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Measuring Customer Feedback, Response and Satisfaction

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Abstract

This paper reviews various different questionnaires designed to measure customer response to a particular service. They differ on various criteria including the dimensions that they are trying to evaluate their established psychometric qualities and their usage. Recommendations for their use are made.

Keywords

Customer Feedback, Questionnaires, Inventories, Service, Quality

1. Introduction

Most service organisations are, quite rightly, very interested in measuring the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of their customers. For some departments (like marketing and sales), it is often one of their primary metrics. As a consequence, various research teams have attempted to devise measures that are comprehensive, reliable and robust. This short paper is a review of the major instruments available to practitioners and researchers.

Customer satisfaction is an assessment of how well a company's products or services meet customer expectations. Customer satisfaction relates to a general and specific psychological evaluation of a customer's experience of a product or service. It is well established that satisfied customers are key to long-term business success (McColl-Kennedy & Schneider, 2000). The idea of the service-profit chain directly relates customer satisfaction to business success and profitability.

Customer satisfaction predicts customer retention, loyalty, and product repurchase. Customer satisfaction has also been suggested to have an impact on future product search activity, alterations in "hopping behaviour", as well as trials of other available products in the sector. Keiningham and Vavra (2001) found that for every percentage increase in customer satisfaction, there is an average

increase of 2.37% of return on investment. Further, when a customer is satisfied they spread this information, acting as marketers for the company.

Gitomer (1998) proposed that nearly one half of American business is built on "word-of-mouth" communication. Such findings demonstrate the importance of customer satisfaction. Whilst some of these ideas and findings are disputed, the measurement of customer reactions remains important. It is thus key to be able to assess these reactions, in order to determine methods of improving business effectiveness.

Measuring customer service is highly important, yet there is no universally accepted measurement scale. There are several theories proposing *how* we should approach the assessment of customer service. These include the expectancy-disconfirmation approach, the performance-only approach, the technical and functional dichotomy approaches, the service quality vs. service satisfaction approach, and the attribute importance approach. Two of these approaches can be seen in Table 1.

However, measuring customer satisfaction is not simple partly because personal attitudes towards quality vary between individuals. What one may consider to be superior quality may be seen as average by another. Garvin (1984) concludes that "quality lies in the eyes of the beholder" (p. 41). However subjective this may be there is clearly considerable agreement between customers, particularly at extremes of good and bad service.

As assessing quality in service is such a complex task, over the years, service management literature has introduced a number of models to measure overall service quality (Seth, Deshmunkh, & Vrat, 2005; Senić & Senić, 2008). The majority of these models are based on comparing what the customer expected from the service or product, and the actual service quality levels perceived. This idea was originally introduced by Grönroos (1982). For instance, the service will be considered excellent if perceptions exceed expectations, but bad if it does not meet expectations (Vázquez et al., 2001).

The aim of this paper is to review the various published measures of customer service.

2. The Measures

Three of the most common scales are documented below in Table 2. They seem to be widely used and reported in various academic papers.

Table 1. Two approaches to measurement.

Approach	Description	Measure
Confirmation-disconfirmation	Comparing the customer's expectations vs. what the customer actually experienced.	The CSI (Customer Satisfaction Index)
Performance-only	Measuring service features related to transitional-specific service satisfaction (both technical and functional),	Customer Satisfaction Survey

Table 2. The most popular scales and their individual items.

Scale	Items

Your expectations about firms offering _____ services.

Tangibles

1. They should have up-to-date equipment
2. Their physical facilities should be visually appealing
3. Their employees should be well dressed and appear neat
4. The appearance of the physical facilities of these firms should be in keeping with the type of services provided

Reliability

5. When these firms promise to do something by a certain time, they should do so
6. When customers have problems, these firms should be sympathetic and reassuring
7. These firms should be dependable
8. They should provide their services at the time they promise to do so
9. They should keep their records accurately

Responsiveness

SERVQUAL

10. They shouldn't be expected to tell customers exactly when services should be performed (-)
11. It is not realistic for customers to expect prompt service from employees of these firms (-)
12. Their employees don't always have to be willing to help customers (-)
13. It is okay if they are too busy to respond to customer requests promptly (-)

