

The Relationship among Antecedents of Service Quality, Overall Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Bank Services

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Acknowledgement

The authors acknowledge the timely suggestions and comments of Dr. Gurumurthy Kalyanaram and his editorial / reviewer team which undoubtedly has improved the quality of the manuscript. We have attempted to incorporate all the suggestions in this revised manuscript.

Abstract

This research study is an attempt to investigate the relationship between quality of service and customer satisfaction. The study uses secondary data from a survey of bank customers. Based on extensive literature survey, a theoretical model is proposed to relate the antecedents of service quality, overall service quality and customer satisfaction. Using convenience sampling, a survey (with a well-defined

questionnaire) was carried out for regular bank customers. Regression Modelling (using IBM SPSS) was used for investigating the relationship between the latent constructs of the antecedents of service quality, overall service quality and customer satisfaction. The study identified five antecedents (Tangibles, Reliability, Assurance, Empathy and Social Responsibility) of overall service quality. The study also established that overall service quality influences customer satisfaction in bank services. Correlation results indicate a positive correlation between the overall service quality and customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *Services Quality, Tangibles, Reliability, Assurance, Empathy, Social Responsibility, SERVQUAL, Customer Satisfaction*

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Introduction

The Indian banking industry is today at crossroads. It is trying to make the transition from the era of socialist rhetoric to the era of the marketing mantra. The Indian banking industry was trailing its peers in developed countries in terms of service quality. The main reason behind the revolution in the Indian banking industry can be attributed to technology. From standing for hours in a queue to withdraw paltry sums, we have reached a stage where we hardly need to know where our bank is located. Commercial banks—faced with the pressures of globalization, competition from non-banking financial institutions and volatile market dynamics—are constantly seeking new ways to add value to their services.

Banking processes are intangible, and hence, complex to measure. The quality of the interactions that bank tellers, relationship managers, investment consultants, etc. have with customers can rarely be standardized to ensure uniformity. Banks that provide poor quality service will find it difficult to survive. Service processes involve customers on real time basis and in the event of default, corrective actions are costly and difficult. If something goes wrong during an online banking transaction, the service quality is adversely affected as the transaction cannot be performed all over again. Many errors in service operations are one-offs; for example, the officer who makes an error creates a technical problem that can neither be foreseen nor corrected ahead to time. Interestingly, such mistakes often can be used to create customer satisfaction by recovering the situation in an efficient manner. Since the customer is central to service quality, service quality will always have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Service providers must offer a high level of service quality since it's normally considered an antecedent to customer satisfaction.

Literature Review

Antecedents of Service Quality

In the book “Delivering Quality Service”, the authors Parasuraman et al. (1990) postulated the five

SERVQUAL dimensions as: Tangibles (appearance), Reliability (delivering promised output), Responsiveness (providing prompt service), Assurance (inspiring trust and confidence), and Empathy (personalized attention). G. S. Sureshchandar et al. (2001), while assessing service quality for banks, postulated the importance of service delivery and core service. Customers are largely influenced by the quality of core services. The core dimension represents outcome of services. Social responsibility helps an organization lead as a corporate citizen in encouraging ethical behaviour in everything it does. Barbara et al. (2010), while exploring service quality in retail banks, suggested that all the Servqual dimensions influence customer satisfaction. A study of consumers of commercial banks in United Arab Emirates revealed three dimensions of service quality: human skills, tangibles and empathy. Criteria stipulated by the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award underline the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Processes, procedures, systems and technology make service a seamlessness experience. Standardized, modernized and basic services without any disturbances, glitches or undesired questioning are desired by service providers. 'Ease of doing business with...' is an important reason for selection of a service provider. Various service quality models can be found in the literature. In the current paper, the eight antecedents of service quality used for overall service quality are: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, Service Product, Social Responsibility and Service Delivery as postulated by G.S. Sureshchandar et al. (Service Quality Eight Dimensions were referenced in the Ph.D. thesis of the first Author Kachwala (2006) and his subsequent research papers).

