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Exploring Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction at Library in Malaysia University

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Services are intangible and a service represents a process, consequently the quality of a service is more difficult to perceive and its more complicated. In general, the perceived quality is defined as the customer's judgment on overall satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is depending on the high quality services. The main objectives of this study was to identify the level of service quality among customers at one library in Malaysia public university and tried to examine the relationship between SERVQUAL and overall quality of service offered. Besides, this study also tried to analyze the dominant factor that affected the relationship between SERVQUAL and overall quality services.

INTRODUCTION

The English word "Library" comes from "Libraria" in Latin. The fundamental perspectives are, a library is the place where books and papers are collected and gathered, those books and papers are for public utilization [30]. Important aspect include how customers experience the physical environment, the accessibility of materials, collections and technology, how customers are treated by staff in every contact with the library, and the availability of products and programs the customers want and need. With emphasis being places on electronic resources, and the learning community being more interested in virtual information service internet, academic libraries urgently need to assess the quality of it services and how user satisfaction can be improved. In recent years, both the library profession and the larger educational community have focused increasing attention on a model of management commonly referred to as service quality.

For academic library in particular, there is a responsibility to preserve scholarly communication as well as the primary resources. Obviously, the user satisfaction depends on quality of service provided by libraries. In with respect to customer orientation, quality in the library sector is defined as permanent customer satisfaction. It is important that quality is defined from the customer's perspectives and that is not predefined by the library standards. Only customer who regards the services as being of a high quality from his subjective point of view will remain a satisfied library customer in the long run. There are a standard that valid for a general assessment of library quality, there is , knowing the customer's needs, faultless delivery of service, good facilities, reliable equipment, efficient administration, efficient back up service and feed back loops to build an improvement procedures [59].

A number of studies have attempted to grapple with the question of effectiveness or performance measures for libraries. Peter and Waterman's (1982), in their bestseller books 'In Search of Excellent' explain that librarians need to heed "close to the customer" to enhance service quality, especially because in the next few years both academic libraries and higher education will experience great change as a result of the increasing emphasis on information technology and decreasing emphasis on the campus and on the library as a physical place. Services are intangible and a service represents a process, consequently the quality of a service is more difficult to perceive and its more complicated to introduce the standards the service should meet that could be used for measuring quality. In general, the perceived quality is defined as the customer' judgment about and entity's overall excellence or superiority [47].

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Alternative approaches, originating from the business sector, have emerged to measure service quality in libraries. Specifically the tool, SERVQUAL [40] is widely adopted by academic libraries in the USA. In the context of education, satisfaction of existing students towards the university's services would transfer a positive impact to the public and this will make the university acquire a competitive advantage [14]. In Malaysia, university libraries are more keen to obtaining the MS ISO 9001: 2000 certification (requirement for quality management system (QMS) to exhibit the library's commitment to quality. Universiti Utara Malaysia is concerned about quality and accountability and it aims to achieve their vision which is to be "The World Class University". The service provided must fulfill customers' needs and wants in order to help the customers to achieve their satisfaction to the fullest

Problem statements:

Education services are difficult to be standardized due its tangibility [14]. Tangible can be described as the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, printed and visual communication materials. Despite of the services given to the students, the top management of the Higher Education (HE) institution should measure their service quality in order to function efficiently and effectively. Satisfaction of existing students toward the university services would bring the positive impact to the outsiders and public. Besides that, it will encourage the university to acquire a competitive advantage [14]. According to Bowen and Chen [10] said that having satisfied customers is not enough, there has to be extremely satisfied customers, because satisfaction lead to customer loyalty.

A quality service rendered to all library users is among the core values of librarianship. Providing excellent service to customers entails the customer's perception of satisfaction in order to meet the customer expectations. Satisfying customers needs in the academic libraries have been primary objective of libraries and librarians. Every year, new students come to the university with different needs and expectations. Furthermore, new technologies, database, and more innovative systems for accessing information have made the library more complicated and challenging for librarians and users alike. The abundance of resources available and the difficulty in being able to evaluate these resources also create problems for users. The inability to easily identify the specific use of a library's services because of the new technologies and the difficulty to access information sources can all contribute to customer dissatisfaction among academic library users.

This study intended to determine the customer' perception towards the quality of services provided from Perpustakaan Sultanah Bahiyah (PSB). In order to discover on how to determine the customer perception towards the quality of services provided at PSB, this study will identify whether five (5) dimensions of service quality (tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) have significant influence on the service quality. The result from this study was highly important to the management of library to maintain the quality qualification and the quality unit of library indeed to know form the customer perspective of the services that have been provided.

Research objectives:

This study will mainly seeks to achieve three research objectives :
1. To identify the level of service quality among customers at Perpustakaan Sultanah Bahiyah.
2. To examine the relationship between SERVQUAL and overall quality of services.
3. To analyze the dominant factor that affected the relationship between SERVQUAL and overall Quality of Service.

