

SERVICE QUALITY MODELS AS CUSTOMERS SATISFACTION TOOLS

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Abstract

In a competitive world, where companies must satisfy their customers to improve profitability and market share, a service quality measurement is an efficient tool. In the last years, there was a debate on service quality and it has led to the elaboration of numerous research papers and descriptive models. The paper aims to present a review of the most three important service quality conceptual models, over time, which are the basis of other models. The authors employed a quantitative research method based on collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing quantitative information from numerous secondary data sources. The article presents the following service quality model: Grönroos's Model, SERVQUAL and SERVPERF, highlighting their main dimensions.

Keywords: *Service quality, models, customer satisfaction, services marketing, review*

Clasificare JEL: *M31, M39*

1. Introduction and context of the study

In the twenty-first century, the services literature enhances the importance of understanding the role played by the consumers in services (Naruo and Toma, 2007; Gradinaru and others, 2016). In a competitive world, where companies must satisfy their customers to improve profitability and market share, a service quality measurement is an efficient tool (Ghotbabadi and others, 2012; Gradinaru and Toma, 2017; Catana and Toma, 2021).

Nowadays economy is characterized as service economy. Moreover, the history of economics revealed that all developing countries have invariably experienced a shift from industry to service sector as the main element of the economy (Sravana, 2015). As the concept appropriate to the marketing field, the Committee of Definitions of American Marketing Association (1960) define services marketing as “activities, benefits and satisfactions which are offered for sale or are provided in connection with the sale of goods.”

The concept of “service quality” was investigated from various perspectives and has been defined in many ways as follows:

- “service quality is determined by differences between customer’s expectations of services provider’s performance and their evaluation of the services they received” (Parasuraman et al., 1985);
- “the difference between customers’ expectations for service performance prior to the service encounter and their perceptions of the service received” (Asubonteng et al., 1996);
- “the subjective comparison that customers make between the quality of the service that they want to receive and what they actually get” (Gefan, 2002).

In the last years, there was a debate on service quality and it has led to the elaboration of numerous research papers and descriptive models (Mauri et al., 2013; Catana, 2019; Catana and

Toma, 2021). There are different schools of service quality models and the researchers try to present the main dimensions for evaluating the gap between the perceived and expected service quality from a consumer’s perspective (Large and Konig, 2009; Toma and Marinescu, 2013; Toma and Marinescu, 2015).

Several studies in the literature emphasize the importance of service quality models (Toma and Gradinaru, 2018; Toma and Catana, 2021). The growing interest in this field is reflected by the multitude of papers written and indexed in the Web of Science database - it has been found 15.465 referred articles.

This paper aims to present a review of the most three important service quality conceptual models, over time, which are the basis of other models. The research is based on a quantitative research method.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the research methodology. Results and discussion are presented in section 3 and the last section illustrates the conclusions, along with research perspectives.

2. Research methodology

The authors employed a quantitative research method based on collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing quantitative information from numerous secondary data sources. The information was obtained through desk research. First of all, the authors studied the scientific literature on the gap model in services and the evolution of the concept over time. Secondly, the information was synthesized and, finally, the authors concluded the paper and emphasized the conclusions following the analysis performed.

3. Results and discussion

Analyzing the selected scientific literature on service quality, the authors found many suggested models for measuring the concept. However, in this study, the authors present the main three models, which are most common in marketing researches and are the basis of other models (table no. 1).

Table no. 1. The three main service quality models over time in the scientific literature

Year	Author(s)	Title of the paper	Journal	Name of the model	Main dimensions
1984	Grönroos, Christian	A service quality model and its marketing implication	European Journal of Marketing	Grönroos’s Model	Technical quality, functional quality, image
1985	Parasuraman, Parsu; Zeithaml, Valerie; Berry, Leonard	A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and its Implication for Future Research	Journal of Marketing	SERVQUAL	<i>Consumer:</i> Word of mouth communications, personal needs, past experience <i>Marketer:</i> Service delivery, translation of perceptions into service quality specs, management perceptions of consumer expectations, external communications to consumers
1992	Cronin, Joseph; Taylor,	Measuring Service Quality: A Reexamination	Journal of Marketing	SERVPERF	Tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy

In 1984, Grönroos proposed a technical and functional quality model, considered the first model of measuring the quality of service (Grönroos, 1984). The aim of this model is that a company must have an understanding of consumer perception of the quality and the way service quality can be influenced (Seth and others, 2005). Moreover, the paper emphasizes the idea that the quality dimensions are interrelated and the importance of image should be recognized (Figure no. 1).

