

Service Quality

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บทคัดย่อ

คุณภาพการบริการทางการตลาดเป็นเรื่องที่สำคัญในวงการตลาดระดับสากล เนื่องจากคุณภาพของการบริการเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญของความสำเร็จในการให้บริการ ซึ่งเป็นผลิตภัณฑ์ทางการตลาด เนื่องจากบริการเป็นผลิตภัณฑ์ที่แตกต่างไปจากสินค้าหลายประการ

คุณภาพของการบริการทางการตลาดเป็นเรื่องของการรับรู้บริการของลูกค้าเมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับ การคาดหวังของลูกค้าต่อบริการนั้น รูปแบบของคุณภาพของการบริการประกอบด้วย 5 GAP การวัดคุณภาพการบริการทางการตลาดนิยมใช้ SERVQUAL เป็นเครื่องมือในการวัด โดยใช้สูตร คุณภาพของการบริการได้จากการรับรู้ของลูกค้าลบด้วยการคาดหวังของลูกค้า ถ้าการรับรู้ของลูกค้า สูงกว่าหรือเท่ากับ การคาดหวังของลูกค้า คุณภาพการบริการนั้นจะได้รับการยอมรับ แต่ถ้าการรับรู้ ของลูกค้าต่ำกว่าการคาดหวังของลูกค้า คุณภาพของการบริการนั้นจะถูกปฏิเสธ

The Characteristics of Service Quality

Brown et al. (1991) stated that service quality is a major factor for achieving commercial success. Service quality is a matter of knowing your customers, designing services to meet customers' needs, and finally managing the service production and delivery process to the customers' satisfaction.

Mefford (1993) also noted that managers of many service firms have concluded that quality is one of the major contributors to their success. While quality of goods is easy to define and measure, quality of service is difficult to understand and control. Service cannot be inventoried or tested to guarantee the quality. Moreover, the quality of service depends on performance. Therefore, it cannot be made uniform of service.

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Most researchers consider service quality to be related to an attitude (Bolton and Drew, 1991 ; Boulding et al., 1993). Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) described service quality as an abstract also it is difficult to measure entity due to three unique characteristics: intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability of the production and consumption functions. These characteristics make the consumers' assessment of service quality more difficult than product quality.

The definition of quality may vary from person to person and from situation to situation. The definitions of service quality change only in wording but typically involve with determining whether perceived service delivery, exceeds or fails to customer expectations (Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Oliver, 1993; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1993).

Besides, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) defined service quality as the degree and direction of discrepancy between the consumers' perceptions and expectations, or the extent to which a service consistently conforming to customers' expectations (Witt and Stewart, 1996). Berry and Parasuraman (1993) explained that expectations contain two levels. The first level is the desired service, which is a service that customers' hopes to receive. The second level is adequate service, which is a minimum level of service that customer will accept. In addition, Bitner and Hubber (1994) defined service quality as "the customer's overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its service" (p.77). Likewise, Rust, R. and Oliver, R. (1994) stated that service quality is a subject concept, which effective management needs to understand the customer's opinion for service quality.

Meanwhile, Swift, Ross and Omachonu (1998) explained that it is difficult to plan and control service quality more than goods service because service quality is difficult to measure. The quality of service is resulted from the producer. Service quality, like good quality, should be responsible for the expectations of the customer. However, it is risk if excessive service is

promised. Service quality can be easily planned when the firm's objectives are clearly defined and the employee committed.

Once Lambin (2000) discussed four characteristics of service quality. Service quality is more difficult for the consumer to evaluate than the quality of goods, because the service tends to be high in experience and create qualities. Service quality is based on consumers' perceptions, not only the outcome of the service, but also their evaluation of the process which the service was performed. Service quality perception results from a comparison of what the consumer expected prior to the service and the perceived level of the service received. Different individuals can have different perceptions and different expectations. A factor in human is significantly involved in the process of service delivery and, therefore, a stable and full standardized level of quality is much difficult to achieve. Different individuals will perform the same service and the same service differently wide spreaders, providers can perform differently at different time.

Measurement of Service Quality

Researchers and managers of service organizations agree that service quality is involved in a comparison of expectations with performance. Gronroos (1982) contended that consumers compare the service they expect with the perceptions of the service they receive in evaluating service quality. In the same time, Smith and Houston (1982) stated that satisfaction of service is connected to confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations. Their research is on the ground of the disconfirmation paradigm, which confirms that satisfaction is linked to the size and direction of the disconfirmation expectations, also disconfirmation is related to the person's primary expectations (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982).

