# Consumers Evaluation of Retail Store Service Quality And Its Impact on Future Consumption Behaviour In India

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**Abstract:** *Good service quality leads to more satisfied customer, profits, and so better retail store performance. This demands reliable and valid scale for measuring retail service quality. Current measures of service quality for retail stores are not reliable and valid in Indian context. This research paper aims the development of a scale for assessing customer perceptions of service quality for specialty stores in India. Based on the objective, exploratory research has been used for exploring new items in Indian context and descriptive research has been used for the development of the retail service quality scale. Data were collected with a sample of 400 customers. A validated Retail Service Quality Scale is developed for measuring service quality in specialty store and its impact on future consumption behaviour is studied. It results in six dimensions namely inspiring confidence, reliability, appearance, problem solving, policy, and courteousness. The results show that among the six service dimensions, an inspiring confidence and policy have the greatest impact on the overall service quality and future consumption respectively. The implications for practitioners and researchers are discussed.*
**Keywords:** *Retail Service Quality, Rsqs, Servqual, Specialty Store.*

## I.    Introduction

Indian retail today began to realize its growth potential – a journey marked by milestones ranging from macro policy updates (like Foreign Direct Investment and Goods and Services Tax) to new-generation developments (like new channels, e-business and mobility), along with a strong focus on operational profitability and higher return on investment.Indian retail industry is one of the sunrise sector with enormous growth potential, accounts for around 17% of the country's GDP (Prasad, Sathish, & Singh, 2014). Comprising of organized and unorganized sectors, retail industry in India is one of the fastest rising industry in the world, especially over the last few years. According to IBEF, January 2016 report, retail industry is expected to grow to $1.3 trillion by 2020. Organized retail is expected to account for 24% of the overall retail market by 2020.The retail arena today is very different, the opportunities are incredible but exploiting them is extremely challenging (Parikh, 2006).  Service quality is gaining importance as a research topic due to its noticeable relationship to customer satisfaction (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Boulding et al., 1993), high revenue, increased cross-sell ratios, higher customer retention (Yavas, Bilgin, & Shemwell, 1997), repeat purchasing behaviour (Cronin et.al., 2000). In today's competitive retail environment,  Service quality can be viewed as a basic retailing strategy (Chao et.al., 2007).

## II.    Literature Review

The retail environment is dynamic and volatile due to great competition either within domestic retailers or between domestic and foreign retailers, a rise in mergers and acquisitions, and more aware customers who have high expectations related to their consumption experiences (Sellers, 1990; Smith, 1989). An Indian consumer is looking for value in terms of availability and quality, pleasant shopping environment, financing option, trial rooms for clothing, return and exchange policies and competitive prices ( Jhamb and Kiran, 2012). According to a survey conducted by Tata Consultancy Services and Retail Association of India (2013), customer service, inventory management, people management, marketing, space management and expense management are the few areas which demand attention of Indian retailers. Under such circumstances, the success of organized retailing in India depends on delivery of quality services.Rapidly changing retail environment along with aware and demanding customers have made it compulsory for the retailers to differentiate themselves in fulfilling the needs of customers for improving their competitive position in the market (Mehta, Lalwani, & Han, 2000).  For survival and growth, retailers are focusing on areas under their control that might provide them an edge in the market. Hence delivering high level of service quality as an area is receiving interest of the retailer. Research has shown that good service quality leads to customer satisfaction

(Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000; Bolton and Drew, 1991; Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993), retention and patronage (Yavas, Bilgin, & Shemwell, 1997), customer loyalty (Wong & Amrik, 2003), profitability (Rust, Zahorik, & Keiningham, 1993), and positive word of mouth. Hence retailers are eager to adopt service quality as a way for improving their performance in the market. It demands an accurate and valid measure of service quality that helps retailers in measuring their performance along the main dimensions of retail service. Such a measure would help them in evaluating their performance and taking corrective action wherever required.