Overall Service Quality

Some studies have defined overall service quality as another way to measure service quality. According to this school of thought, the SERVQUAL dimensions are not antecedents of service quality. Rentz et al. (1996) contended that Parasuraman et al.'s (1998) method of measuring the five dimensions does not capture

customers' overall evaluation of service quality, which is possible using a separate multi-item construct. Dabholkara et al. (2000) contended that the dimensions of service quality act as antecedents to overall evaluations of service quality. Govind (2017) contended that customer orientation is an important determinant of service quality. Several other researchers used similar items to measure overall service quality. In the current paper, the items of overall service quality, namely, excellent overall service, service of a very high quality, a high standard of service and superior service in every way, were mainly based on service quality literature by Dabholkara et al. (2000).

Customer Satisfaction

Mixed findings have been reported on the direction of relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Amit Bhadra (2019) developed a relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Rakesh Kumar (2017) stated that attitude is considered to be highly correlated with one's intentions, which, in turn, is a reasonable predictor of customer behaviour and customer satisfaction; this is stated as "a feeling which results from a process of evaluating what has been received against what was expected, including the purchase decision itself and the needs and wants associated with the purchase". Most authors have reported that service quality determines customer satisfaction. While service quality is an attitude relating to superiority of service, customer satisfaction is related to a specific transaction. Customer satisfaction is a comparison of what actually happened in a service interaction with what a customer predicted was to happen. Clemes et al. (Michael D. Clemes, 2008) related the concept to customer satisfaction and the results supported the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Similar to service quality, customer satisfaction has also dominated service-related literature (Bei & Chiao., 2001). There are divergent definitions on customer satisfaction. For instance, Oliver et al. (Oliver, 1981) defined customer satisfaction as "a total psychological state when there

is an existing discrepancy between the emerging emotion and expectation, and such an expectation is a consumer's feeling anticipated and accumulated from his or her previous purchases". Boeselie et al. cited in Bakti et al. (2013) defined customer satisfaction as "a positive, effective state resulting from the appraisal of all aspects of a party's working relationship with another". Customer satisfaction is "the customers' evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether that product or service has met their needs and expectations". Customer satisfaction is a customer's perception of fulfilment of needs and expectations. Jones and Sasser (2009) stated that "achieving customer satisfaction is the main goal for most service firms today". Gurumurthy (2016), while emphasising the research on the effect of brands on non-marketing areas, stated that employees are critical to customer satisfaction. Increasing customer satisfaction has shown to directly affect companies' market share, which leads to improved profits, positive recommendation, lower marketing expenditures (Heskett, 2002) and greatly impacts the corporate image and survival. Zeithaml (2002) defined satisfaction as the customers' evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether the product or service has met their needs and expectations. Levesque et al. (1996), based on a study in retail banking, reported that service quality is an important driver of customer satisfaction. Other scholars define customer satisfaction according to two levels of aggregation: first, as a transaction-specific assessment—an emotional reaction following a disconfirmation experience, and second, as an overall assessment with the organization based on all encounters and experiences with that particular organization (Mary Jo Bitner, 1997). In the current paper, four items of customer satisfaction, namely, happy experiences, satisfied with the quality, satisfied with the overall services and performance is 'beyond expectation' are determined based on the scales of Srinivasan et al. (2003).

Overall Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Joseph et al. (1992) reported that service quality is a determinant or an antecedent of customer satisfaction, because service quality is an effect of the services from service providers in an organization. Gurumurthy et al. (2016) argued in favour of quantity reduction to price increase to avoid customer attention. Allada (2014) identified a number of service determinants like convenience, responsiveness, accessibility, confidentiality of information, technological upgrade, etc. The association of service quality with customer satisfaction is well established in the academic literature. Peter (1994) and Yazdi, A.K. (2015) stated that customer satisfaction is proportional to the quality of service offered. A growing body of empirical works supports the fundamental logic that customer satisfaction should positively influence customer retention (Reibstein, 2002). Literature confirms that satisfied customers automatically become loyal customers, that satisfaction is a leading factor in determining loyalty and high customer satisfaction gives rise to increase in repurchase intention and customer retention (Richard L Oliver, 1989). Service quality helps in increasing the number of customers. Practicing service quality will improve customer satisfaction and therefore, many companies attempt to understand and measure service quality indicators (Yazdi, 2015).

