

# A Systematic Literature Review of SERVQUAL in Various Service Sectors

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**Abstract**—The basic service quality measurement scale, SERVQUAL scale has been reliably applied for the measurement of quality of service provided by service providers. The SERVQUAL scale has proved to be adaptable to quantify service quality in various service sectors. Despite facing some critics on various parameters, various research authors of SERVQUAL have refuted the criticisms with logical and in context reasoning. This paper highlights the various characteristics and criticism of SERVQUAL. Using the standard SRL (Systematic Review of Literature) approach, the paper identifies and assesses all high quality research falling within the SERVQUAL context. The procedure concludes that the applicability of SERVQUAL leads to a measurable and meaningful outcomes in service quality.

**Keywords:** Systematic Review of Literature, Service Quality and SERVQUAL.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A systematic Review means literature review focused on a research question that attempts to Identify, Appraise, select and synthesize all evidence based High quality Research. Also, it is used in Business management. Systematic reviews are qualitative reviews that adhere to the standards for gathering analyzing and reporting Evidence. It includes steps, of defining review question, selection of collected research studies, presenting results and summary of Findings table and interpreting results and drawing conclusions. Systematic studies present a persistent picture of the Body of Evidence by expending realist reviews and Meta Narrative Approach in order to overcome heterogeneity in diverse literature and problem of methodology.

## 2. STEPS IN SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVISES:

- a. Outline objectives of literature review,
- b. Search and obtain Articles based on specific criteria,

- c. Summarize highlights from selected articles,
- d. Analyze Data,
- e. Present results and summary of findings Table 1,
- f. Interpret results and draw conclusions.

SERVQUAL or RATER is a service quality framework designed and developed in the mid 80's by A. Parasuraman, L.L Berry and V. Zeithaml. SERVQUAL is a 22 item scale developed as a pioneering effort to measure service quality generically across various service sectors. It investigates the customer perceptions of service quality across service and retailing organizations. The elaborate contemplation of conceptualization and operationalization of service quality leads to the development of SERVQUAL. It is utilized to measure the scale of quality in the service sectors. SERVQUAL originally measured on ten aspects of service quality namely reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the customer and tangibles. By the early 1990's, it was refined to RATER (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness).

Its basic assumption is based on customers' evaluation of a firm's service quality by comparing their perceptions with their Expectations.

**OBJECTIVE:** To review the literature regarding the adaptability and relevance of SERVQUAL scale for measurement of service quality.

**SOURCES OF DATA:** Articles in journals, Books, Online Databases, etc.

**STUDY SELECTION:** Studies with significantly strong references on SERVQUAL, Empirical studies based on

accepted sampling methods that reported original data and used statistical tests were selected.

**DATA SCOPE:** Totally 126 Articles were revised for study and out of this 77 were taken up for Review.

The first article on SERVQUAL which introduces the SERVQUAL scale was given by A. Parasuraman V. Zeithaml and L.L. Berry in 1988. The scale was attacked by a plethora of critics on various Parameters. Critics have noted that SERVQUAL 's Five Dimensions (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy& Responsiveness) are not universal and the Model fails to appeal on proven economic, statistical and psychological theory. The main criticisms are on the object of measurements, length of questionnaire, timing of questionnaire administration, use of LIKERT scales, static nature of the model, use of P-E difference scores and Generalization of service quality dimensions. Also it was not clear whether SERVQUAL measures service quality or customer satisfaction. It was recommended that certain items can be eliminated or the fusion of interrelated dimensions of reliability responsiveness and assurance into one dimension of task related receptiveness. The timing of questionnaire administration as vague was pointed out. The critics pointed out the Issue of whether it is appropriate to use a 5 points or 7 point Likert scale. They also observed the inconsistencies in (Pi-Ei) scores and that SERVQUAL dimensions cannot be generalized across all services. A Few studies have also shown that empirically SERVQUAL does not answer or needs adaptation regarding aspects of multiple service functions, the points at which Information about expectation must be obtained, the difference between expectations and perceptions, its use in retail setting and the commendation of alternative scales such as SERVPERF.

