

Service Quality Improvement Effort (An Indonesian Restaurant Empirical Fact)

Gabriella Imanuel¹, Christina Wirawan²

¹ Industrial Engineering Department, Maranatha Christian University, Indonesia;

² Industrial Engineering Department, Maranatha Christian University, Indonesia

Abstract

Customer satisfaction is very important for a business because it will determine the arrival and purchase of customers. One of the determinants of customers satisfaction is service quality. A business needs to pay attention to service quality so that it can always provide satisfaction to customers. As a case, this article studied Resto XYZ. This restaurant is experiencing a decline in revenue. The cause of this decline in revenue is the lack of customer satisfaction which is indicated by the number of customer complaints. This study aims to measure customer satisfaction and then provide suggestions to improve Resto XYZ's service quality using SERVQUAL method popularized by Parasuraman. We made modifications for gaps measurement from Parasuraman's model. Data collection was carried out by quantitative and qualitative methods. As a result, some variables are found unsatisfactory for customers. Mostly the cause of the customers' dissatisfaction is a lack of management knowledge about customers' expectations. For this reason, this study provides suggestions for management to keep in relation with customers and create surveys to gain information about customers' expectations. Other suggestions related improve photos in the menu, managing employees' work to shorten the service time, tightening the health protocol, redecorating the dining area, and providing adequate parking space.

Keywords: *Customer Satisfaction, Quality Gap, Quality Improvement, SERVQUAL*



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INTRODUCTION

One measurement of business performance is revenue or profit. Businesses that can generate adequate income will be judged to have good performance. Many things affect the income of a business, such as competition, inappropriate marketing strategies, changes in consumer tastes, and poor product or service quality. The most well-known and widely used service quality model is the so-called SERVQUAL (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1990). Measurements using this concept have been widely carried out and developed by researchers, until the last few years, for example, Hasibuan (2020), Hassan & Salem (2022), Nunkoo, Teeroovengadam, Ringle, & Sunnassee (2020), Raza, Umer, Qureshi, & Dahri (2020), Zhong & Moon (2020) and many more. This study will measure quality, find the causes of poor quality and provide suggestions based on the SERVQUAL model with modifications in gaps measurement.

This study aims to help a restaurant in Jakarta, Indonesia called Resto XYZ. This restaurant serves an economical Japanese menu which is mainly intended for students because the location of this restaurant is indeed near one of the major universities in Indonesia. But in addition to students, this restaurant is also a choice of food for the surrounding community. XYZ restaurant serves food orders for dine-in, take-out, and also delivery.

Since around September 2019, XYZ Resto has experienced a decline in sales, so it does not reach the set target. The decline occurs because there are more competitors around the restaurant, and also because of the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused campuses to be closed and there are regulations to temporarily close restaurants. This condition, coupled with complaints from regular customers, including reduced portions, poor quality of food, and although the restaurant did not have too many visitors, the service felt long by customers. With conditions like these, this research tries to provide suggestions to help XYZ Resto increase its income by improving the service quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SERVQUAL is an abbreviation of the word Service Quality, which means the quality of service. The Servqual method is a method based on the "Gap Analysis Model" developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1990). The image of the SERVQUAL conceptual model is shown in Figure 1.