Literature review:
Service:

Berry [5], identifies services as an interaction of two or more parties, and it usually involves the interaction between service providers and customers that resulted satisfaction between both parties. Hakesver (2000) looked at service as a set of economic activities that provide time, location form and psychological benefits. Beer [36] defined service as a set of characteristics and overall properties of the service which aim to satisfy clients and meet their needs. Bolton *et al*. [8] reviewed the definition of service and describe some of the characteristics of service in order to simplify and make it easier to understand the concept of services.

Firstly, a service is a reflection of the company's performance. It occurred along with the creation of interaction and communication between customers and service providers during the undertaking of delivery process [24,45,60]. Secondly, other factors such as physical or environmental resources have impact in influencing the ability of the companies to offer services to customers. In other studies, Boshoff *et al*. [9] and Bowen [10] mentioned that services required by the customers area tool to solving problem and as a two-way communication among them. Pasuraman *et al*. [41,61] mentioned that there are three characteristics that become the basic when making comparison between services and goods (i.e. intangible, heterogeneous, simultaneous).

Based on Christopher H. Lovelock [36], services can be grouped or classified in many useful ways. There are, the degree of tangibility/intangibility of services process, Who or what is the recipient of service processes,

The place of service delivery, Customization versus standardization, Relationship with customer, Discrete versus continuous services and High contract versus low contract Customer's.

Quality:

Reeves and Bednar [46] in their study, defined quality as excellent and value when customers meeting or exceeding their expectation to the specifications of services and another authors also found that quality can be defined by satisfying or delighting of customer's feeling [55]. Crosby [11] defined quality as consistency with fixed specifications and this agrees with Karim's definition (1996), who defined quality as anything that accords with the characteristics of the product to meet the external client's needs. According to the Oxford dictionary [29], quality is the standard of something when it is compare to other things.

Quality is an elusive and indistinct construct. Often mistaken for imprecise adjectives like "goodness, or luxury or shininess, or weight" [11], quality and its' requirements are not easily articulated by customers [58]. Explication and measurement of quality also present problems for researchers [38] who often bypass definition and unidimensional self report measures to capture the concept [32]. The other approach is directed towards quality control, on how we control the process in our organization to achieve quality. It is primarily internally oriented. Service research has so far shown less interest in this approach. The major written sources are Crosby [11], Deming [12] and his "interpreter" Scherkenbach [49], Ishikawa [31] and Taguchi [57]. Many of those sources claim that their conclusions and recommendations work equally well for services. In practice, a poor quality performance has a lesser economic value, and a performance that is extremely deficient can produce negative or destructive results, called "deducted values" [20].

Service Quality:

Service quality, which is a subjective concept and more of a "global judgment attribute" or attitude toward service [17], differs from ,but is related to customer satisfaction which examines " a specific transaction", perceived value, and customer preferences [48]. In library and information science, service quality is typically defined in terms of gap analysis, or the gap between customers' expectation in general and those perceptions relating to the particular library and its services.

Researchers such as Garvin [18], Dodds and Monroe [16], Holbrook and Cofman [28], Jacoby and Olson [32] and Zeithaml [60] have emphasized the difference between the objective and perceived quality. For examples, Holbrook and Cofman [28], noted that consumers do not use the term of quality in the same way as researchers and marketers, who define it conceptually. The conceptual meaning distinguishes between mechanistic and humanistic quality. "Mechanistic" involves on objective aspect or feature of thing or event while "humanistic" involves the subjective response of people to object and is therefore a highly relativistic phenomenon that differs between judges" [28]. Positive word of mouth can be a very powerful tool for attracting new customers. On the hand, negative word of mouth can have devastating impact on the credibility and effectiveness of organization's effort to attract new customers. In addition, customer's service expectations are constantly rising, while their tolerance for poor service is declining [54]. As a result, customers are increasingly likely to migrate to competitors with a perceived higher service quality [19].

As noted by Oldfield and Baron [39], any attempt to deliver quality service, those who exert control or influence upon any of the customer groups needs to be constantly aware that interaction between customers (user) and staff lies at the heart of good service delivery. One approach to quality is to list those characteristics essential in assessing the quality of a service. In one model, customer perceived service quality is viewed as the result of two generic types of quality:technical (output) quality and functional (process) quality [22,34]. Parasasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry [60] identified ten determinants of service quality that may relate to any services:reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding, and tangibles. Later, these were boiled down to five : tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy [40]. Gronross [23] has suggested six criteria, five of which coincide with those previously listed.