Assurance

14. Customers should be able to trust employees of these firms
15. Customers should be able to feel safe in their transactions with these firms' employees
16. Their employees should be polite
17. Their employees should get adequate support from these firms to do their jobs well

Empathy

18. These firms should not be expected to give customers individual attention (-)
19. Employees of these firms cannot be expected to give customers personal attention (-)
20. It is unrealistic to expect employees to know what the needs of their customers are (-)
21. It is unrealistic to expect these firms to have their customers' best interests at heart (-)
22. They shouldn't be expected to have operating hours convenient to all their customers (-)

Dimension 1 Physical Aspects
1 Appearance

1. The store has modern-looking equipment and fixtures
2. The store and its physical facilities (trial rooms and restrooms) are visually attractive
3. Materials associated with this store's service (such as shopping bags, loyalty cards and catalogues) are visually appealing
4. The store has clean, attractive and convenient physical facilities (restrooms, fitting rooms)

2 Convenience

5. The store layout at this store makes it easier for customers to find what they need
6. The store layout at this store makes it easier for customers to move around in the store

RSQS

Dimension 2 Reliability
3 Promises

7. When this store promises to do something (such as repairs, alterations) by a certain time, it will do so
8. This store provides its services at the time it promises to do so

4 Doing-it-Right

9. This store performs the service right the first time
10. This store has merchandise available when the customers want it
11. This store insists on error-free sales transactions and records

Dimension 3 Personal interaction

Continued

5 Inspiring Confidence

12. Employees in the store have the knowledge to answer customers' questions
13. The behaviour of employees in this store instils confidence in customers
14. Customers feel safe in their transactions with this store

6 Courteousness/Helpfulness

15. The employees in this store give prompt service to customers
16. Employees in this store tell customers exactly when services will be performed
17. Employees in this store are never too busy to respond to customer's requests
18. This store gives customers individual attention
19. Employees in this store are consistently courteous with customers
20. Employees in this store treat customers courteously on the telephone.
    (*deleted as not applicable in Indian context*)

RSQS

Dimension 4 Problem Solving

21. This store willingly handles returns and exchanges
22. When a customer has a problem, this store shows a sincere interest in solving it
23. Employees of this store are able to handle customer complaints directly and immediately

Dimension 5 Policy

24. This store offers high quality merchandise
25. This store provides plenty of convenient parking for customers
26. This store has operating hours convenient to all their customers
27. This store accepts all major credit cards
28. The store has its own credit card

Customer Treatment

1. Employees care for customers as they would like to be cared for
2. Employees go the "extra mile" for customers
3. We are noticeably more friendly and courteous than our competitors
4. Employees go out of their way to reduce inconveniences for customers

Employee Empowerment

5. Decisions are made "close to the customer." In other words, employees often make important customer decisions without seeking management approval
6. Employees have freedom and authority to act independently in order to provide excellent service

Service Technology

7. We enhance our service capabilities through the use of "state of the art" technology
8. Technology is used to build and develop higher levels of service quality
9. We use high levels of technology to support the efforts of men and women on the front line

SERV-OR

Service Failure Prevention

10. We go out of our way to prevent customer problems
11. We go out of our way to "head off" or prevent customer problems rather than reacting to problems once they occur
12. We actively listen to our customers

Service Failure Recovery

13. We have an excellent customer complaint handling system for service follow-up
14. We have established problem-solving groups to enhance our ability to resolve service breakdowns
15. We provide follow-up service calls to confirm that our services are being provided properly
16. We provide every customer with an explicit service guarantee

Service Standards Communication

17. We do not wait for customers to complain, we use internal standards to pinpoint failures before we receive customer complaints
18. Every effort is made to explain the results of customer research to every employee in understandable terms

