

Assessment of Gap Between Service Quality Expectation and Perception: A Study of Goan Personal Grooming Industry

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Abstract

As the intensity of competition and hostility of environmental factors increases, the concern for service quality grows. Various service organizations are the recipient to the needs of best services demanded by the customers. Service quality is said to be crucial in the hospitality industry, hotel industry, telecom industry, medical industry, banking and other financial industry and personal grooming industry. An attempt has been made in this paper to understand the expectations and perceptions of customers availing personal grooming services in Goa. Therefore, a well administered questionnaire fulfilling the objective needs was circulated to most suitable respondents. A total of 210 questionnaires were circulated out of which only 187 were usable. After applying the necessary techniques like gap analysis & Mean Analysis, the results showed that the expectations were higher than the perception of customers in this industry in Goa.

Keywords

Environmental Factors, Service Quality, Personal Grooming Services, Gap Analysis, Mean Analysis

Introduction

The service sector is of Explosive growth. More than 50% of the average family's budget is spent on services. Share of services in the country's GDP is about 60% & likely to grow. Here is where the importance of services arises in the country. Different subjects have also formed a part of the curriculum

to highlight its importance. One of them is service marketing.

Service marketing is an important subject to understand how services differ from products in terms of the marketing mix required to be applied by the organizations. It also explains the different service encounters that matter to the customer as well as to the

service provider which determines repeated purchase. Solving of customers queries is also a crucial element in services. Doing it right the first time is the principle followed by service organizations.

Marketing of Services is an important matter to organizations because of the intangible nature of services. Service organizations need to convince the customer of the best quality of services provided by them so that the customers are satisfied and are willing to come back to avail the same service again. Service organizations are facing tough competition from other service providers in terms of the services offered to their target. They are trying for different ways to increase customer loyalty as it is considered the “back-bone of business.”

As the intensity of competition and hostility of environmental factors increases, the concern for service quality grows. Various service organizations are the recipient to the needs of best services demanded by the customers. Service quality is said to be crucial in the hospitality industry, hotel industry, telecom industry, medical industry, banking and other financial industry and personal grooming industry. The industries having more number of services are subject to the needs of best service quality. Nowadays companies need to differentiate to gain the brand loyalty of customers. Customers getting satisfied after availing the service is most important because this will then decide the future intentions of customer to repurchase the same service or not. This behavior of customers indicates loyalty towards the organisation.

What is Personal Grooming?

Personal grooming is the art of cleaning, grooming and maintaining parts of the body. In the modern world everyone wants to look good. Pampering oneself is done almost by every single individual. In this

dynamic environment it is necessary to have competitive edge over the others in every sphere of life. Differentiating ones service is a solution for this.

A few years back these services were availed by only a few affluent part of the society but now almost all are conscious of their physical appearance and these services are become a part of their day to day life. This study aims in determining the satisfaction level of consumers towards personal grooming services in the state of Goa.

Personal grooming is the term for how people take care of their body and appearance. Habits that are considered personal grooming include bathing, dressing, applying make-up, hair removal, and taking care of one’s teeth and skin. A person’s personal grooming routine may determine how he or she feels about them, and how other people perceive him or her.

Many people take care of their skin and teeth. Skin care typically consists of using products designed to clean, exfoliate, moisturize, and improve the appearance of the skin. Taking care of one’s teeth generally involves a flossing and brushing the teeth using toothpaste.

Many men and women choose to include body and facial hair removal in their personal grooming routine. Women may shave or wax their legs, underarms, and bikini area. Men often shave their facial hair and may use a trimming tool to remove hair from their ears and nose. Eyebrows can also be groomed by waxing or using a pair of tweezers to pluck out stray hairs.

Cologne, perfume, and deodorant are often used by both men and women. Deodorant is applied to the underarm area in order to control body odor. The type of perfume or cologne selected is a matter of personal taste.

Perfume and cologne should be applied in small amounts in order to not produce an overwhelming smell. Women often apply cosmetics to enhance the features of their face. Make-up products commonly used are face powder, blush, and lipstick. Eye shadow, eye liner, and mascara may also be used on the eyes. Dressing is also an important part of personal grooming. Clothes should be neat and clean.

Good personal grooming can make a person look polished and well put together. Looking good usually improves a person's self-esteem and confidence. A person who is well-groomed is often better perceived by others than a person who does not take as much care with his or her appearance. Personal grooming (also called tidying and preening) is the art of cleaning, grooming, and maintaining parts of the body. It is a species-typical behavior.

Why is Personal Grooming Important?

