761	0.006**
	Urban	21.06	1.171		
Customization	Rural	20.58	1.470	1.131	0.258
	Urban	20.70	1.500		
Service consistency	Rural	20.68	1.258	6.563	0.000**
	Urban	21.31	1.602		
Access	Rural	8.62	0.895	1.697	0.090
	Urban	8.53	0.855		
Service components	Rural	21.12	1.607	7.904	0.000**
	Urban	21.92	1.408		
Tangibility	Rural	24.95	1.874	15.673	0.000**
	Urban	26.89	1.833		
Innovation	Rural	11.82	1.155	3.999	0.000**
	Urban	12.12	1.104		
	Rural	21.00	1.294	6.845	0.000**
	Urban	20.37	1.446		
Record maintenance	Rural	17.37	2.089	8.842	0.000**
	Urban	18.56	1.940		
Responsiveness	Rural	11.81	1.336	2.160	0.031*
	Urban	11.98	0.904		
Reliability	Rural	12.31	1.369	9.804	0.000**
	Urban	13.09	0.961		

The highly viewed service quality factors of banking among the urban customers are responsiveness; customization and credibility since the mean scores are 11.98, 20.70 and 21.06 respectively. Among the rural customers, these attributes are employee behavior, tangibility and responsiveness since the respective mean scores are 21, 24.95 and 11.81. The Significant difference among the urban and rural customers is noticed regarding the customers' attitude on the service quality factors namely credibility, customization, tangibility and innovation since the respective' statistics are significant at five percent level.

Conclusion

Credibility ,customization, consistency in service, access, service components, tangibility, innovation, employee behavior, record maintenance, responsiveness and reliability are identified as key factors influencing customers' service quality.

The highly viewed factor of service quality among the customers in SBI group banks are reliability, credibility and service consistency are responsiveness. Among the customers in OPSB, the highly perceived service quality factors are reliability and credibility and service components. In the case of private sector banks, key service quality factors are employee behavior, customization and service consistency

The highly viewed service quality factors of banking among the urban customers are responsiveness; customization and credibility since the mean scores are 11.98, 20.70 and 21.06 respectively. Among the rural customers, these attributes are employee behavior, tangibility and responsiveness since the respective mean scores are 21, 24.95 and 11.81.

Research implications

The banks in this e banking era, should try to innovate products that suits the attitude of urban and rural customers of three segments of banks.

Scope for future research

Research studies can be undertaken that map the entire psychographics of the customers that would enable the banks to adopt strategic marketing methods to woo new customers. Comparative studies can be undertaken with regard to old private sector banks, new private sector banks and foreign banks. Various service quality models can be used and detailed study on service quality gaps can also be attempted.

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