Continued

	19. Every employee understands all of the service standards that have been instituted by all departments
	20. We have a developed chain of objectives linking together every branch in support of the corporate vision
	21. Service performance measures are communicated openly with all employees regardless of position or function
	Service Vision
	22. There is a true commitment to service, not just lip service
	23. Customers are viewed as opportunities to serve rather than as sources of revenue
	24. It is believed that fundamentally, the organization exists to serve the needs of its customers
	Servant Leadership
	25. Management constantly communicates the importance of service
	26. Management regularly spends time "in the field" or "on the floor" with customers and front-line employees
SERV-OR	27. Management is constantly measuring service quality
	28. Management shows that they care about service by constantly giving of themselves
	29. Management provides resources, not just "lip service" to enhance employee ability to provide excellent service
	30. Managers give personal input and leadership into creating quality service
	Service Rewards
	31. Management provides excellent incentives and rewards at all levels for service quality, not just productivity
	32. This organization noticeably celebrates excellent service
	Service Training
	33. Every employee receives personal skills training that enhances his/her ability to deliver high quality service
	34. We spend much time and effort in simulated training activities that help us provide higher levels of service when actually encountering the customer
	35. During training sessions we work through exercises to identify and improve attitudes toward customers

Parasuraman et al. (1985) built on Grönroos's idea, and formulated the *five gaps model*, which was the basis for a 22-item questionnaire assessing quality in service, the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) (see Table 2). The five most critical dimensions of quality were identified as *reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility*. To a large extent this model and measure which has been critiqued and updated has dominated the field. The reason is probably because the five dimensions are clear and important and the test is short and the items interpretable in many settings.

Many instruments have been introduced for measuring service quality since. The best known alternative to SERVQUAL is SERVPERF, constructed by Cronin and Taylor (1992). Much discussion followed differentiating between the two models in order to conclude which one was more valid when predicting service quality.

A contrasting suggestion to Grönroos's (1982) original idea of comparing expectations with experience is the idea that the measurement of service quality should only include customer perceptions (Caro & García, 2007).

Grönroos (1982) suggests that service quality is comprised of two dimensions, *functional* and *technical*. The functional dimension relates to *how* a service is delivered, where the technical dimension refers to an output of the service, e.g., what the customer receives. These aspects of service quality have been found to impact on customer attitudes towards a brand as well as on future behavioural intentions (Dagger & Sweeney, 2006). This suggests that perception of service

quality is determined by *functional quality, technical quality and corporate image*: that is the image and reputation of the organisation for service in general. Fonesca (2009) supported this model, proposing that these three factors represent the main determinants of satisfaction. Therefore, it is argued, service quality leads to satisfaction directly.

However, when measuring satisfaction, many challenges occur (Maričić, 2008). Satisfaction is a subjective measure of a customer's perception of the quality of a product or service. The measurement of satisfaction also encompasses expectations of quality of a product or service. Bateson (1995) highlights the difficulties of measuring service quality due to the fact of its intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability.

Table 3 describes a number of service quality and customer satisfaction models and scales. Each scale is comprised of different dimensions. Some of these are consistent across models, such as reliability (SERVQUAL, RSQS, SERVPERF, Weighted SERV-PERF, SERVQUAL-R), suggesting this is a key dimension of customer satisfaction and service quality. The scales vary in the number of dimensions included, from 2 - 10, varying in the different factors they think it is necessary to assess. Our research suggests that the SERVQUAL and the weighted SERV-PERF are the most used, however it is only possible to assess the published research in the area, and it may be that many of the other scales are widely employed throughout business yet not published in either the academic or trade literature.

These scales have not all been subjected to exacting and repeated psychometric assessment such as checking their dimensions through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, as well as the internal reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of those dimensions. More importantly perhaps in this area, there are few good norms so that those who use the measures can compare their data to that of a large group of representative service providers.

3. Discussion

There are various ways to evaluate the different scales mentioned in the table. The can be divided into psychometric and practical criteria. Psychometricians are interested in such things as reliability, validity and dimensionality. They look for evidence that the various scale items factor or cluster into the various dimensions the authors proposed. They are also interested in the internal reliability of the questionnaire, but most of all the validity: that is the proof that the questionnaire data predicts actual behaviour like sales. Some scales have been put to the test while others have received much less attention. Whilst it is relatively cheap and easy to develop a model and questionnaire items it is much more expensive in terms of time and money to psychometrically evaluate the scale.