Personal grooming is very important. To be able to function and fit in today's society; you must make sure your personal grooming is your personal grooming is up to standard. Job opportunities, relationship possibilities and invitations to parties and other social events are all inextricably linked to how you present yourself to the world. Grooming is simply one of those things for which there is no excuse not to take time and effort with. So let's start with the basics.

Literature Review

Services are deeds, processes and performances (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003). Services include all economic activities whose output is not a physical product or something that is generally consumed at the time it is produced and which provides added value in forms (convenience, amusement, timeliness, comfort or health)

that are essentially intangible for its first purchaser (Quinn, Baruch and Paquette, 1987). According to (Mohammad Mizener Rahaman, 2011) a watchword for all service organizations nowadays is Quality. It is the quality that decides the competitiveness of the organizations in the globalization era. Service quality is a critical dimension for competitiveness in the industry (Lewis, 1989). The demand for better customer service has considerably increased the need for managing service quality (Wu *et. al.*, 2012; Dr. Nopadol Rompho 2012). (Berry *et. al.*, 1988; Md. Rifayat Islam 2012) described quality has become a significant differentiator and the most powerful competitive weapon which all the service organizations want to possess.

(Parasuraman *et. al.*, Zeithaml 1988; Mohit Kumar 2015) defined service quality as evaluation of services expected and the performance of the service provider. Expectations are viewed as predictions made by consumers about what is likely to happen during impending transaction or exchange. Perceived performance is defined as customer's perception of how product performance fulfills their needs, wants and desire (Cadotte *et. al.*, 1987; Mohit Kumar 2015).

SERVQUAL has been applied as a tool in many studies in different industries for understanding gaps in service quality from the customers' perspective. As per studies conducted in the Hotel industry in Thailand it was seen that the service quality of hotels in Thailand was moderately low. Hotels were not able to deliver services as expected (Dr. Nopadol Rompho 2012) (Gabbie and O'Neill 1997; Dr. Nopadol Rompho 2012) conducted research on the service quality of hotels in North Ireland. Their aims were to study the gaps between the expectation and the perception of service quality delivered by

two 3-star hotels using 22 characteristics of SERVQUAL. The research revealed that a gap between the customer perception and the customer expectation of the first hotel that applied total quality management (TQM) was smaller than that of another one. TQM drove better performance due to employee empowerment, so the first hotel was able to satisfy customer needs more efficiently. (Dr. P. Srinivas Rao and Dr. Padma Charan Sahu 2013), focused on the gap between customers' expectation and their perception of front office service quality in Hotel May Fair, Bhubaneswar. The results showed that there was a positive SERVQUAL gap as the overall perception was higher than expectation in all dimensions. When we speak of similar studies in the telecom service industry in India, study by (Ahuti Bhargav 2014) revealed that customers' expectations from the mobile phone service providers are higher than the perceived quality. The service providers need to take urgent steps to shore up the quality of their services to meet customers' expectations. In another study (Md. Rifayat Islam 2012) it was inferred that customers of mobile services in Bangladesh are not getting the expected service and therefore significant differences are seen in the gap scores. A study in the similar lines was done in Bangladesh but in the Banking sector. Gap analysis was used and the results were that the banks were unable to understand the needs of the customers and therefore lacked in the service provided to them. But there is still a lot of scope to develop and improve the services provided to the customers (Mohammad Mizenur Rahaman, 2011).

(Mohit Kumar 2015) in another study of Service gap in Public Sector Banks there existed a negative gap which means that perceptions was less than that of services customers expected from the banks. Corrective actions were also suggested to the banks for future improvement in the services.

Therefore, to assess the gap between the service expectations and service experiences customers of Personal grooming industry in Goa the SERVQUAL model has been considered as the conceptual model of the study.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this research paper was to undertake Gap analysis of the Expectation and Perception of various attributes of Service quality in the Personal grooming industry in the state of Goa.

Conceptual Framework

SERVQUAL model: Parasuraman, Valarie Zeithaml and Len Berry developed this Service Quality model in, 1988. The model highlights superior quality measurement dimensions. In the beginning around ten dimensions were identified but later they were brought to five which were Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy. These dimensions are briefly explained in the following.

Service Quality Dimensions

- *Tangibles*: The manner in which physical facilities, equipment and personnel appeared in the personal grooming industry.
- *Reliability*: The performance of promised services dependently and accurately.
- *Responsiveness*: The nature of employees or service providers to help a customer and provide prompt service.
- *Assurance*: Knowledgeable employees having courtesy and ability to inspire trust and confidence.
- *Empathy*: Care and individualized attention given by the employees to its customer.