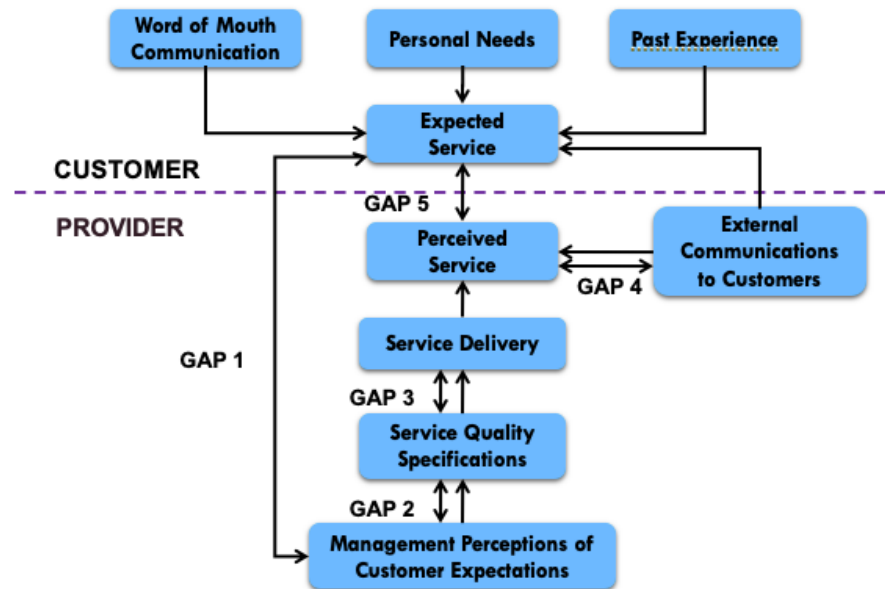


Figure 1. SERVQUAL Model (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1990)

Figure 1 shows that the horizontal dotted line separates the actors involved. The section on the top represents events that occur and relates to customers, while the bottom section refers to the company or service provider. There are five gaps shown in Figure 1, namely (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1990):

- Gap 5: The gap that occurs between the perceived service and the expected service.
- Gap 1: The gap that occurs between customer expectations and management perceptions.
- Gap 2: This gap occurs between management's perception of consumer expectations and specifications of service quality.
- Gap 3: This gap occurs between service quality specifications and service delivery.
- Gap 4: This gap will occur between service delivery and external communication.

Gap 5 describes customer satisfaction, namely the difference between the service perceived by the customer by his perception and what is expected by the customer (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1990). Measuring the difference in customer perceptions and expectations means measuring customer satisfaction.

Zeithaml et al. (1990) also formulated five main dimensions of service quality, namely:

- Reliability: Conformity of completion of work according to standards / promised (delivering on promises)
- Responsiveness: Respond to consumer demand quickly and swiftly.
- Assurance: The trust and confidence felt by customers because the company can show competence, courtesy, credibility, and security.
- Empathy: Empathy is how companies treat customers as individuals by maintaining easy access, establishing communication, and understanding the customer
- Physical Evidence (Tangible): Tangible facilities related to services affect customer satisfaction.

SERVQUAL has been widely used and developed by researchers since it was popularized by Parasuraman around 1990. Several criticisms and reviews have been made by researchers, such as Buttle (1996), Coulthard (2004), Kulašin & Fortuny-Santos (2005). Criticisms were made about the measurement method, model, and concept robustness. Developments have also been made, including the gap

measurement, such as Hansen (2014), Kim, Kim, & Yun (2003), and Tefera & Govender (2016). Researchers have also made developments to the model (Stević *et al.*, 2021). Research has also been widely used using the SERVQUAL concept and combining it with other concepts or variables, such as a combination with the fuzzy concept (Hasibuan, 2020), the concept of customer satisfaction (Nunkoo *et al.*, 2020; Raza *et al.*, 2020; Hassan and Salem, 2022), the concept of perceived value (Li and Shang, 2020), the concept of loyalty and happiness (Zhong and Moon, 2020), brand image and customer loyalty (Dam and Dam, 2021). Service quality has been used by researchers to measure customer satisfaction with various types of services and also look for factors that affect customer satisfaction. With the increasing popularity of the internet, online platforms, and e-commerce, research is expanding toward services related to these matters, such as Roy *et al.* (2021), Kim, Wang, and Roh (2021), Li *et al.* (2021), Omar *et al.* (2021), and Zhou *et al.* (2021). Seeing that the concept of SERVQUAL (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1990) has been used for a very long time and it can be said that this concept has been tested and flexible enough. This research will also use this method, by modifying the way of measuring gaps. Measurement of gaps will be carried out using quantitative and qualitative methods, as modifications from Zeithaml *et al.* (1990).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology carried out in this study is based on the SERVQUAL method (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990). This research begins by identifying the problems that exist in XYZ Resto, namely the decline in income, and one of the causes is the poor quality of service in this restaurant (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1990).