Current Research

Research Gap

Research literature (Vijaya et al., 2014) shows evidence that there is a positive relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction. Bakti, I. G., & Sumaedi, S. (2013) have reported that overall service quality is the antecedent of customer satisfaction. Research papers on banks have also investigated the perception of customers on service quality dimensions. There are also research papers related with banks that show the relationship between service quality dimension and overall service quality. However, a comprehensive model that establishes the inter-relationship between the antecedents of service quality, overall service quality and customer

satisfaction for banks is not available in the Indian context to the best of our knowledge.

Research Objective

The current research paper attempts to establish the inter-relationship between the antecedents of service quality, overall service quality and customer satisfaction for bank services in Mumbai. The following are the two research questions (Figure 1):

1. Is there a relationship between the antecedents of service quality and customers' perception of overall service quality?
2. Is there a positive and significant influence of overall service quality on customer satisfaction?

Research Hypothesis:

Group 1: Hypotheses concerning the associations between antecedents of service quality and customers' perception of overall service quality:

H1a: Antecedent tangibles significantly influence overall service quality.

H1b: Antecedent reliability significantly influences overall service quality.

H1c: Antecedent responsiveness significantly influences overall service quality.

H1d: Antecedent assurance significantly influences overall service quality.

H1e: Antecedent empathy significantly influences overall service quality.

H1f: Antecedent service product significantly influences overall service quality.

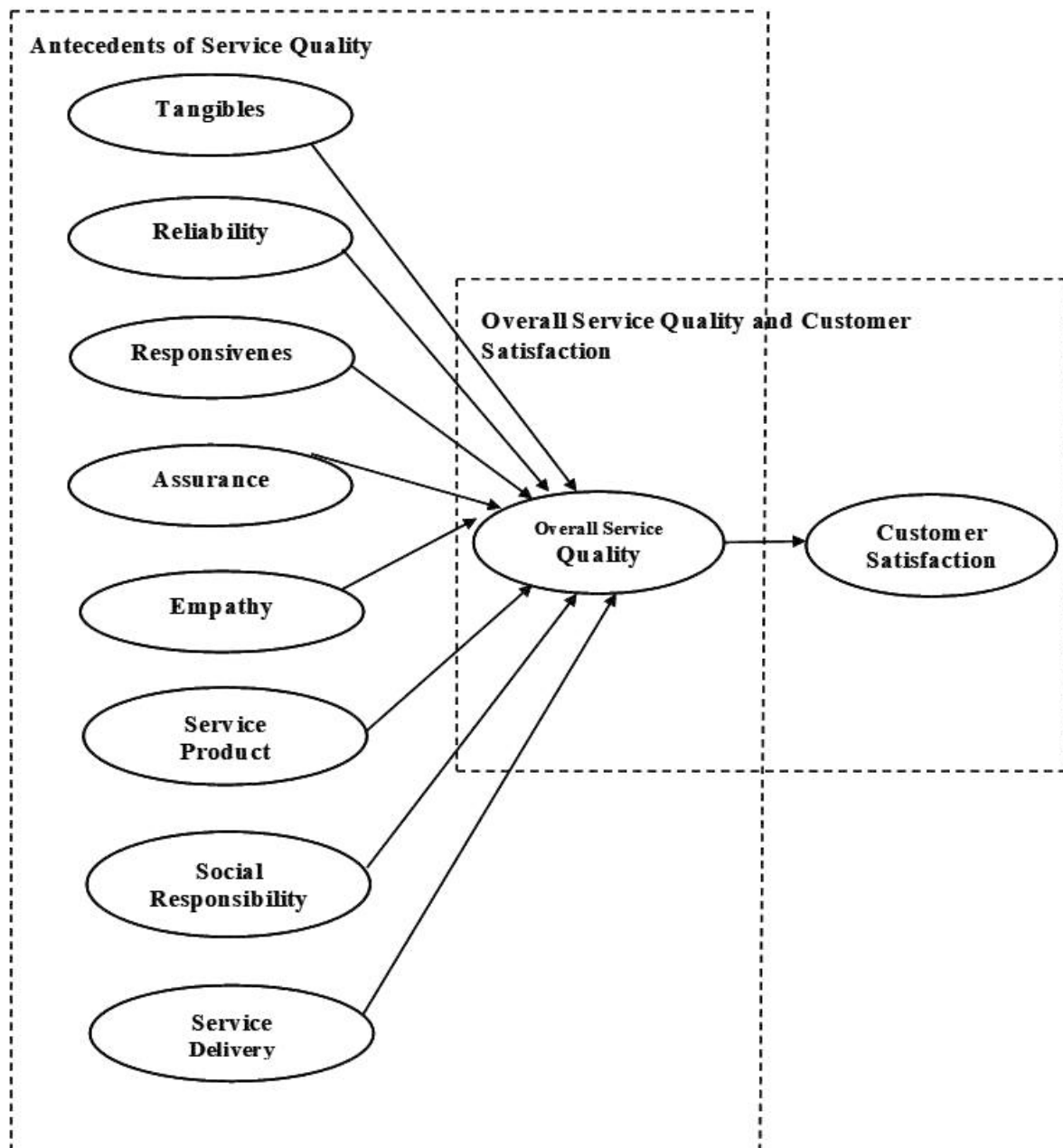
H1g: Antecedent social responsibility significantly influences overall service quality.