Table 3 shows that where measured the tests seem to have acceptable levels of internal reliability, though there is less work on test-retest reliability. Psychometricians would in this case be very interested in the factor structure of these measures using factor analysis and structural equation modelling to try to

Table 3. Research on these scales.

Scale Name	Authors	Dimensions	Psychometric Properties	Evidence it is used
Service Quality (SERVQUAL)	Parasuraman et al. (1985)	1. Tangibles 2. Reliability 3. Responsiveness 4. Assurance 5. Empathy	The findings show that the SERVQUAL scale exhibits both reliability and convergent and divergent validity when measuring classroom service quality; in fact, in these regards, it outperforms traditional student assessment scales (Stodnick & Rogers, 2008). First, the reliability of the scale (A ≥ 0.95) and of its constituent dimensions (all A ≥ 0.71) is adequate, which confirms their internal consistency. Second, the existence of five dimensions (i.e., tangible elements, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) as they were originally suggested was confirmed. Third, the reliability dimension has the highest weighting in importance as well as a positive and significant relationship with overall quality. It is concluded that the SERVQUAL scale adapted to the services performed by travel agencies constitutes a valid and reliable instrument for measuring service quality.	Adapted to be used across a range of Scottish council services (Wisniewski, 2001). A particular electric company (SCECO-East utilizes SERVQUAL for measuring customers' perceptions of service quality (Jannadi & Al-Saggaf, 2000). This instrument has been widely adopted for the measurement of service quality (i.e. Babakus & Mangold, 1992; Heskett, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1997; Reichheld, 1996). According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1993), its major advantage over the alternatives is its diagnostic power and thus its practical application, as direct measures, such as SERVPERF and weighted SERVPERF, tend to magnify customers' assessments (Andronikidis & Bellou, 2010).
Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS)	Dabholkar Thorpe & Rentz (1996)	1. Physical Aspects 2. Reliability 3. Personal Interaction 4. Problem Solving 5. Policy	The retail service quality scaleis a reliable instrument, returning an overall Cronbach alpha of 0.78. Taking 0.7 and above as indicator of reliability (Nunnally, 1978), we see that all underlying sub-dimensions/dimensions are reliable except the Convenience sub-dimension pertaining to Physical aspects dimension of service quality (alpha = 0.67). This compares to the findings of Boshoff and Terblanche (1997) who found the RSQS scale (alpha = 0.93) and all dimensions reliable except the Policy dimension (alpha = 0.68). Kaul (2005).	Kim & Byoungho (2002) report the RSQS a useful scale for measuring service quality of discount stores across two different cultural contexts of the US & South Korea. Boshoff & Terblanche (1997) report highly encouraging results for the RSQS applicability in the context of department stores, speciality stores and hypermarkets in South Africa.

Continued

SERVPERF (the performance component of the Service Quality scale (SERVQUAL)	Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1985, 1988)	1. Tangibles 2. Reliability 3. Responsiveness 4. Assurance 5. Empathy	SERVPERF (performance-only) results in more reliable estimations, greater convergent and discriminant validity, greater explained variance, and consequently less bias than the SERVQUAL scale (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1994; Quester, Wilkinson, & Romaniuk, 1995; Llusar and Zornoza, 2000).	This study applies SERVPERF items to urban community development issues by considering the utility of the SERVPERF items in predicting a propensity to shop neighbourhood stores as compared to a propensity to shop in areas outside the neighborhood (Marshall & Smith, 2000).
Weighted SERV-PERF	Cronin & Taylor (1992)	1. Tangibles 2. Reliability 3. Responsiveness 4. Assurance 5. Empathy		This study compares all four alternatives (SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, weighted SERVQUAL, weighted SERVPERF) within the auto-repair industry in Greece. Based on data from 1043 customers, overall results are in line with previous studies, confirming the multidimensionality of the service-quality construct and the five-factor SERVPERF pattern. In disagreement with previous studies, findings show that the importance-weighted SERVPERF scale provides the greatest diagnostic information (Andronikidis & Bellou, 2010). In this paper, a weighted SERVPERF model was expressed to assess taxi service quality of Hangzhou, China (Yao & Ding, 2011).
American Customer Satisfaction Indexes (ACSI)/European Customer Satisfaction Indexes (ECSI)	Fornell (1992)	E-CSI:		The ACSI & ECSI have been extensively applied (Fornell et al., 1996; Anderson and Fornell, 2000; Martensen, Grønholdt, & Kristensen, 2000; Dermanov and Eklof, 2001; Fornell, 2001; Eklof and Westlund, 2002; Yeung, Chew-Ging, & Ennew, 2002).