The next step is to determine the research variables deployed from the 5 dimensions of SERVQUAL, namely tangible, responsiveness, empathy, reliability, and assurance (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1990). Adjusted to Resto XYZ, 29 variables were deployed to measure SERVQUAL and become the basis for improving the service quality of Resto XYZ. These variables can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Research variables

No.	Variables
Reliability	
1	Good taste of food
2	Food taste consistency
3	Good taste of beverage
4	Beverage taste consistency
5	The suitability of food portions with photos on the menu
6	Compatibility of orders received with promotions offered
7	Ease of making payment
Responsiveness	
8	Responsiveness of employees in serving costumers
9	The speed of employees in serving customers
10	Willingness of employees to accept criticism and suggestions
11	Willingness of employees to help customers
12	Employee patience in serving customers
Assurance	
13	The ability of employees to provide reliable information
14	The ability of employees to provide information that is clear and easy to understand
15	Friendliness of employees serving customers
16	Courtesy of employees serving customers
17	Ability of employees to serve clean food
18	The ability of employees to serve customers without any mistakes
19	The ability of the restaurant to provide a sense of security to customers
Empathy	
20	Ability of employees to meet customer needs
21	The ability of employees to meet customer desires
22	The ability of employees to provide solutions to customer problems
23	The ability of employees to communicate well with customers
Tangible	
24	Cleanliness in the restaurant service area
25	The attractiveness of the restaurant interior
26	Sufficient parking space for cars and motorbikes
27	Cleanliness of employee appearance
28	Restaurant equipment and supplies
29	Restaurant discipline in implementing health protocols related to COVID-19

These variables are used to measure gap 5, gap 1, gap 2, gap 3, and gap 4. For measurement, quantitative methods are used in the form of a questionnaire. Before being used, the validity of the measuring instrument was tested using the Pearson correlation value (Lee Rodgers and Alan Nice Wander, 1988), and reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha (Warrens, 2015). If the questionnaire is valid and reliable, then it can be used to measure all SERVQUAL gaps.

The measurement starts from gap 5 (the gap between customer perceptions and customer expectations), also known as a measure of customer satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 1990). To measure gap 5, the questionnaire was filled out by 30 customers at Resto XYZ who were randomly selected. Furthermore, the research step is continued by measuring gap 1. This measurement is carried out by comparing the data on customer expectations with management's perception of customer expectations which will be sought by asking management to fill out a questionnaire with the same variable (Zeithaml et al., 1990). The next step is measuring gap 2. Management perception data compared with specification data was obtained from questionnaires filled in by management and employees (Zeithaml et al., 1990). After that, the measurement of gap 3 is carried out by comparing the service specifications with the delivery of services (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Service delivery is mainly influenced by employee performance, although it can also be influenced by other things. Service delivery is measured by filling out questionnaires by management and employees. The last is the measurement of gap 4 (gap regarding external communication). This gap is measured by filling out a questionnaire by employees, management, and customers.