H1h: Antecedent service delivery significantly influences overall service quality.

Group 2: Hypotheses concerning the associations between the customer's perception of overall service quality and customer satisfaction:

H2a: Overall service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction.

Figure 1: Integrated Framework of Antecedents of Service Quality, Overall Service Quality & Customer Satisfaction



Sample selection

Sample data comprises customers of different banks (ICICI, HDFC, SBI, Dena Bank, other PSBs) located in Mumbai. Questionnaires were distributed through executive education participants at School of Business Management, NMIMS University, Mumbai. Respondents were identified amongst regular users using convenience sampling. Due to high levels of missing data (exceeding 5%), some of the responses

that were incomplete and inadequate were eliminated. Three hundred and ninety-three valid respondents (from a total of 446) were used for analysis. In the 393 valid responses, there were 4 variables with 1-4 missing values which were replaced by the mean values for continuous scale. The respondents' demographic comprises 72 per cent males and 28 per cent females.

Variables and Indicators

The current research considers eight latent variables (antecedents) of service quality and two other latent variables i.e. overall service quality and customer satisfaction. The latent variables cannot be measured directly and are referred to as unobserved variables. Therefore, we use indicators to represent them, which are referred to as observed variables (Scott MacLean, 1998).

Antecedents of Service Quality

Multiple indicators (observed variables) for the eight antecedents of service quality are listed below: (Reference - Kachwala (2015), Service Quality in Organized Retail Shop from Customer's point of view, Smart Journal of Business Management Studies, Vol.11, Number 2, Page 61-72).