This has the same effect as the junk yard strategy, which is used to supplement the zero defect strategy: "The junk yard refers to the pile of bad products and services which are delivered to customers and which cause dissatisfaction. There should be a clear strategy to remove the junk and make the customers happy" [25]. A major outcome of their work is a conceptual framework (the Gaps Model of Service Quality) and a measurement instrument (SERVQUAL) for assessing service quality. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry [60] have identified five gaps to summarizes the Model. Gap 1 : Consumer expectation – management perception gap, Gap 2 : Management perception – service quality specification gap , Gap 3: Service quality specifications – service delivery gap, Gap 4 : Service delivery – external communication gap and Gap 5 : Customer expectation – Perceived service delivered. A key finding from the focus groups was the service quality as defined by consumers can be characterized as the discrepancy or gap between their perceptions and expectations.

Expectations are desired wants, the extent to which customers believe a particular attribute is essential for an excellent service provider [42] and perceptions are judgment of service performance. Disend [15], correlates

the Gaps Model with the concept of service quality. He maintains that poor service results if the gap, or difference, is large between what is expected, customer find the service acceptable. The definitions of service quality presented in the Gaps Model recognizes that expectations are subjective and are neither static nor predictable [6].

Customer Satisfaction:

The word 'satisfaction' is derived from the Latin *satis* (good, enough, sufficient) and *facio* (to do or not make). The *Oxford Dictionary* goes on to describe it as 'fulfillment', leaving nothing to be desired', to 'be content or pleased'. Customer service has been characterized "as meeting the needs and expectations of the customers as defined by the customers." Meeting those needs and expectations means that librarians know about and are at turned to those needs and expectations and are willing to meet high-interest expectations consistently as well. Most importantly, the customer, as the consumer of library services, does not define the library's mission and its service delivery. A number of customers may not request or require assistance, preferring instead to find resources on their own or to rely on friends or colleagues for information gathering and evaluation.

Thinking of library users as customers is a new concept for many librarians. However, Sirkin [53] stated that "the 'customer' problems of libraries have more in common with 'customer' problems of other businesses than librarians like to think" and, as Shapiro and Long [51] mentioned, "Much like the business sector, we in academic libraries are pre-occupied with the future and our ability to maintain our market share and prosper". However most academic librarians have a hard time thinking of people, especially students who come library as customers, even though students are the only ones who can furnish a view of what our colleges or universities look like from the receiver's prospective. [7].

Sharma and Ojha [52] explained that customer satisfaction is related to the size and direction of disconfirmation, which is defined as the different between the post purchase and post usage evaluation of the performance of the product or service and the expectations held prior to the purchase. Customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty and this leads to profitability [26]. Moreover, stability in business relations is also beneficial where the positive quality image minimizes the cost for current customers [37]. Andreassen and Lindestad [2] gives their consensus that customer satisfaction is the accumulated experience of a customer's purchase and consumption experience. Peter and Olson [43] argue that the amount of dissatisfaction is dependent on the extent of disconfirmation and the consumer's level of involvement with the product and the problems solving process.

Customer Satisfaction and Service Quality:

Service quality and customer satisfaction have been found to be indispensable for retaining and attracting customer in service providing institution such as libraries [3]. Tangible and intangible aspects of service performance affect the level of service quality and customer satisfaction, which in turn determine whether customer will re-visit the library and advise other to visit it in future [3]. However, the level of service performance may change over time. Service quality and customer satisfaction can also change because of shift in the attribute weights determining service satisfaction. Sureschandar *et al.* [56] pointed out that customer satisfaction should be view as multi-dimensionalconstruct and the measurement items should be generated with the same dimensions of service quality.. The meaning, definition, and evaluation of quality exist in the consumer's mind. Ultimate quality is the difference between service quality expectations and the perceptions of reality. This theory shifts focus from the production and output of the service to the customer. Whereas the attribute theory places primary importance on the technical aspects of production, the customer satisfactions theory places primary importance on customer perceptions. Sirkin [53] stated that the strategic focus on customer service and satisfaction is an effective tool to help librarians accomplish their mission. Because service quality and customer satisfaction are intended to produce repeat business, an important measure of satisfaction is willingness to return to the same library and certain staff members again. Dewdney and Ross [13] reported on student experiences in using academic and public libraries, concluded that both willingness to return and overall satisfaction were significantly related to the librarian's behavior and the quality of the answer.

Model Development (SERVQUAL):

SERVQUAL model [40] is based on the customers' expectation of the service level and their perception of the actual service performance level. SERVQUAL as the most often used approach for measuring service quality has been compare customers' expectation before a service encounter and their perceptions of the actual service delivered [21,35,41]. The SERVQUAL instrument has been the predominant method used to measure consumers' perceptions of service quality and it has five generic dimensions or factors.

Reliability:

  Reliability is defined as " the ability to perform the promised serviced dependably and accurately" or "delivering on its promises" [62]. Deal with customer need a provider keep their promises to provide the best services as their promise.