Continued

SERVQUAL(R)	Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml (1991)	1. Access 2. Communication 3. Competence 4. Courtesy 5. Credibility 6. Reliability 7. Responsiveness 8. Security 9. Tangibility 10. Understanding	
SERV*OR	Lytle, Hom and Mokwa (1998)	1. Customer treatment 2. Employee empowerment 3. Service technology 4. Service failure prevention 5. Service failure recovery 6. Service standards communication 7. Service vision 8. Servant leadership 9. Service rewards 10. Service training	
Electronic-Customer Satisfaction index (e-CSI)	Hsu (2008)	1. Information availability and content 2. Ease of use or usability 3. Privacy/security 4. Graphic style fulfilment	A survey of 89 customers in Sweden categorized into different industries, namely automotive, other manufacturing, service, motor vehicle and remaining industry, was utilized in the analysis of the European customer satisfaction index (ECSI) model. Hardware, software and perceived value were found to be the variables in the ECSI model to have the most effect on customer satisfaction (Dahlgaard & Ciavolino, 2007).
Quality Perception Questionnaire (QPQ)	Coluccia, Ferretti, Lorini, & Calamai (2006)	To measure patients' perceptions of quality during a recent hospital admission. 1. Doctors 2. Nurses 3. Auxiliary staff 4. Structures	Confirm the QPQ is a valid instrument-revealing the four factors as hypothesised by the authors. The factors explained about 72% of the total variance (Coluccia, Ferretti, Cioffi, Lorini, & Vidotto, 2005). No differences were found in the QPQ scores with respect to age or sex. (Cioffi et al., 2012).

determine if there is a universal structure to the dimensions people use in the evaluation of services. So far there appears very little research of that kind. More

importantly there appears no research to indicate which of the various scales in these measures relates most powerfully to the overall satisfaction of the customer

Further there is little evidence that the scales retain their properties when translated into different languages. Similarly, it would be of interest to examine demographic correlates of these scales to attempt to determine whether, for instance age, social class or gender were related to the different factors in customer evaluation.

There can be no validity without reliability but it appears that there is relatively little published evidence on the validity of these scales. This research is not easy and usually involves correlation customer service data and other salient data like sales, profit, store visits or repeat purchases over time to assess the expected relationship between these measures. More interesting is how much variance is accounted for by the customer service data compared to other issues, like price which may attract customers. This could answer the question of whether it is indeed a wise investment to spend money on attempts to improve customer service.

The second and not always closely related criterion is always practical. Table 3 shows some evidence of the applications of these scales. Practitioners want questions which are very short clear and easy for customers to complete and yet measure the dimensions they are really interested in. They are often happy to trade off length for psychometric reliability and add as well as remove items they think not relevant to them.

They also like to use the same measure for different purposes. Some are concerned that you may annoy customers by using such measures while other believe the opposite, namely that customers feel appreciative in being asked. Most seem to be used in the hospitality industries but that is changing.

There are inevitable gaps in Table 2 and Table 3. There may well be other measures that are in use and many other papers that attempt to assess these instruments. In that sense these tables are, and will always be preliminary, but as far as we know no one has attempted a review such as this.

4. Conclusion

Both those in pure and applied research want scales that are short, psychometrically sound and sensitive to the various facets/dimensions that make up the behaviour (customer service) that is assessed. The review has located what we believe are the most well known and used measures and the evidence for them. We hope to be able to update this report every so often as the literature and the use of these measures increases.

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