- (1) Tangibles (Facilities):
 - (a) Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, etc.
 - (b) Classy and comfortable ambient conditions.
 - (c) Well-dressed personnel (neat, clean and professional appearance).
 - (d) Visually appealing signs and other facilities.
 - (e) Physical layout of equipment and other furnishings/facilities.
 - (f) Proper housekeeping.
- (2) Reliability:
 - (a) Service provider's ability to display a positive moment of truth.
 - (b) The interest the service provider shows in solving customers' problems.
 - (c) The right delivery of service the first time and every time.
 - (d) The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
 - (e) The ability to provide error-free records, bills and other transaction documents.
- (3) Responsiveness (Timeliness):
 - (a) Ability to communicate provisions of services as per desired schedule.
 - (b) Willingness to help customers at all times.
 - (c) Providing prompt and timely service.
 - (d) Availability of service provider at the time he is required (accommodating and anticipating).
- (4) Assurance:
 - (a) Politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness of contact personnel (procedural skill and convivial skill).
 - (b) Possession of the required skills and knowledge to perform the service and offer helpful suggestions.
 - (c) Trustworthiness, believability and honesty of the service provider.
 - (d) Freedom from danger, risks, or doubt. Feeling of delight and satisfaction.
 - (e) Ability for actions whenever a critical incident takes place and the degree to which the organization succeeds in bringing the condition back to normality to the satisfaction of the customer.
- (5) Empathy:
 - (a) Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers. Resolving amicably customers' problems (being tactful during service recovery).
 - (b) Approachability and ease of contact.
 - (c) Keeping customers informed in languages they can understand, and listening to them.
 - (d) Making the effort to know customers and their specific needs. Keeping the customers' best interests at heart.
- (6) Service product (outcome of service / core service):
 - (a) The content of service.
 - (b) The intensity and depth of service.
 - (c) The diversity and range of services.
 - (d) Service innovation.
 - (e) Convenient and flexible operating / service availability hours.

- (7) Social responsibility:
 - (a) Equal treatment stemming from the belief that everyone should be treated alike.
 - (b) Giving good service at the best value (reasonable cost), but not at the expense of quality.
 - (c) Social responsibility characterized by 'deserving service' to people belonging to all strata of society (e.g. concessions to economically and socially downtrodden people, needy ones, senior citizens, etc.)
 - (d) Extent to which the organization leads as a corporate citizen, the level to which it promotes ethical conduct in everything it does and a sense of public responsibility amongst employees.

- (8) Service delivery:
 - (a) Standardized, simplified and structured delivery processes so that the service delivery times are minimum and without any bureaucratic hassles.
 - (b) Enhancement of technological capability (e.g. computerization, networking of operations, etc.) to serve customers more effectively.
 - (c) Degree to which the procedures and processes are perfectly fool proof.
 - (d) Extent to which the feedback from customers is used to improve service standards.
 - (e) Effectiveness of customer grievance procedures and processes.
 - (f) Adequate and necessary personnel and facilities for good customer service.

Overall Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Two other important latent variables - overall service quality and customer satisfaction - are each measured by four indicators (observed variables) as listed below:

- (1) Overall Service Quality:
 1. Excellent overall service
 2. Service of very high quality
 3. A high standard of service
 4. Superior service in every way
- (2) Customer Satisfaction:
 1. Happy experiences with the bank
 2. Satisfied with the quality of the internet services
 3. Satisfied with the overall services offered
 4. The performance is beyond expectation

Measurement Scale Validation

Statements selected for the antecedents of service quality and customer satisfaction were modified from earlier studies by the authors (Kachwala et al., 2015, 2017 & 2018). Wong and Sohal (Amy Wong, 2003) have used different studies to similarly develop the factors of service quality and customer satisfaction.

Construct Validity and Reliability Assessment

Reliability testing was performed using the value of Cronbach's alpha which ranged from 0.555 to 0.758, demonstrating that the factors have good construct reliability. To ensure the composite reliability and average variance extracted are above the required cut-off values, few of the scale items were removed from their constructs (Scale items SRP(a) & SDL(f) deleted in Table 1 as per instrument defined in 4.41).

Table 4.4.1: Reliability of Scale

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items	Delete
Overall Service Quality - OSQ	0.645	4	
Tangibles (Facilities) - TAN	0.758	6	
Reliability - REL	0.736	5	
Responsiveness (Timeliness) - RES	0.638	4	
Assurance - ASS	0.697	5	
Empathy - EMP	0.683	4	
Service Product - SRP	0.705	4	SRP(a)
Social Responsibility - SOR	0.654	4	
Service Delivery - SDL	0.724	5	SDL(f)
Customer Satisfaction - CS	0.555	4	

Composite reliability and average variance extracted are tabulated in Table 4.42 (Lai & Chen, 2010); (Tari, Molina, & Castejon, 2007); (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The composite reliability and average variance extracted exceed the respective cut-off value (Lai and Chen, 2010; Tari et al., 2007).