**Retail Service Quality: Measurement and Scale:**

The most extensively known and discussed scale for measuring service quality is SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Even though SERVQUAL has been empirically tested in a number of studies involving "pure" service settings like banking, telephone service etc., it has not been effectively adapted to and validated in a retail store environment (Carman, 1990; Finn & Jr., 1991; Gagliano and Hathcote, 1994; Vazquez & Ruiz, 2001). A retail store provides a mix of merchandise and service. A retail store experience is different than a nonretail service experience in terms of customers negotiating in the store, finding their required merchandise, interacting with several store personnel, and replacing & returning merchandise, which influence customers' evaluations of service quality. Thus, even though measures of service quality for pure service environments and for retail environments are likely to share some common dimensions, measures of retail service quality must capture additional dimensions.

For measuring retail service quality, Dabholkar, Thorpe, & Rentz, (1996) developed the Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS). Studies testing the applicability of RSQS have confirmed encouraging as well as discouraging results. Dabholkar, Thorpe & Rentz (1996) replicated their own study and found all RSQS dimensions and sub-dimensions to be valid in the US. Mehta, Lalwani, & Han, (2000) found the RSQS five dimensional structure appropriate for measuring the service quality perceptions of supermarket consumers in Singapore. According to Kim & Jin (2002), RSQS is a useful scale for measuring service quality of discount stores across two different cultural contexts of the US and South Korea though they reported empirical support for a four-and not a five-dimensional structure. Boshoff & Terblanche (1997), in a replication of the Dabholkar, Thorpe & Rentz (1996) study, report extremely encouraging results for the RSQS applicability in the context of department stores, specialty stores, and hypermarkets in South Africa. Kaul, (2005) tested the applicability of RSQS in the Indian specialty apparel store context and concluded that RSQS dimensions were not valid in India. Parikh, (2006) tested the reliability and validity of the retail service quality scale in the Indian small grocery stores to hypermarket and found problem in the factor structure of RSQS scale in Indian context. Nhat & Hau, (2007) applied retail service quality scale in supermarket in Vietnam and refined RSQS with four-dimensions which consist of 18 items. The RSQS was developed for measuring service quality in department store in US and applicability of scale for measuring service quality in retail stores depends on the variety of retail formats and different retail environment. Compared to US, India has a relatively short history of retailing, so Indian retail environment is different from US. Since RSQS was developed in US context, it is possibly not just inaccurate but also incomplete in Indian context. Future research needs to examine not only just the factor structure of service quality in retail, but also develop a scale that captures the maximum retail service construct.

**Service Quality and Customer Loyalty:**

The importance of service quality for customer satisfaction and loyalty is  acknowledged in literature as well as it is related with service providers' profitability (Cronin *et al.*, 2000). Consequently, the development of service quality models has been a major concern of service scholars (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Grönroos, 1993). Service quality models present a depiction of the key components of service quality. As such, they are tools that help managers to diagnose the performance in service delivery processes and develop quality improvement programmes (Seth *et al.*, 2005). Service quality influences customers' satisfaction, which has been linked to customers' intentions to repurchase and recommend a service – ultimately resulting in the provider's profitability (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Anderson *et al.*, 1994; Reinartz *et al.*, 2004). It has been revealed by previous researches that service quality is a key determinant of customer satisfaction (Fornell *et al.*, 1996; Bagozzi, 1992), positively affecting customer intentions to repurchase the service and recommend the service provider (Anderson, 1998; Danaher and Rust, 1996). Zeithaml *et al.* (1996) empirically show that superior-quality perceptions were associated to positive customer intentions (e.g. recommending a given service provider), while inferior-quality perceptions were linked to negative behaviours (e.g. switching provider). In this study we explore the impact of each service quality dimension on customer's intention to repurchase and recommend the retail store.

## III. Objective

Based on above discussion, there is a need to develop a scale for measuring service quality across different retail formats in India. In this study we have taken retail format named specialty store which offers high level of service to customers. Hence the objective of this study is to develop a scale for service quality measurement in specialty store in India. The other objective is to investigate the relationship among service quality dimensions, overall service quality, and future consumption behavior.