Lewis and Booms (1983) explained that service quality is a measure of how well the delivered service level matches customer expectations. Delivering quality service means conforming customer expectations consistently.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) advanced the concepts of perceived service quality by developing a comprehensive measure known as SERVQUAL. They applied exploratory research from executives and customer focus group interviews in order to define and model the concept of perceived service quality. They also confirmed that customers evaluated the functional aspect of service quality during service delivery.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) developed SERVQUAL into their study between customers' perceptions of the service which they received and their expectations as a measure of customer satisfaction. The perception-expectation gap is the difference of the predicted service as compared to the service gained. They concluded the service expectations are the result of both experiential and non-experiential factors.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988) proposed a service quality model after extensive interviews of executives of many companies and focus groups. They used SERVQUAL as an instrument to measure perceived service quality, and discussed five quality dimensions of SERVQUAL which are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Then, they identified five specific gaps or discrepancies in the service delivery process affecting a consumer's evaluation of the service experiences. In addition, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) studied the difference between one's expectations of a service and the service experience. They found that a customer's assessment of overall service quality relies on the gap between expectations and perceptions of actual performance levels.

Moreover, Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Peter, Churchill, and Brown (1993) observed three problems in using SERVQUAL. Firstly, it is difficult to explain a score difference in score between expectation and perception in measurement perception. Secondly, the difference in score between expectation and perception should represent perceived overall quality. Thirdly, the Gap theory of SERVQUAL raises many questions about the true factor structure of service quality construction.

Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Teas (1993) reported that SERVQUAL offers a well documented and multidimensional approach for measuring service quality by using a different score approach. Babakus and Boller (1992), Carman (1990), and Cronin and Taylor (1992) believed that measuring perceptions after the service experience is more valuable than measuring expectations and perceptions of the experience.

The element of service quality that has received the most attention is the expected service-perceived service gap acknowledged by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), which can be defined operationally as a “perceptions-minus-expectations” (P-E) measurement framework.

The formula for computing quality is displayed as following :

$$\text{Quality} = \text{Perception} - \text{Expectation}$$

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) distinguished the differences between matching customers' expectations and perceptions. They defined perceived service quality by using three equations :

Expectations of service quality are exceeded or quality exceeds expectations.

$$PS > ES \text{ or } PS - ES > 0$$

Expectations of service quality are met or quality is acceptable.

$$PS = ES \text{ or } PS - ES = 0$$

Expectations of service quality are not met or quality is unacceptable.

$$PS < ES \text{ or } PS - ES < 0$$

Tustin stated, “there is not presently available a universally accepted concept of service quality that adequately defines service quality or reflects the differences that must be considered in managing service quality, as opposed to goods quality” (1992, p.6). The results confirm the effectiveness of using quality dimensions and expectations and perceptions gap analysis to operationalize service quality. Furthermore, the findings provide insight into the relationships among customers' overall quality rating of a service, the customers' expectations

and perceptions of a service, the type of customer considered, the service provider understandings of those expectations and perceptions, and the service provider hierarchical level.

On the other hand, Pyo stated, “Service quality is more difficult for the customer to evaluate than goods quality. Service quality perception results from a comparison of customer expectations with the actual performance. Quality evaluations are not made solely on the outcome results but on an involved evaluation of the process of service delivery” (2001, p.113).

Model of Service Quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) developed a model of service quality that encompasses five gaps. These gaps are shown in Figure 2 and discussed below. There are five gaps in the service quality model, which are shown in Figure 2.

GAP 1 : Consumer Expectation – Management Perception Gap. Gap 1 is the difference between the expectations of consumers and the perceptions of management