Table 4.4.2: Validation of Scale

Variable	Loading Range Component Matrix	ESSL % Variance
Overall Service Quality - OSQ	.680 - .728	49.558
Tangibles (Facilities) - TAN	.631 - .741	45.373
Reliability - REL	.669 - .735	49.027
Responsiveness (Timeliness) - RES	.673 - .708	48.49
Assurance - ASS	.612 - .743	45.93
Empathy - EMP	.698 - .730	51.365
Service Product - SRP	.717 - .747	53.457
Social Responsibility - SOR	.681 - .719	49.069
Service Delivery - SDL	.667 - .720	47.613
Customer Satisfaction - CS	.596 - .748	43.876

Model fitting and Hypotheses testing

Multiple regression analysis (using summated scales - average) is used for model fitting and hypotheses testing. Two regression equations are hypothesised for the purpose of the study:

Equation 1: Regression of Overall Service Quality on Antecedents of Service Quality

$$OSQ = \beta_{11} + \beta_{21} * TAN + \beta_{31} * REL + \beta_{41} * RES + \beta_{51} * ASS + \beta_{61} * EMP + \beta_{71} * SRP + \beta_{81} * SOC + \beta_{91} * SDL$$

OSQ = Overall Service Quality

TAN = Tangibles

REL = Reliability

RES = Responsiveness

ASS = Assurance

EMP = Empathy

SRP = Service Product

SOC = Social Responsibility

SDL = Service Delivery

5.0.2 Equation 2: Regression of Customer Satisfaction

on Overall Service Quality

CS = Customer Satisfaction

OSQ = Overall Service Quality

$$CS = \beta_{12} + \beta_{22} * OSQ$$

Multiple Regression Analysis

5.1.1 Equation 1: Regression of Overall Service Quality on Antecedents of Service Quality

Table 5.1.1.1 Regression Model Summary - OSQAVG

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.694 ^a	.482	.475	.75490

a. Predictors: (Constant), SORAVG, TANAVG, ASSAVG, EMPAVG, RELAVG

Table 5.1.1.2 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.217	.216		5.636	.000
	TANAVG	.108	.046	.115	2.362	.019
	RELAVG	.179	.058	.171	3.098	.002
	ASSAVG	.200	.051	.214	3.958	.000
	EMPAVG	.144	.045	.164	3.199	.001
	SORAVG	.149	.041	.183	3.629	.000

a. Dependent Variable: OSQAVG

Table 5.1.1.3 Anova

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	204.865	5	40.973	71.898	.000 ^b
	Residual	220.541	387	.570		
	Total	425.406	392			

a. Dependent Variable: OSQAVG

b. Predictors: (Constant), SORAVG, TANAVG, ASSAVG, EMPAVG, RELAVG

5.1.2 Equation 2: Regression of Customer Satisfaction on Overall Service Quality

5.1.2.1 Model Summary for CSAVG

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.698 ^a	.487	.485	.67144

a. Predictors: (Constant), OSQAVG

Table 5.1.1.2 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.060	.169		12.207	.000
	OSQAVG	.627	.033	.698	19.255	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CSAVG

5.1.2.3 Annova

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	167.143	1	167.143	370.743	.000b
	Residual	176.275	391	.451		
	Total	343.418	392			

a. Dependent Variable: CSAVG

b. Predictors: (Constant), OSQAVG

Conclusion of Model fitting and Hypotheses testing

5.2.1 Group 1: Hypotheses concerning the

associations between antecedents of service quality and customers' perception of overall service quality

H1a: Antecedent tangibles significantly influence overall service quality.

H1b: Antecedent reliability significantly influences overall service quality.

H1c: Antecedent responsiveness does not significantly influence overall service quality.

H1d: Antecedent assurance significantly influences overall service quality.

H1e: Antecedent empathy significantly influences overall service quality.