These dimensions are further used to check customer expectation and perception about

the services. Customer expectation was the level where customers felt that a high level service performance was needed. While customer perception was the level at which the customers experienced the same service. If expectations were more and the actual experience or perception was less than the quality was considered to be inferior and vice versa.

The service gap then emerges out from customer's perceptions of quality. $Gap = P - E$ i.e. if there is a positive gap than it is an indication of good service quality. If it is negative, then it indicates poor service quality.

Gap Analysis: Is a means where the gaps between desired levels and actual levels of performance are identified and corrected.

Gap 1 (the positioning gap):- Consumers expectations perceived by a manager and its relative importance.

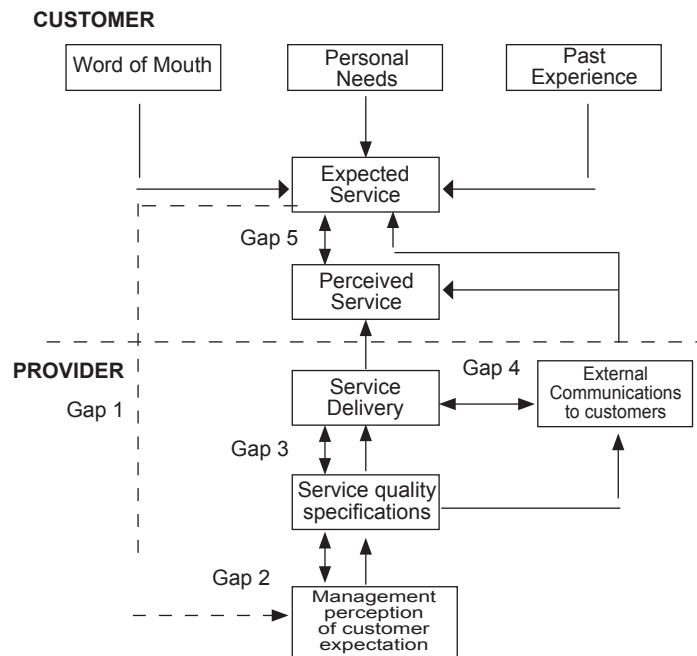
Gap 2 (the specification gap):- Difference in Consumers expectation from the business and what the manager's believe about the consumers wants.

Gap 3 (the delivery gap):- this gap exists when difference exists when the employee does something else besides that what is specified by the management.

Gap 4 (the communication gap):- this gap talks about the promises made by the companies when they don't match consumer's expectation on the same.

Gap 5 (the perception gap):- this gap is

Conceptual Model of Service Quality



Source: SERVQUAL gaps as generally defined by (Zeithaml et. al., 1990).

seen when there is a difference between the expected and the actual service received.

In this study we will be checking Gap 5 i.e. difference in the expected and the actually received service by the customers in the personal grooming industry in Goa.

Methodology

This study was conducted using SERVQUAL model proposed by Parasuraman *et. al.*, 1985 i.e. Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy. A self administered Questionnaire was framed for the same based on a review of the literature on SERVQUAL and in-depth interviews with the people directly in contact with personal grooming services like beauty experts, beauticians, customers availing these services frequently etc. A set of 20 statements were included in the questionnaire as per suitability of the industry to check the expectation and perception by customers of personal grooming services in Goa. The questionnaire had two parts. The first part was to measure the respondents' expectations and perceptions regarding the service quality offered by Personal Grooming centers in Goa. A five-point likert scale was used to get the responses wherein the respondents had to rate 1-“Strongly disagree” to 5-“Strongly Agree”. And the second part was to elicit demographic information of the respondents and how they were aware of the salon.

The Questionnaire was pretested with some respondents before the actual survey and it was understood that they came across some confusion with the contents and couldn't understand the questions clearly. A pilot test was further conducted to assess the reliability of the attributes, and to ensure that the wordings of the questionnaire were clear. Some problems were encountered with unclear wording, so some minor changes were made to avoid any confusion.

This research is a quantitative research and has used survey method to collect data. Convenience sampling method was adopted to conduct the study. The incidence rate was high when it came to collection of data. Data was collected from all parts of Goa i.e. North Goa and South Goa. Around 206 questionnaires were circulated among users of personal grooming services out of which only 187 were returned which were complete in all ways and were taken to be usable for further analysis. This showed a response rate of 90.77%. The questionnaires were filled by the respondents with some guidance if needed.

Data Analysis was done using **SPSS 20**. Through descriptive analysis it was proved that data collected is reliable with Cronbach alpha being more than 0.7 followed by Descriptive Statistics.