## IV. Methodology

The population was defined as active retail shoppers who have visited and shopped from that retail stores two or more time. The sample consisted of 400 retail shoppers of specialty stores. Eight specialty stores were selected in national capital region which included Ghaziabad, Noida, Delhi, and Gurgaon. Non-probability sampling named judgemental sampling technique was used for selecting the respondents from the target population. The development of the retail service quality scale is mainly dominated by the characteristics of descriptive research design. However, generation of relevant items in Indian context is exploratory in nature and thus elements of exploratory research design inherited. A structured questionnaire was drafted and all required items have been incorporated in the questions to gather data for realizing the aforesaid objective of the study. Overall 51 items were identified and included in the questionnaire where 25 items were explored by using qualitative research methods and 26 items were taken from RSQS. All items were measured using a five point likert scale where '1 means Strongly disagree', '2 means Disagree', '3 means Neither agree nor disagree', '4 means Agree', and '5 means Strongly agree'. For collecting demographic data, nominal scale was used. Survey method was used for the purpose of data collection. The questionnaire was administered just after the respondent shopping experience as they would be able to give more reliable response. Descriptive statistics were taken for computing the perception means and standard deviation on each perception items of the questionnaire. To get the factor structure of the new scale, principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation was used. Multiple regression analysis with the various service quality dimensions as the independent variables and overall service quality as dependent variable was performed.

## V. Data Analysis And Results

**Scale Development:**

Items representing various facets of retail service quality were generated by exploratory research and RSQS. This process resulted in the generation of 51 items. Data were gathered from a sample of 400 adult respondents. Purification of the instrument began with the computations of correlations among variables.

The visual examination of the correlations for 51 items identifies those that are statistically significant. Inspection of correlation matrix reveals that 80% correlations are significant at 0.05 level, which provide an adequate basis for proceeding to an empirical examination of adequacy for factor analysis.

The repeated applications of measure of sampling adequacy (MSA, which consider the correlations and the pattern between variables) suggested the deletion of 14 items because of MSA value below 0.50 and also the highest count (more than 70% of the total significant correlations of individual variable with others variables) of significant correlations. Thus the available number of items for the scale development has reduced to 37 items.

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the 37 items that assessed the perceived service quality of the specialty store. The statistical test result (KMO = 0.870, Bartlett Test of Sphericity = 5365.547, Significance = 0.000) indicated that the factor analysis was appropriate. Thus, 19 items/ 6 Factors with eigen values greater than 1.0, were retained. The resultant factor structure explained 58.6 per cent of total variance, which was an acceptable figure. The six factors and loadings are listed in Table 1.

| **Table 1:** Factor Pattern of Service Quality Scale for Specialty Store | |
|---|---|
| The Factor Analysis | Loadings |
| Factor 1: Inspiring confidence | |
| IT23 The behavior of employees in this store instills confidence in customers | .759 |
| IT22 Employees in this store have knowledge about products and services to answer customer's questions | .753 |
| IT25 Employees in this store provide correct information to customers | .699 |
| Eigen value = 5.524, Variance accounted for 11.65% | |
| Factor 2: Reliability | |
| IT11 store displays information about available products | .739 |
| IT12 store provides its services at the time it promises to do so | .729 |
| IT13 store performs the service right the first time | .671 |
| Eigen value = 1.656, Variance accounted for 10.25% | |
| Factor 3: Appearance | |
| IT1 store has modern looking equipment and fixtures | .833 |