H1f: Antecedent service product does not significantly influence overall service quality.

H1g: Antecedent social responsibility significantly influences overall service quality.

H1h: Antecedent service delivery does not significantly influence overall service quality.

5.2.2 Group 2: Hypotheses concerning the

associations between the customer's perception of overall service quality and customer satisfaction

H2a: Overall service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction.

Similar results have been observed by Tan Lay Hong et al. (2014) where the authors, using regression, observed that Tangibles, Reliability, Assurance, Responsiveness and Empathy were statistically significant.

Managerial and Scholarly Implications of the Study

Scholarly Implications

The research observation that customers' perception of overall service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction is in line with the few studies conducted in banks (Chen & Chen, 2007); in pest control, dry cleaning and fast food industry (Cronin & Taylor, 1992); in energy industries (Ibanez, Hartmann, & Calvo, 2006); in airline industry (Clemes, Gan, Kao, & Choong, 2008); and in public transport study, (Wen, Lawrence, & Cheng, 2005). Ajzen (1991) argued that satisfied customers may not use bank services because these customers have multiple other options for bank services, mainly through internet channels where many bank services are accessible. It can therefore be argued that customers could recognize service quality as a hygiene factor (Prajogo & Sohal, 2004). Therefore, providing service quality does not guarantee re-use of bank services. However, in absence of service quality, customers will certainly not re-use bank services.

This research reveals that banks' customer satisfaction is related to perception of overall service quality. However, many researchers like Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1994), Voss, Grewal (1998), Bei & Chiao (2001) have indicated that customer satisfaction is not dependent on overall service quality alone. Bank administration needs to recognize personnel and other factors that can affect bank customer satisfaction (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). The study strengthens the belief that overall service quality dimensions are positively correlated with customer satisfaction. We conclude that quality banking service is a prerequisite for establishing satisfied customers.

Managerial Implications

Many studies have been conducted on bank users' satisfaction and how this construct is related to the perception of overall service quality. In the current study, the researchers have incorporated the antecedents of overall service quality in addition to the relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction. The study identified five antecedents of overall service quality - Tangibles,

Reliability, Assurance, Empathy and Social Responsibility. The study also found that overall service quality has a direct influence on customer satisfaction.

Quality service is rapidly becoming a challenge since the early 2010s. Banks that want to achieve a certain goal, will be successful through a cultural transformation that produces a quality service organization, which is engaged in establishing high service performance standards for the customer at all times. This will enable banks to increase sales and market share. Satisfied customers become loyal customers. Customer loyalty can be employed by banks to survive in today's ever-increasing competitive environment. The results of this research paper confirmed the literature theory regarding the relationship among antecedents of service quality, overall service quality and customer satisfaction in bank services.

Limitations and Directions for future Research

The respondents of this study were only from one city (Mumbai). The data is cross sectional collected during the period June 2018 to December 2018. The responses were based on convenience sampling. Limitations of today's research will provide directions for future research. Since the research findings relate to the current status of customers' insights of overall service quality and customer satisfaction, it is recommended to carry out similar studies with a larger respondent profile, longitudinal study and involving more banks in multiple cities. The findings can be generalized as they are in line with other studies with similar research objectives.

There are many other variables like culture, customers' income, gender that influence customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, which have not been mentioned in the present study. The authors opine that the present model can be further extended to include customer loyalty using structural equation modelling (SEM).

Applicability and Generalizability of the Current Research

The source of the sample data is customers of different banks (ICICI, HDFC, SBI, Dena Bank, other PSBs) located in Mumbai. Respondents were identified amongst regular customers using convenience sampling. Three Hundred and Ninety-Three valid respondents (from a total of 446) were used for analysis. Many of the respondents were executive students from marketing discipline and traveling all over India for work related

assignments. This makes us believe that our results would be applicable to the overall Indian economy. However, due to different cultures, technology adoption, financial regulations, the results may require a more comprehensive study in emerging global economies. This study, in our view, contributes to the current body of knowledge by improving the understanding of the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in the banking context.

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