Mean Analysis, Gap Analysis (Perception – Expectation for Service quality before and after a visit to the Salon) & **Paired t-test**.

Every Customer in the market has some expectation before buying a product or before availing any service. But it is not always that these expectations are met by the service providers. Similarly, if we narrow down to personal grooming industry, the customers here too have their personal expectation may be to look good or to feel good and pampered. But if these expectations are not met, it leads to disappointments and change of service provider. Therefore, the purpose of studying the following objective is to check the difference in the customer's expectations and the actual service received by them in the personal grooming industry in Goa and also suggest improvements if necessary.

Mean Analysis: For every attribute of service quality there are variables and each variable has a mean value. If the mean value is between 3-5, it indicates that customers

agree that the Service quality is important/satisfactory. For values between 1-2, it means they consider it to be unimportant/unsatisfactory.

GAP Analysis: is the difference in values between Perceived Mean and the Expected Mean (Tonge and Moore, 2007, Hanim *et. al.*, 2010). If the Gap value is positive it indicates that the customer's actual experience is more than expectation, indicating satisfaction. If the value is zero or negative, it means that their experience was equal to their expectation or less than their expectation, indicating dissatisfaction.

Paired t-test has been carried out to determine whether the Gap (difference in mean values) was significant or otherwise. Statistically it was used to test the following hypotheses:

H_0 : There is no significant difference between expectation and perception of customers in terms of tangibility dimensions in the personal grooming industry.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between expectation and perception of customers in terms of Reliability dimensions in the personal grooming industry.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between expectation and perception of customers in terms of Responsiveness dimensions in the personal grooming industry.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between expectation and perception of customers in terms of Assurance dimensions in the personal grooming industry.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between expectation and perception of customers in terms of Empathy dimensions in the personal grooming industry.

If there is no difference between the means, it indicates that tourists' experiences were exactly as expected, and the null hypothesis

is accepted. If not, Alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Results and Discussion

The Grand Mean Value for **Perception** (Actual) was 3.75 for SQ1 (Tangibility) with all variables showing 'above average' satisfaction. For SQ2 (Reliability) it was 3.62 overall, indicating 'average' satisfaction for all 5 variables. For SQ3 (Responsiveness) it was 3.77 overall with most variables having 'above average' levels of satisfaction. For SQ4 (Assurance) it was 3.99, indicating 'Higher' level of satisfaction overall with 3 variables tending towards the higher end while only 1 variable (Sympathetic & reassuring) tending toward the lower end of 'average' satisfaction whereas SQ5 (Empathy) had a mean of 3.80 which is again 'above average' satisfaction. But overall we notice that all the grand means of all Attributes had 3.786 as the Mean of means which unveils that the customers had 'above average' satisfaction with the service quality provided by various Salons/personal grooming firms.

The Paired t-test results indicate that except for 4 variables - Modern equipments, visually appealing physical facilities & Physical facilities support the type of services provided in SQ1 Accurate Information about services in SQ2, there is no significant difference between expectation and perception of customers in terms of all dimensions of Service quality in the personal grooming industry (thus accepting the null hypothesis). In the case of all other variables in SQ1 & SQ2 and all variables in SQ3 & SQ4, there is a significant difference between expectation and perception of customers in terms of dimensions of Service quality, thus rejecting the Null Hypothesis and accepting the alternate hypothesis.

From the above table, we infer unhappiness of customers in the personal grooming industry