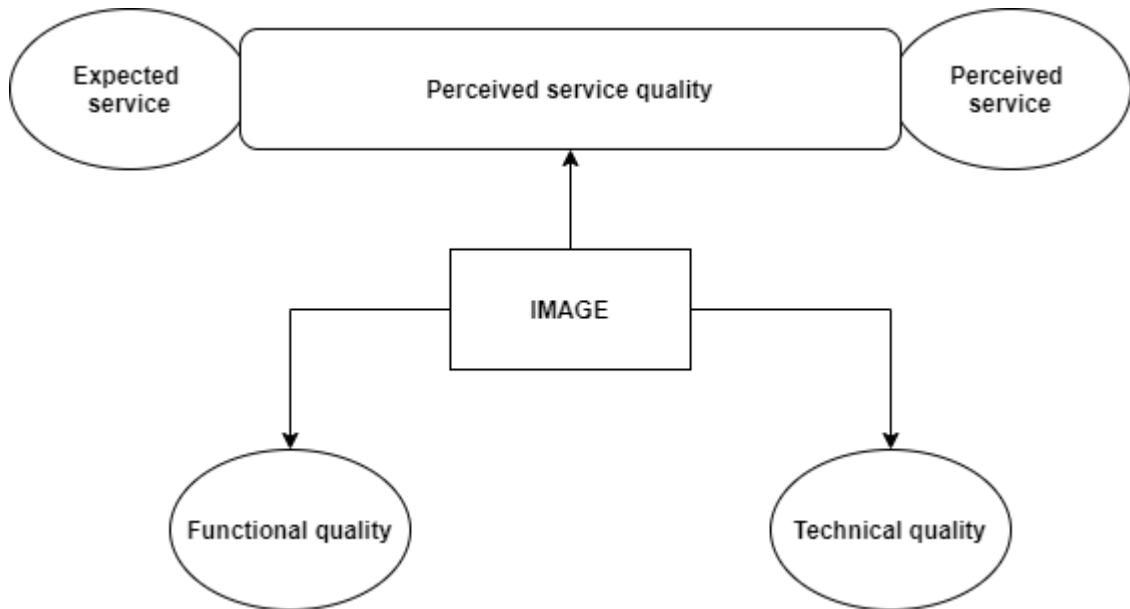


Figure no. 1. Grönroos model

In 1985, in the article entitled “A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and its Implication for Future Research (SERVQUAL)” was proposed, for the first time, the Gap Model of Service Quality – a framework for analyzing common customer satisfaction issues (Figure no. 2) (Parasuraman and others, 1985). In this paper the central service gap is originated from the difference between the perceived and expected service quality from a consumer’s perspective (Large and König, 2009). Further, many studies tried to apply the SERVQUAL scale to different services sectors (Mauri and others, 2013).

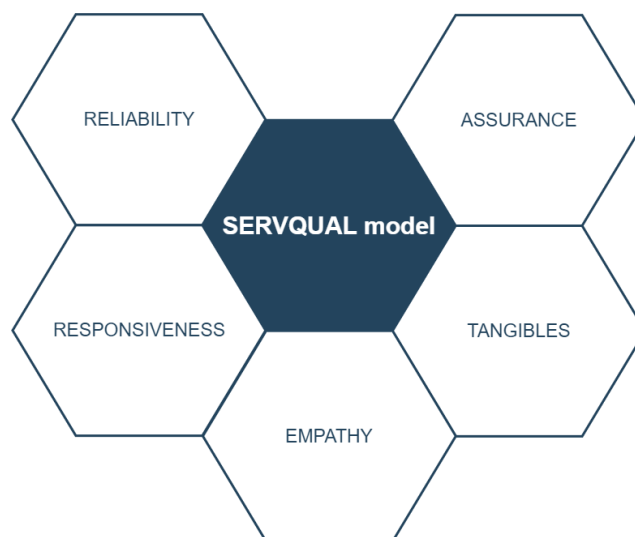


Figure no. 2.

SERVQUAL model

Further, in 1992 and 1994, in their papers, Cronin and Taylor developed a performance-only model called SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Cronin and Taylor, 1994). The purpose of this model is to overcome the shortcomings of SERVQUAL and it measures only performance (Endeshaw, 2019).

Most of the studies revealed that service quality is multidimensional and SERVQUAL and SERVPERF are the most used and famous models in service quality (Ghotbabadi and others, 2012). Although these models have strong validity and are applicable for measuring service quality in many services industries (Ghotbabadi and others, 2012), there are researchers that found out the lack of generalizability for all businesses (Seth and others, 2005).

All in all, the existing literature has shown gaps regarding how to measure the quality of services. Firstly, the customer expectations should be embedded in service quality models. Secondly, any service provider should consider the image, and the technical and functional quality of the service. Thirdly, any dimension of service quality models must take into consideration the consumer's perception.

4. Conclusions

The idea of using the service quality models to analyze the gaps between customer's expectations and reality concerned the scientific world, over the last four decades. Nowadays, the researchers' interest in this field is continuously growing, given the effort of the companies to have satisfied customers.

Since the 1980s the researchers developed different service quality models and clarified lots of changes occurred in the process of providing services. Consequently, they entered specific tools and techniques.

This paper highlighted the dimensions of the three most important service quality models and the differences between them. Future studies should be conducted using qualitative analysis to research consumer's preferences regarding the quality of services. Moreover, there is a need for future articles related to the other service quality models.

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