

The Relationship between Perceived Service Quality and Fishermen Satisfaction

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Abstract

Nowadays each and every organization put their eyes on ensuring and enhancing the service quality, since they believe that customers perceived service quality and their satisfaction take a crucial role in achieving their goals. Even today, these two constructs are known as popular topic and still there is a need to check the constructs in different areas. Thus, the current research attempted to investigate the relationship between the fishermen perceived service quality and their satisfaction towards the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource in Sri Lanka. For this purpose, there were 150 fishermen selected for the study and interview and questionnaires methods were used to collect the data. The study adopted univariate as well bivariate analysis. There were six hypotheses formulated for the study and as per the analysis, all six null hypotheses were rejected, as a result all alternative hypotheses were accepted. Thus, the study supported the findings that there is a positive significant association between fishermen' perceived service quality and their satisfaction. Also the current study found that there are positive correlations among the dimensions of fishermen' perceived service quality and their satisfaction where responsiveness and empathy were highly influenced on fishermen' satisfaction.

Keywords: Perceived Service Quality, Fishermen' satisfaction, Dimensions of Service Quality, SERVQUAL

1. Background of the study

The services sector takes a vital role in each and every economy, no matter whether the nation is developed or developing. As per Ahmed *et al.* (2010), the services sector is an indispensable player of most contemporary economies.

Nowadays Service quality and customer satisfaction have become the top concepts in marketing, since it is proved that without these concepts, the smooth operations of marketing cannot be run. Moreover, these concepts have been studied in many previous researches (Sasser *et al.* 1978; Lehtinen and Lehtinen, 1982). They suggested that it was very hard to measure the service quality from the customer point of view than assessing good quality, since the perceived service quality needs to be judged by each consumer expectation. Satisfaction can also be a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment that results from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome with their expectations (Kotler and Keller, 2009, p. 789).

It is obvious that public sector in any country has more responsibilities towards the essential services for their citizens. Sri Lanka is one of the developing countries that provides a huge number of services including free education, free health services, financial services to the small medium entrepreneurs etc. in order to boost the country's economy. In this regard, fishing industry in Sri Lanka is one of the effective foundations in economy which plays a crucial role in the countries' activities.

According to Randall and Senior (1994) and Robinson (2003) public sector organizations have been forced to enhance the service quality and to improve efficiencies. Therefore, even the government organization cannot ignore the service quality, since it has an impact on all other constructs. In this regard, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource run is for providing better services for fishermen. However, the question remains "whether there is a relationship between fishermen service quality and their satisfaction". Therefore, the current study attempted to answer this question.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Service Quality

Quality is an important concept for consumers (Solomon 2009, p. 413). Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) defined service quality as "the overall evaluation of a specific service firm that results from comparing that firm's performance with the customer's general expectations of how firms in that industry should perform". Later he defined the Service quality as "the customers' evaluation of the expectation with actual service performance" (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1994).

According to Taylor and Huneter (2002) the perceived service quality leads to favourable business outcome including customer satisfaction, favourable marketing, behaviours, such as repurchases and positive word-of-mouth of customers.

Parazuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988) proposed five dimensions of service which are; reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangibility and these are still widely used in researches.

Additionally, SERVQUAL model was the most popular service quality model which was developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), even though it got some criticisms (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

2.2 Customer satisfaction

Customer is the person who engages in buying of the products whereas the consumer is the person who ultimately consumes the product (Solomon, 2009). When a customer is contented with either the services it is termed satisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Moreover, they brought the meaning of satisfaction as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment that results from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome with their expectations. According to Schiffman & Karun (2004) it is defined as "the individual's perception of the performance of the products or services in relation to his or her expectations".

2.3 Service quality and customer satisfaction

Various studies have examined the relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. As per previous findings, service quality influences relative attitude and satisfaction with department stores (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000).

Service quality has had an impact on satisfaction in non-profit organization as well. As example, in the study of Bennett & Barkensjo (2005) for the purpose of finding the relationship among quality, relationship marketing, and client perceptions in charitable organizations, it found that the SERVQUAL approach is indeed applicable within the non-profit domain (Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005). The findings has coincided the findings of Negi (2009) told that reliability and satisfaction were important factors to assess service quality and further they stuy suggested that tangibles, empathy and assurance should not be neglected when evaluating perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.

Ahmed et al., (2010) conducted a mediation of customer satisfaction relationship between service quality and repurchase intentions for the department sector among university students, with SERVQUAL model's 5 dimensions (tangibles, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and reliability) by Parasuraman et al. (1988) to measure service quality. It is confirmed that measuring service quality on customer satisfaction still working in any contexts.

3. Methodology

The main concepts were taken from the well-established literature. Therefore it ensures the content validity. Dimensions of the service quality were adopted from SERVQUAL model which was developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) and it is still the most widely used instrument and thus confirmed the content validity (Carman, 1990; Bolton and Drew, 1991). Moreover, the current research instrument were satisfied its reliability, since service quality and fishermen's satisfaction were accounted the Cronbach Alpha as 0.874 and 0.825 respective and these values were above the threshold (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The Table 1 illustrates the conceptual model for the current along with its hypotheses.