| | |
|---|---|
| IT2 physical facilities at this store are visual appealing | .714 |
| IT3 materials are visual appealing and quality ones | .481 |
| IT4 store has clean, attractive, and convenient public areas | .465 |
| Eigen value = 1.338, Variance accounted for 10.13% | |
| Factor 4: Problem Solving | |
| IT47 This store accepts majority credit cards/ debit cards | .729 |
| IT28 store offers an environment where one can shop with family | .578 |
| IT19 store offers fast billing to avoid queue | .553 |
| Eigen value = 1.125, Variance accounted for 8.99% | |
| Factor 5: Policy | |
| IT49 This store offers discount to their customers | .805 |
| IT50 This store offers loyalty card/bonus to its customers | .800 |
| Eigen value = 1.055, Variance accounted for 8.84% | |
| Factor 6: Courteousness | |
| IT33 Employees in this store are never too busy to respond the customer's request | .821 |
| IT35 Employees in this store are consistently courteous with customers | .602 |
| IT40 This store willing handles returns and exchanges | .491 |
| IT9 store layout makes it easy for customers to move around the store | .441 |
| Eigen value = 1.023, Variance accounted for 8.75% | |
| Note: The bold italic items are those items which had been included by qualitative research | |

The findings showed that the original five retail service quality dimensions as per retail service quality scale did not factor out. Some similarities and some differences were found in the study. The overall reliability of the construct was satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha is 0.847). Factor 1 comprised of three items that related to the inspiring confidence. This factor was analogous to the sub-dimension labeled as inspiring confidence in the

**Table 2:** Relationship among Six Service Quality Dimensions, Overall Service Quality, and Future Consumption Behaviour in Specialty Store

| Dimensions | B | β | Significant T |
|---|---|---|---|
| Relationship between six service dimensions and overall service quality | | | |
| Inspiring confidence | 0.132 | 0.416 | .000* |
| Reliability | 0.089 | 0.279 | .000* |
| Appearance | 0.077 | 0.243 | .000* |
| Problem solving | 0.093 | 0.292 | .000* |
| Policy | 0.063 | 0.198 | .000* |
| Courteousness | 0.049 | 0.154 | .000* |
| Adjusted $R^2$=0.451; P*< 0.05 | | | |
| Relationship between six service dimensions and intention to shop | | | |
| Inspiring confidence | 0.024 | 0.101 | 0.027* |
| Reliability | 0.026 | 0.111 | 0.015* |
| Appearance | 0.053 | 0.224 | .000* |
| Problem solving | 0.055 | 0.232 | .000* |
| Policy | 0.06 | 0.254 | .000* |
| Courteousness | 0.007 | 0.031 | 0.493 |
| Adjusted $R^2$=0.18; P*< 0.05 | | | |
| Relationship between six service dimensions and intention to recommend | | | |
| Inspiring confidence | 0.028 | 0.116 | 0.013* |
| Reliability | 0.023 | 0.096 | 0.039* |
| Appearance | 0.001 | 0.005 | 0.922 |
| Problem solving | 0.052 | 0.217 | .000* |
| Policy | 0.068 | 0.285 | .000* |
| Courteousness | 0.02 | 0.084 | 0.07 |
| Adjusted $R^2$=0.145; P*< 0.05 | | | |

personal interaction factor of the Retail Service Quality Scale. Its accounted for the 11.65 per cent of the variance. The two items were similar to RSQS but one new item "Employees in this store provide correct information to customers" was included by qualitative research. This factor was related to the trustworthiness of the specialty store perceived by its customers.Factor 2 was a reliability factor that contained three items and accounted for the additional 10.65 per cent of thvariance. This factor was analogous to reliability factor of Retail Service Quality Scale. The two items were similar to RSQS and the one new item "store displays information about available products" was taken by qualitative research.Factor 3, which was labeled as appearance, was composed of four items and accounted for the additional 10.13 per cent of the variance. This factor was similar to the sub-dimension labeled as appearance in the physical aspects of the original dimension of the Retail Service Quality Scale. All the four items were similar to RSQS. All these items were crucial elements for the

customers to evaluate the intangible service and influence the perceived service quality.Factor 4 was interpreted as a problem solving factor and comprised three items. It accounted for additional 8.99 per cent of the variance. The one item was similar to RSQS and the two new items were store offers an environment where one can shop with family, and store offers fast billing to avoid queue. Factor 5 comprised of two items that related to the policy of the retailer and accounted for the additional 8.84 per cent of the variance. Policy included the matter of "loyalty card/bonus to customers", and "discount to the customer". Here both items were new which had been included by qualitative research.Factor 6 was labeled as courteousness that included four items. It accounted for the additional 8.75 per cent of the variance. Here all items were belonged to RSQS. This factor reflected the "sales service" component of service quality.