The supportive SERVQUAL authors have established that the claimed psychometric superiority of the alternative non-difference score conceptualization was debatable, in response to critics. SERVQUAL was backed as offering richer Diagnosis. The authenticity of the methodology used to develop the 22 item questionnaire that makes up the scale has been visibly established by the authors proved by their consequent successful use reported by them.

They further developed and reviewed the SERQUAL scale and brought out an improved LIKERT scale which processes agreement or disagreement. Reliability, Factor Structure and Validity of the sophisticated SERVQUAL was established.. The customer valuation of service quality was measured for 3 types of Service-Telephone Repair, Retail Banking and Insurance. The findings of the study were united with that of similar research studies. The criticality of Perception minus Expectation (Pi - Ei) scores was recognized.

Further, authors have appraised all criticisms against SERVQUAL and on various conceptual and operational criterion supported SERVQUAL as a rigorous tool, appropriate and perfect. Also, the advances made in service

quality measurement have validated SERVQUAL. It was recommended as a tool for improving Service Quality, Organizational Performance and Customer Satisfaction in both the private and public service sectors. Studies on the applicability of SERVQUAL to measure citizen perception of health care quality and compare it across two countries have reported a stable structure. Bayesian framework based behavior process model of service quality have demonstrated the criticality of the Expectation and Perception factors for service quality assessment by customers and the interrelationship of these factors on consumer behavior.

Empirical studies conforming to research methodology tenets done by various authors in different service industries across different countries supports and approves the conceptual and operational suitability of SERVQUAL as a reliable measurement of service quality. Studies have been done by authors in sectors including health care facilities, hospital services, hotel services, higher education, travel and tourism, restaurants, information services, banking services, sports organizations, local authority and government services, police and so on. These studies were carried out by authors in different countries including U.K., U.S.A Malaysia, Singapore, Turkey, Australia, Ireland and Iran. SERVQUAL was also applied to compare service quality of public sector service providers. The studies adopted Experimental Designs, Hypothesis Testing methods, and Rigorous Statistical Analysis. The studies have clearly confirmed the Appropriateness of SERVQUAL dimensions as distinct and conceptually clear. The P – E framework proved the existence of perception differences between customers and service providers and the reality of perception differences between consumers across countries due to cultural factors. Many authors of these studies conclude that SERVQUAL meets all tests of rigorous and Appropriateness and suggest that it is a perfect tool. It was held that many advances in service quality measurement validated SERVQUAL. SERVQUAL was found to be easily applicable even in industry such as car services in Holland. All the studies reported conclusive evidence on accurate measurement of service quality as well as comparison of service quality using SERVQUAL. The managerial Implications of using SERVQUAL as an assessment tool in meeting and managing customer expectations, managing physical design of product, educating service customers and development of TQM programs was highlighted. SERVQUAL emerges as the most acclaimed, researched cited instrument in marketing literature with the most widespread use in Industry.

**Table 1: Summary of Findings**

AUTHOR(S)	OBJECTIVE	OUTCOME
Parasuraman A., V.A. Zeithaml and L.L. Berry (1998)	Development of Instrument to measure consumer perceptions of service quality	Development of 22 item scale called SERVQUAL to measure service quality by assessing customer perceptions on various parameters