Table-1: Paired Sample t-test

Sr. No	Service quality attributes	Variables	Expected (E)	Perceived (P)	GAP (P-E)	T-test	Significance
SQ1	Tangibility	a. Modern equipments.	3.95	3.79	-0.16	1.820	.070
		b. Visually appealing physical facilities.	3.82	3.66	-0.16	1.972	.050
		c. Well dressed and neat employees.	4.09	3.81	-0.91	3.613	.000**
		d. Physical facilities support the type of services provided.	3.90	3.75	-0.15	1.787	.076
		GRAND MEAN	3.94	3.75			
SQ 2	Reliability	a. Dependable Salon.	3.78	3.56	-0.22	2.744	.007**
		b. Consistent service at each visit.	4.05	3.68	-0.37	4.392	.000**
		c. Services are provided at promised time.	4.11	3.72	-0.39	4.695	.000**
		d. Accurate information about services.	3.57	3.52	-0.05	.672	.503
		GRAND MEAN	3.88	3.62			
SQ 3	Responsiveness	a. Prompt service to customers.	4.14	3.80	-0.34	4.119	.000**
		b. Employees willing to help.	4.18	3.81	-0.37	4.687	.000**
		c. Staff replies to all queries.	3.99	3.72	-0.27	3.436	.001**
		d. Arranges special care to special customers.	3.99	3.73	-0.26	2.703	.008**
		GRAND MEAN	4.08	3.77			
SQ 4	Assurance	a. Sympathetic & reassuring.	3.95	3.59	-0.36	4.416	.000**
		b. Feeling safe in dealings with Salon.	4.14	3.84	-0.3	3.772	.000**
		c. Trustable employees.	4.05	3.86	-0.19	2.441	.016**
		d. Polite & courteous employees.	4.20	4.02	-0.18	2.233	.027**
		GRAND MEAN	4.09	3.99			
SQ 5	Empathy	a. Customers best interest.	3.99	3.69	-0.3	4.242	.000**
		b. Individual attention to customers.	4.10	3.83	-0.27	3.469	.000**
		c. Convenient operating hours	4.06	3.84	-0.22	2.628	.001**
		d. Service providers understand all customer needs.	4.14	3.83	-0.31	3.814	.009**
		GRAND MEAN	4.07	3.80			.000**

P-value <0.05*

- Authors own compilation
- Expectation scores show the mean of customer expectation with regards to tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance & empathy based on a five point scale where 1 is very unimportant and 5 is very important.
- Perception scores show mean of Customers perception with regards to tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance & empathy based on a five point scale where 1 is very unsatisfied and 5 is very satisfied.

Table-1.1: Pair differences

Pairs		Mean		GAP Score	T-test	Significance
		(P)	(E)	(P-E)		
Pair 1	TAN.PER-TAN.EXP	3.75	3.93	-.187	2.892	.004
Pair 2	RELI.PER-RELI.EXP	3.62	3.87	-.256	4.563	.000
Pair 3	RESP.PER-RESP.EXP	3.76	4.07	-.310	4.962	.000
Pair 4	ASSU.PER-ASSU.EXP	3.82	4.08	-.255	4.187	.000
Pair 5	EMP.PER- EMP.EXP	3.79	4.07	-.275	4.577	.000

*Significance is at 5%

in the state of Goa. We can see a shortfall in terms of the actual service provided with that of the expectation. Customers are more dissatisfied about Responsiveness and Empathy dimensions in personal grooming as the gap is the highest i.e. -0.310 and -0.275 respectively. Responsiveness that speaks about employee's willingness to help their customers and providing quick service is lacking in Goa (Philip Kotler 1999) (Bitner, M. J., and Zeithaml, V. A. 2003) and Empathy means the provision of caring, individualized attention to the customer. A High gap is also seen and needs improvement in Empathy that speaks about perceiving the customer's needs as they actually are.

From the table we can also say that there exists a difference between customer expectation and perception in terms of all the dimensions of service quality. In terms of tangibility dimension, the p -value <0.05 i.e. 0.004 therefore we reject the H_0 and conclude that there is a significant difference in the expectation and perception of service quality. In terms of Reliability dimension, the p -value <0.05 i.e. 0.000 therefore we reject the H_0 and conclude that there is a significant difference in the expectation and perception of service quality.

In terms of Responsiveness dimension,

the p -value <0.05 i.e. 0.000 therefore we reject the H_0 and conclude that there is a significant difference in the expectation and perception of service quality. In terms of Assurance dimension, the p -value <0.05 i.e. 0.000 therefore we reject the H_0 and conclude that there is a significant difference in the expectation and perception of service quality. In terms of Empathy dimension, the p -value <0.05 i.e. 0.000 therefore we reject the H_0 and conclude that there is a significant difference in the expectation and perception of service quality.

Conclusion

This study has been done in the personal grooming industry to check service quality and what makes the repeat purchase of those services. Different techniques and models were used to check mediation effect of customer satisfaction in this industry. SERQUAL instrument was used to identify the various dimensions involved in service quality and gap scores were checked between the different pairs of expectation and perception which were identified through questionnaires circulated. This research provides a perspective to the field of service quality and generally it is seen that the expectations are higher than what customers actually receive and experience. So organizations need to

work towards increasing the experience and reduce the gap between the expected and perceived service. This can be done by adopting some new strategies or getting in more qualified and professional staff. The SERVQUAL instrument was used here to check the external view of service quality from the customers while the same instrument can further be modified to check the internal service quality provided by the departments within an organization to its employees. This data can then be used to measure the quality aspects and help the top level to maintain it for sustaining competition and for survival and growth.

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