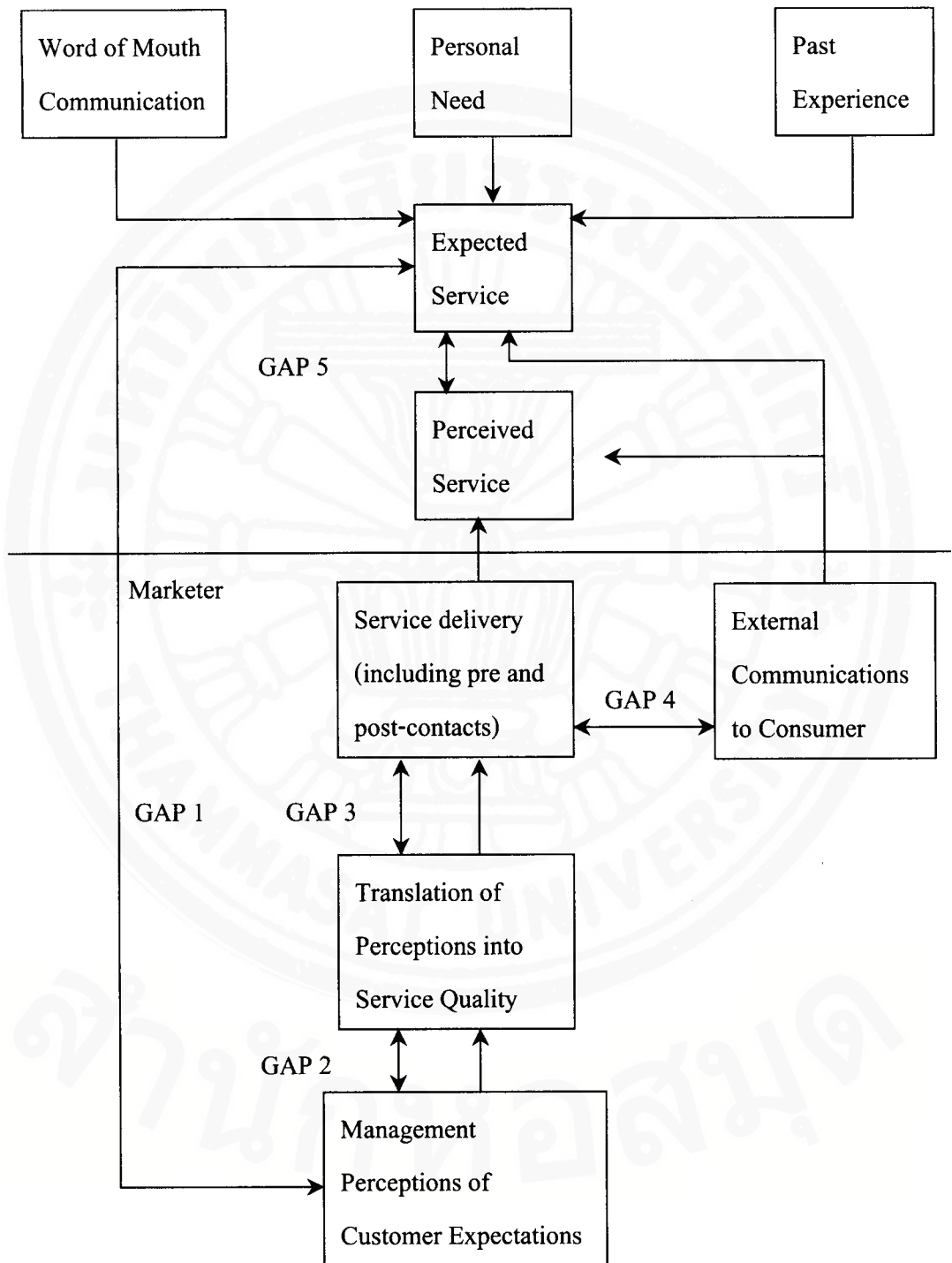
GAP 2 : Management Perception – Service Quality Specification Gap. Gap 2 is the difference between management’s perceptions and service quality specifications.

GAP 3 : Service Quality Specification – Service Delivery Gap. Gap 3 is the difference between the service quality specifications and the actual service delivery.

GAP 4 : Service Delivery – External Communications Gap. Gap 4 is the difference between the actual service delivery and what is communicated to customers.

GAP 5 : Expected Service – Perceived Service Gap. Gap 5 is the difference between the customers’ expected services and the perceived service actually delivered.

Figure 1. Gap Analysis



Source : Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985). A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implications for Future Research. *Journal of Marketing*, 49 (4), 41-50.

Finally, Woodruff and Gardial (1999) stated that gaps analyses, which compare suppliers' perceptions of what their customers want with what these customers want in reality, reveal significant differences. Personal experience of customers does not seem to be sufficient for true understanding what customers want. A supplier sees customers with a biased attitude; and often irregular and infrequent contact with customers' hinders. The supplier needs to find the depth and accuracy of learning about customers' requirements.



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