Assurance:

  Assurance is defines as "the employees' knowledge and courtesy and the service provider's ability to inspire trust and confidence" [62]. Assurance may not be so important relative to other industries and services, where the risk is higher and the outcome of suing the service is uncertain [1]. The trust and confidence may be represented in the personnel who links the customer to the organization [62].

Tangibles:

  Defined as the physical appearance of facilities, equipment, staff, and written materials. Tangibles are used by firms to convey image and signal quality [62]. Refers to the physical facilities and equipment that was provided to the customers, such as reading area, relaxation area, book shelf , toilet and other facilities. Besides that, the personnel was include in this item.

Empathy:

  Empathy is defined as the "caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customer [62]. The customer is treated as if they are unique and special. They are several ways that empathy can be provided : knowing the customer's name, their preferences and their needs. Many small companies use the ability to provide customized services as a competitive advantage over the larger firms. [62]. Provision of individualized care and attention to customers when the customers need any helps. For example, when the customers at the library need more attention to the services the staff will have the ability to understand their needs without acknowledge them.

Responsiveness:

  According to Zeithaml *et al.,* [62], responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. This dimension is concerned with dealing with the customer's request, questions and complaints promptly and attentively. Companies must look at responsiveness from the point of the customer rather than the company's perspective [62].

Methodology:

  This study looks at the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction at a library in one of public university in Malaysia. To measure the degree of relationship, five independent variables involved such as Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness using the SERVQUAL model based on survey method to collect the detailed information. Self administered questionnaire is used in this survey to collect the related data to find out the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Secondary data is collected and analyzed from the available literature and previous research studies to build the foundation for the hypotheses. For this quantitative study, various statistical tests are performed with the usage of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 20.0 to interpret the result of data. According to Sekaran [50], sample size is the actual number of elements to be concluded in the study to represent the population characteristics. The library's customers was include all the registered student, employees and the outsiders who register as a member of the library. For the active students that was registers, it was about 31,847 student and for the employees was 3,417 people and 18 register as a member. However, according to Krejcie and Morgan [33] table, the sample that should be collect from the respondent it about 380 respondent. To analyse the level of service quality, reliability analysis was use to test internal consistency of reliability of group items analysis of the instruments. It followed by analyzed about the correlation between both variables, independent variables (reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness) and depend variable (customer satisfaction).

  Diagram 1 below shows the relationship between service quality to customer satisfaction. This study involves five variable. Five variables are the independent and one is depend variable. Independent variable consist of five dimensions of service quality namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. On the other hand, the independent variable is the customer satisfaction. This model will describe the relationship of two variables and this proposed model will give better understanding either the relationship will affect directly on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. The model presented a situation that service quality is a focused evaluation that reflects the customer's perception of reliability, assurance, tangible, empathy and responsiveness, and while satisfaction is more inclusive and it is influenced by perceptions of service quality, image,loyalty and customer expectation .
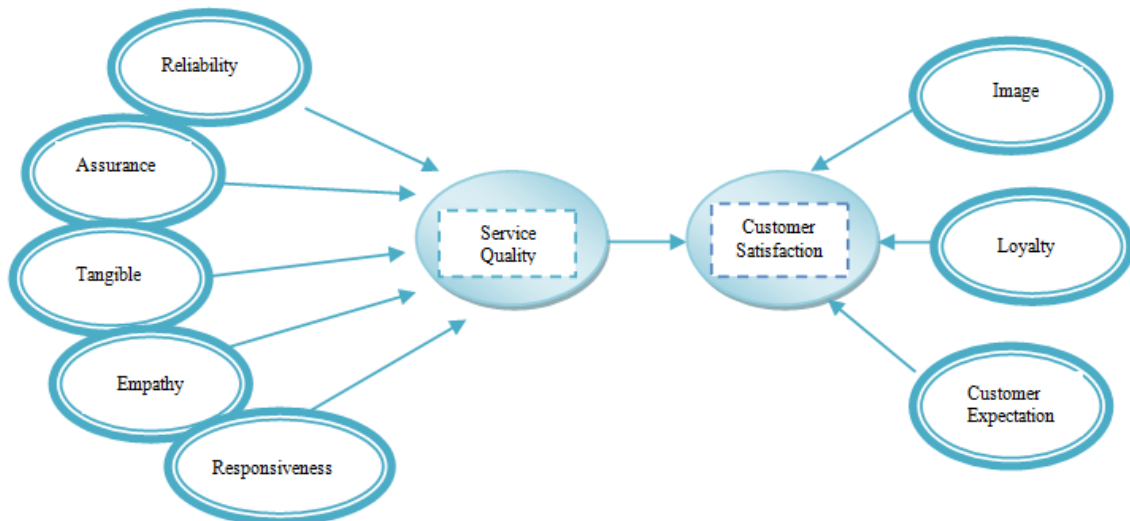
Conclusion:

Diagram 1:

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