After measuring the gap, each gap is recapitulated to see its relationship and analysis. In addition to using the questionnaire described previously, we also collected qualitative data, namely by conducting in-depth interviews with management, employees, and representatives from customers. Interviews were conducted related to the same variables, but to dig deeper to find what and why of each of these variables. This information was later used to analyze and make suggestions to improve the quality of Resto X's services. The analysis will mainly be carried out for variables that are declared dissatisfied by customers. These variables will be explored, and what causes them. If the cause does not exist, it means that dissatisfaction is possible due to the customer's causes or there is a shortage in the measuring tool, so it is not analyzed further. The analysis is then followed by making suggestions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The results of measuring these gaps can be seen in table 2. From this table, it can be seen that 13 variables are declared dissatisfied by customers. Of the 13 variables, there are 8 variables whose causes were not detected in other gaps (gaps 1-4). The 8 variables whose causes were not detected in other gaps were probably due to customer personal causes, or some causes were not detected in gaps 1-4. These variables were not analyzed further. Five variables were stated to be dissatisfied by customers and there was a cause between gaps 1-4. They are variable 5 the suitability of food portions with photos on the menu, variable 9 speed of employees in serving customers, variable 19 the ability of XYZ Resto in providing a sense of security to customers, variable 25 attractiveness of interior of the building, and variable 26 the adequacy of motorcycle and car parking spaces. Dissatisfaction needs to be considered because it affects the return of customers to the restaurant through the customer trust (Sirimongkol, 2021). The service quality perspective is used here because perceived service quality and price determination affect customer satisfaction (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022).

For variable 5, the cause of dissatisfaction is that the customer feels that the portion of the food received is not the portion in the photo listed on the XYZ Resto menu. The portion received by customers is less than what is in the photo. This happens because of gap 1. Management thinks that customers will not compare the portions of food they receive with the photos on the menu, so when taking photos, they only think about the aesthetic side. For the proposed improvement, Resto XYZ needs to improve the photos on the menu by adjusting the portion of the food photographed with the actual portion.

For variable 9, customers feel that the service takes too long, both in serving food, requesting service for eating utensils, and complementary foods, such as chili sauce, sauce, green onions, sesame, etc. From the recapitulation of the gap, it turns out that the cause is also gap 1, namely, management does not know customer expectations. Management thought the time needed for service was fast enough because there

are not too many customers who eat at the restaurant. However, management does not consider that they also receive delivery services orders. The solution that can be proposed first is to make customers participate in carrying out some of the services. Food complement can be placed on a small table so that customers can pick them up themselves. By providing the opportunity to take their food, in addition to faster service, customers also feel happy because they are free to take their complimentary food according to their liking. The second solution is to rearrange the tasks of the workers and set task priorities. Management can manage to set dine-in service as a priority so that dine-in customers don't feel the service is too long. The third solution is to speed up the manufacture of food and beverages, by having prepared a measure or providing a measuring device that is easy to use and the dosage is by what is needed so that it can speed up the process. For example, to measure 2 tablespoons of syrup, replace it with a jigger cup that contains 2 spoons to shorten the time.

Table 2. Gap measurement results recapitulation

No.	Gap 5	Gap 1	Gap 2	Gap 3	Gap 4
1	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, not communicated to employees	Unable to meet service specifications	No gap
2	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
3	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, not communicated to employees	Unable to meet service specifications	No gap
4	Customer dissatisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
5	Customer dissatisfied	Management does not know consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
6	Customer dissatisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
7	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
8	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
9	Customer dissatisfied	Management does not know consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
10	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	There is a gap
11	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
12	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
13	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
14	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
15	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
16	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
17	Customer dissatisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
18	Customer dissatisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
19	Customer dissatisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are no service specifications	Unable to meet service specifications	No gap
20	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
21	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
22	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
23	Customer satisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
24	Customer dissatisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
25	Customer dissatisfied	Management does not know consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
26	Customer dissatisfied	Management does not know consumer expectations	There are no service specifications	Unable to meet service specifications	No gap
27	Customer dissatisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
28	Customer dissatisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap
29	Customer dissatisfied	Management knows consumer expectations	There are service specifications, communicated to employees	Able to meet service specifications	No gap