**Service Quality and Future Consumption Behaviour**

Table 2 reports the results of the multiple regression model with overall service quality rating, intention to shop, and intention to recommend a friend as the dependent variables, and the six service dimensions as the independent variables for specialty store. In terms of the relationship between individual service dimensions and overall service quality rating, the adjusted $R^2$=0.451 was statistically significant. It meant that the retail service quality dimensions explained 45.1 percent of the variance in the customer's overall rating of service quality. All six dimensions were statistically significant (sig. T<0.05). Of the factors, inspiring confidence has achieved the strongest association with the overall perception of service quality than other factors. It showed that the behavior of the employees which develops confidence in customers, knowledge of employees about products and services to answer customer's questions, and correct information provided to customers by employees were effective in influencing customer's general evaluation on the retail service quality. The relationship between individual service dimensions and intention to shop or repurchase was relatively weAccording to Table 2, the adjusted $R^2$ = 0.18 was statistically significant which meant that 6 dimensions explained only 18 percent of the variation in customer's repurchase intention. Inspiring confidence, reliability, appearance, problem solving, and policy were shown to be statistically significant but they had very weak positive association with repurchase intention. Among inspiring confidence, reliability, appearance, problem solving, and policy, the association was strong between policy, problem solving, & appearance and repurchase intention. In terms of relationship between individual dimensions and intention to recommend, the adjusted $R^2$=0.145 wastatistically significant. It meant that the retail service quality dimensions explained 14.5 percent variance of the intention to recommend. Except the appearance and courteousness, the remaining four dimensions showed significant association. Among these four dimensions, policy and problem solving had the strongest positive association with the intention to recommend.

# IV. Conclusion

The retail service quality scale with six dimensions/19 items, are extracted from the present study for measuring retail service quality in specialty stores in India. Six dimensions are namely Inspiring Confidence, Reliability, Appearance, Problem Solving, Policy, and Courteousness. Out of 19 items, 6 items are those which have been included by qualitative research and literature review. These 6 new items are relevant in Indian context for specialty store. The remaining 13 items were belonged to retail service quality scale (RSQS). Specialty store offers considerable depth in the type of product that they are specialize in selling with higher service quality and hence service quality is a way to create differentiation. This service quality scale for specialty store can be used to understand service perception of consumers. The scale is suitable for use as a diagnostic tool that will allow a retailer to identify weak areas of service delivery which demand managerial attention.One potential application of this scale is to determine the relative importance of the six dimensions in influencing customer's overall service quality perceptions. As shown in Table 2, the retail service quality dimensions explained 45.1% of the variance in the customer's overall rating of service quality. All the six dimensions are statistically significant. A striking result in terms of the relative importance of the six dimensions in predicting overall quality is that inspiring confidence is the most important dimension. Problem solving is the second, reliability, and appearance are the third, and fourth most important dimension respectively.In terms of service quality and future consumption behaviour, it is found that the dimensions of policy, problem solving, and appearance are reasonably influential factors that will affect customer's future consumption behaviour. This can be considerable reference point for retailers at the time of developing their retailing strategies.The newly developed scale is applicable in national capital region in India for measuring retail service quality in specialty stores. Due to great diversity in India, future research could investigate the appropriateness of this scale in other geographic regions of India. This scale is applicable for specialty store. The scale can be modified to measure service quality for other retail formats. We did not confirm whether the scale can be adapted to specific circumstances. Hence future research could explore whether an adaptation of this scale would be appropriate for self-service stores etc. In future research, customers and employees may reveal new aspects of retail service quality that are important and relevant to them, and these would have to be incorporated in the scale to ensure a

valid measure of retail service quality on continuous basis. In total, the retail service quality measurement needs to be conducted regularly to measure the extent of service enhancement and customer satisfaction.

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