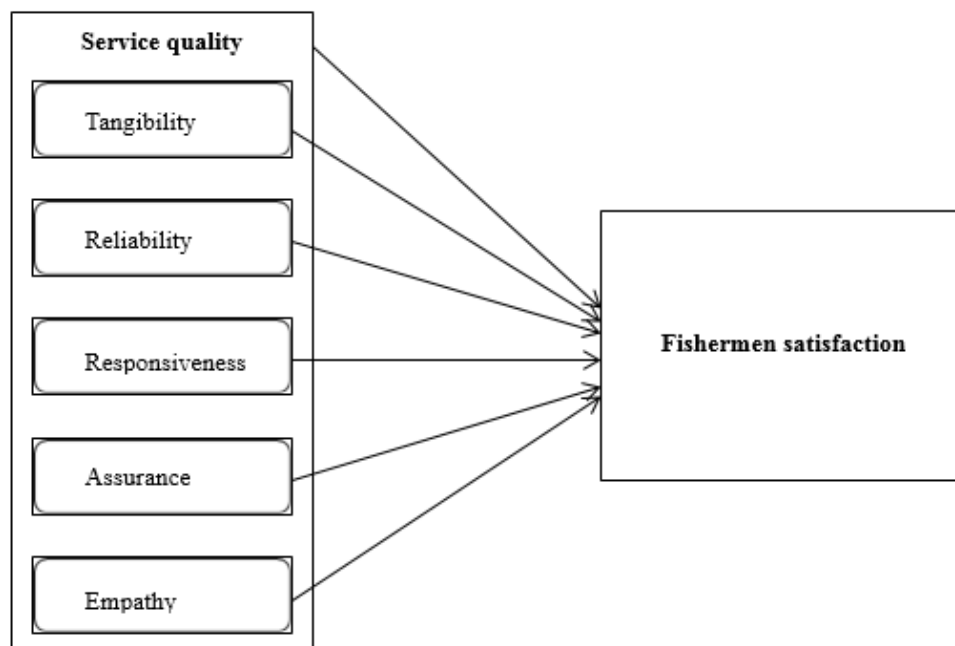


Figure 1. Conceptual model

The following hypotheses were developed in order to test the relationship between the constructs.

H₁: There is a positive significant relationship between fishermen' perceived service quality and their satisfaction.

H₂: There is a positive significant relationship between tangibility and fishermen satisfaction.

H₃: There is a positive significant relationship between reliability and fishermen satisfaction.

H₄: There is a positive significant relationship between responsiveness and fishermen satisfaction.

H₅: There is a positive significant relationship between assurance and fishermen satisfaction.

H₆: There is a positive significant relationship between empathy and fishermen satisfaction.

According to Sekaran (2007) population is the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. The necessary requirement in the sample choice is that the selected samples must reflect the whole population's intentions. In the current study sample was limited to 150 fishermen from all divisional Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource office in Sri Lanka and stratified sampling technique was used to identify the sample of the study. Since the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) reported as 0.575, it is acceptable as it exceeded its threshold value of 0.5 (Kaiser, 1974).

Interviews and questionnaires methods were used to collect data and the researcher had to read put the questions to the illiterate interviewees and go their responses. All 150 questionnaires were still usable for the current study.

4. Data analysis and Data Presentation

4.1 Descriptive statistics

As per the data analyzed, the mean values of Fishermen perceived service quality and their satisfaction were 3.69 and 3.39 respectively. The fishermen were highly impressed with the service quality and they were moderately satisfied. The Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of these constructs.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation

Constructs	Mean	Standard deviation
Perceived service quality	3.69	0.37
Fishermen' satisfaction	3.39	0.50

Table 3: Level of perceived service quality of the fishermen

Level of Perceived service quality	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Moderate level	45	30
Higher level	105	70
Total	150	100

As shown in Table 3, 70% of the respondents were highly perceived with the service quality and the rest were moderately perceived with the service quality.

Table 4: Level of fishermen's satisfaction

Level of Customer satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
Lower level	5	3.3
Moderate level	83	55.3
Higher level	62	41.3
Total	150	100

As per Table 4, 41.3% of the respondents were highly satisfied, whereas 55.3% of the respondents were moderately satisfied. And only 3.3% of the respondents showed the lower level of satisfaction.

4.2 Correlational analysis

Table 5 shows the Pearson correlation between perceived service quality and fishermen satisfaction. It was found that there was a strong positive relationship between the two constructs, since the coefficient of correlation (r) was 0.588 which as significant at 0.01 (2-tailed).