In variable 19, customers feel that Resto XYZ is not optimal in providing a sense of security. The security is referred to as security from theft and criminal acts, as well as being safe from the transmission of COVID-19. The gaps caused are gap 1 and gap 3. Management feels that his restaurant is safe enough. Indeed, until now there has never been a theft or crime in Resto XYZ because it is located in a row of shophouses that are quite busy. But customers still expect these efforts. Regarding gap 3, employees sometimes do not wear masks and do not spray disinfectant on tables and chairs after use by customers. The suggestion given concerning security from theft and crime is to place CCTV in the dine-in area associated with the management room and the room for preparing food. In the dine-in area, a sticker is affixed that says that the room was recorded with CCTV, thereby reducing people's courage to commit crimes. Chang and Cheng (2022) found that the prevention of COVID-19 transmission that the restaurant was concerned with returned 30% of customers who were lost during social restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this was considered important by customers. Regarding safety against COVID-19 transmission, restaurants should prepare hand washing equipment and hand sanitizer near the door and scan the body temperature of everyone who enters the restaurant, including customers. Then the restaurant also needs to establish health procedures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, such as requiring employees to wear masks, requiring customers who are not eating to wear masks, requiring customers to use hand sanitizer before entering the dining area, arranging tables and chairs in the dining area so that maintaining a safe distance, spraying disinfectant on tables and chairs after use by customers, and sterilizing tablewares.

Variable 25 also occurs because of gap 1. Management does not think that the attractiveness of the interior of the building is important the concept is economical food, but as also found by Ha and Jang (2010) restaurant atmosphere affects customer satisfaction as moderating variable. Currently, the building is just an ordinary shophouse. Decorations are only pictures of food menus that are sold hanging on the wall. The restaurant can consider beautifying the wall by hangings pictures on display. In addition, the color and pattern of wall paint can also help make the building more attractive. Additional decorative lights, curtains, or ornaments with Japanese pictures, including Japanese flower decorations can also add to the attractiveness of the interior of the dining area.

The next dissatisfaction is variable 26. This variable is caused by gaps 1, 2, and 3. There is a gap 1 because management does not think that parking space is a customer need. Customers are mostly students whose campus is close to this restaurant, so they usually walk, or the local community can also come on foot. However, it seems that there are also customers who come using motorized vehicles, so they are not satisfied with the availability of parking spaces. Gap 2 is related to gap 1. Because management did not consider this variable important, they did not make a specification. And gap 3 occurs because there is no adequate parking space for motorbikes and cars. All shophouses have very limited parking spaces, especially if customers bring their cars. Therefore, as a proposal, if possible, Resto XYZ rents a parking lot for another shophouse that is not being used or vacant land around it. If this is not possible, then Resto XYZ should emphasize more on delivery sales. Delivery can be provided with delivery by XYZ Resto employees for delivery around XYZ Resto so that the delivery process can be faster and without additional costs.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that SERVQUAL is still relevant to be used to measure service quality and customer satisfaction, even though it is an old concept. From this study, it can also be seen that there are still several variables at Resto XYZ that have not satisfied customers, and the most common cause is gap 1, namely, management does not know customer expectations. Therefore, the management of Resto XYZ needs to conduct surveys and build relationships with customers, to always be able to know customer expectations. By knowing customer expectations, management can set specifications that match customer expectations, so that the quality of XYZ Resto's services can satisfy customers. The SERVQUAL measurement method can be modified and adapted to the conditions of the research object.

This research is fruitful in opening up further research opportunities. Further research can be done by further analyzing the variables that are stated to be dissatisfied by customers, but the cause has not been detected from gaps 1-4. It is possible to further explore the causes of these dissatisfactions. Other research can also be done by further analyzing the variables that are stated to be satisfied by the customer but there is still a gap of 1-4. This means that there is still a cause gap even though the customer is still satisfied in the end. This condition has the potential to cause dissatisfied customers in the future. Other research can also be done by multiplying respondents or even researching other restaurants to generalize the conclusions. Research can also be developed using various other tools related to SERVQUAL, such as QFD, TRIZ, Kano, and others.

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