Brown Tom, J., G.A. Churchill and J. Paul Peter (1993)	Evaluation of the Conceptual and Theoretical bases of SERVQUAL	Critique of SERVQUAL difference Score conceptualization superiority of alternative Non-difference conceptualization score	Bouman, Marcel and Tom Wander wide	Testing SERVQUAL Instrument	SERVQUAL instrument is found to be ideal and easily applicable to test service quality in Dutch car service firms
Parasuraman A.,V.A. Zeithaml and L.L. Berry (1998)	To defend the SERVQUAL scale against criticisms	Demonstrates SERVQUAL Concept Ideal, Richer and Better than Non-Difference Conceptualization Scores	Yun Lok Lee and Nerilee Hing (1995)	Testing the usefulness and Application of SERVQUAL Instrument in Hotel Industry	SERVQUAL as an easy and Inexpensive internment to measuring service Quality in Restaurant is Demonstrated
Buttle F. (1996)	Review of the appropriateness of SERVQUAL	Raises Theoretical and operational concerns on SERVQUAL scale	Wisniewski MIK	Testing SERVQUAL application in customer satisfaction with local Government	SERVQUAL is found to contribute to continuous improvement in ensuring services by Scottish local council
Ausboteng P., K.S. Mcleary and John E. Swan (1996)	Review of the appropriateness of SERVQUAL	Rebuts Criticisms of SERVQUAL and Support its applicability across different service industries	Devi Prasad and Rajasekar (2010)	Evaluation of Passenger Rail Service Quality in Indian Railways using Modified SERVQUAL	RAILQUAL instrument based on SERVQUAL has found to be reliable and valid to improve railways quality
Joseph Cronin (JR)and Steven. A. Taylor(1994)	Review of SERVQUAL and Development of an Alternative Scale	Questions the appropriateness of SERVQUAL Instrument and Support SERVPERF Scale as opposed to SERVQUAL	Sanjay Jain and Garima Gupta	Compare SERVQUAL and SERVPERF Scales	SERVQUAL found to outperform SERVPERF scale with higher diagnostic power to pinpoint areas for managerial interventions
Pitt, Leyland F., Richard D. Watson and C. Bruce Kenen	Review of the appropriateness of SERVQUAL scale	All Criticisms against SERVQUAL Refuted and SERVQUAL is Supported as rigorous, appropriate and perfect	Norizan Mohammedkasi m and Jamil Bojai	Use SERVQUAL to measuring Gaps in Telemarketing	SERVQUAL Instrument found to suitable to measure Gaps between consumer perceptions of expectation in Telemarketing.
Lam S.S.K. (1997)	Application of SERVQUAL Scale to test Hospital Service Quality	SERVQUAL found to be a Consistent and Reliable scale to measure patient perceptions of Health care quality in a Hong Kong Hospital	Akbaba, tilla	Investigate appropriateness of SERVQUAL to measure service quality in Hotel	Quality dimensions of SERVQUAL model found to be applicable and suitable to measure customers 'expectations and quality is hotel industry in turkey.
Kettinger, W.J. and Choong (1999)	Tests the Application of SERVQUAL Scale in the Research on Information System	SERVQUAL supported as an Ideal Instrument to evaluate Quality and user satisfaction with Information System Function	Headley, D.E. and S.J. miller	Examine the Reliability and validity of SERVQUAL In Health Care	The Findings on for 159indicate that SERVQUAL Scale, is reliable, valid and dimension can be adopted to clinical settling
Jo Ann Dutty Michael Dutty and William Kilbourne (1997)	Cross National Study to measure Nursing Home Service Quality using SERVQUAL	SERVQUAL Successfully applied to compare expectation and Perception Difference of Service Quality among Nursing Home Residents of U.S.A and U.K.			
Headley, Dean E. and Bob Choi (1992)	Statistical Approach to Test Suitability of SERVQUAL	Analyses of Perceptual Differences between service providers and customers by SERQUAL is simple and Useful			
Bojanic David C. and Dreus Rosen (1994)	Testing SERVQUAL for Nursing Restaurant Quality	SERVQUAL is proved as an effective tool for measuring service quality in restaurant			

### 3. CONCLUSION

The Service Quality research taking its course of improvement faced some criticism. These criticisms have been refuted on both conceptual and Empirical grounds. This measurement scale has proved to be most versatile and adaptable with applicability across different service sectors in various countries. Its dimensions have been proved distinctly valid and the appropriateness of Likert scales suitability. SERVQUAL is easily amenable to the rigidities of Hypotheses testing and other statistical methods. It appears that the criticisms do nothing to invalidate SERVQUAL as a measuring tool but

more to do with how researchers use the tool. Nyeck et al. (2002) reviewed the measure and concluded that “SERVQUAL remains the most comprehensive attempt to conceptualize and measure the service quality”.

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