Table 5. Correlation between the perceived service quality and fishermen satisfaction

Constructs		Perceived Service quality	Customer Satisfaction
Perceived service quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.588**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	150	150
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.588**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6: Correlation between the dimensions of perceived service quality and fishermen satisfaction

Correlations		Customer Satisfaction
Perceived service quality		
Tangibility	Pearson Correlation	.293**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	.232**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.552**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Assurance	Pearson Correlation	.438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.419**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 illustrates the correlations among the dimensions of perceived service quality and fishermen satisfaction. From the table, it is clearly understood that all the dimensions of perceived service quality were significantly correlated with fishermen satisfaction, where responsiveness shows the highest correlation between fishermen' satisfaction (0.552), followed by assurance (0.438), empathy (0.419), tangibility (0.293) and reliability (0.232).

As per Table 7, the regression equation is

$$SQ = 0.598 + 0.784FS$$

Where, SQ is service quality and FS is fishermen' satisfaction.

Table 7: Summary of regression, ANOVA and coefficient analysis

R	.588 ^a
R Square	.346
Adjusted R Square	.341
Std. Error of estimate	.406
F change	78.242
Sig F change	.000 ^a
DF1	1
DF2	148
Sum of Squares	37.205
B constant	.598
B- PMS	.784
Standardized coefficient beta	.588
T	1.818
T sig	0.000

Predictors: (Constant), service quality

The b value of the equation, the gradient of the regression is 0.784 which is significant at 1% (sig. t=0.000). As indicated by adjusted R², 34.1% of the variance of fishermen' satisfaction was explained by their perceived service quality with the standard beta of 0.588.

4.3 Hypotheses testing

A hypothesis is a reasonable assumption which is being tested in the study. The hypotheses were tested using the results of Pearson's Product Movement Correlation Analysis and the results of regression analysis. The alternative hypothesis were concerned with positive relationship (H_A >0), two tail test was used in the correlation analysis.

H₁: There is a positive significant relationship between fishermen' perceived service quality and their satisfaction.

As per the result of the Pearson's Product Movement Correlation analysis between fishermen' perceived service quality and their satisfaction, the correlation coefficient was 0.588, which was significant at the p- value of 1%. Moreover, according to the regression analysis, the regression coefficient (b) was 0.784 which was significant at 1% (sig. t 0.000). Therefore, both test rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis, since according to r>0, b>0 there was a positive significant relationship between fishermen perceived

service quality and their satisfaction.

H₂: There is a positive significant relationship between tangibility and fishermen's satisfaction.

The correlation coefficient was 0.293, which was significant at the p-value of 1% between tangibility and fishermen satisfaction. Since $r > 0$, $b > 0$, there was a positive significant association between tangibility and fishermen satisfaction.

H₃: There is a positive significant relationship between reliability and fishermen's satisfaction.

As per the analysis, the correlation coefficient was 0.232, which was significant at the p-value of 1% and it led to the rejection of null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, it was found that there was a positive correlation among reliability and fishermen satisfaction.

H₄: There is a positive significant relationship between responsiveness and fishermen satisfaction.

There was a positive significant relationship between responsiveness and fishermen satisfaction found hence the null hypothesis was rejected due to the fact that correlation coefficient was 0.552, which was significant at the p-value of 1%.

H₅: There is a positive significant relationship between assurance and fishermen satisfaction.

As per the results, the correlation coefficient was 0.438, which was significant at the p-value of 1% between assurance and fishermen satisfaction. Therefore, null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted since $r > 0$, $b > 0$.

H₆: There is a positive significant relationship between empathy and fishermen satisfaction.

The correlation coefficient was 0.419 between empathy and fishermen satisfaction. Since $r > 0$, $b > 0$, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted. As a result, it was found that there is a positive relationship between these constructs.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The current study found that there is a significant positive relationship between fishermen perceived service quality and their satisfaction. Hence, it can be said that higher the perceived service quality, the higher the fishermen satisfaction.

Moreover, the study reveals that fishermen were highly perceived the service quality and they were moderately satisfied with services provided by Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource. The study also points out that 70% of the respondents were highly perceived with the service quality and the rest were moderately perceived with the service quality. On the other hand, 55.3% of the fishermen moderately satisfied and 41.3% of the respondents showed higher level of satisfaction towards the department.

Furthermore, the results of the study show that all the dimensions of perceived service quality significantly correlated with fishermen satisfaction. However, responsiveness shows the highest correlation between fishermen satisfaction than the other dimensions namely assurance, empathy, tangibility and reliability.

The current study findings coincide with the findings of previous studies (Wang & Hing-Po, 2002; Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005) in checking the association between the perceived service quality and customer satisfaction in different context. Thus, it can be concluded that better perceived service quality leads to enhance fishermen satisfaction towards the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource in Sri Lanka.

6. Limitations and future research

Even though, the study provides more insights into perceived service quality and customer satisfaction, it still provides a pathway for future research. Mainly, the objective of the study was to examine the relationship between the constructs among fishermen in Sri Lanka. However, it did not cover other beneficiaries from other service departments. Future studies may focus on for-profit as well as for not-for-profit organizations. Moreover, the current study used SERVQUAL model of Parasuraman et al. (1988). It would be valuable to conduct a future study comparing the results of the current study with those that used other acceptable measures of service quality.

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