
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY OF CCEs AND ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONING VARIABLES IN INDIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT:

Current study is an attempt to contribute to the growing body of knowledge of linkage studies which work at establishing links between organizational functioning variables and organizational outcomes. This research explores the relationship between organizational outcome i.e. service quality and two organizational functioning variables i.e. job satisfaction and organizational commitment of customer-contact employees (CCE), in the hotel industry. This study expands the organizational commitment to include normative and continuance commitment, the two neglected aspects of commitment in marketing of services literature. To measure organizational functioning variables data was collected from 150 CCEs and to measure organizational outcome variables, data was collected from 150 customers, with help of structured self administered questionnaires. Data analysis was done using correlation and regression analysis. Results of the study highlight that hypothesis of Linkages applies to this relationship based industry as well. However the interesting output of the study was the relation between service quality and normative commitment. These results highlight that, if managed properly, in a high relationship based service industry like hotel industry, human resource could be a source of core competence and inimitability through competitive ambiguity. Research results further suggests that service companies should develop human resource strategies for normative commitment targeted at younger and well educated people CCE.

Keywords: *Service quality, SERVPERF, Job satisfaction, Organizational Commitment.*

Introduction:

In service industry customer satisfaction tends to be a function of a customer's perception of services received, attitude and behavior of the individuals providing the service (Lovelock, 1983; Rust & Oliver, 1994)). Researchers in the past have found service quality to be strongly related to customer loyalty, retention and profitability (Curasi & Norman, 2002; Taylor S.A. & Baker T.L., 1994). It is due to this relationship that, in the present competitive landscape, service quality has become one of the most important dimensions of doing business.

Service delivery is a process where customer satisfaction depends upon customers' evaluation of performance of service provider during the process. The performance evaluation is further made difficult by unique characteristics of services i.e. intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability (Parasuraman,

Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Furthermore, this process performance has been found to be dependent upon variables like climate and encounters (Schmit & Allscheid, 1995; Siehl, Bowen, & Pearson, 1992); attitudes and behavior of the service provider (Burke, Borucki, & Hurley, 1992; Schneider, Gunnarson, & Niles-Jolly, 1994); value of the firm (Muse, Rutherford, Sharon, & Raymond, 2005). It is due to this complexity and multiplicity of variables which influences the service quality and customer satisfaction that practitioners follow a varying degree of relationship based approach to doing. It was within this backdrop that the current study was undertaken to explore the relation of the above mentioned influencers with service performance in a true relationship based industry. This is a less explored aspect especially from the perspective of both customers and service providers.

Employees: Customer Contact Employees

Inseparability and heterogeneity characteristics of services (Parasuraman, et al., 1985) necessitate that the customer be the part of the consumption process and have direct contact with the service provider at multiple points. This simultaneous process has two major implications for the service industry. One because of visibility of the process, imitation of the process is very real threat and second the consumer and employee behavior influences the production process (Muse, et al., 2005).

This for service provider means that the employees in the service process especially the ones on front stage, one performing in the front of the customer, become very important components of customers' service quality perception. In these industries not only the attitude and behavior of the CCE's (Bowen & Schneider, 1985), but also his emotional state (Anderson, 2006) while providing the service, becomes important in establishing customer perception of quality. The importance of behavior of CCEs can be further highlighted from the fact that many researchers have found lack of positive behavior of CCEs to be the reason for failure of service firms (Bitner, 1990). If managed properly these CCEs can lead to customer satisfaction and be a source of competitive advantage.

Marketing of services literature discusses management of CCEs from three perspectives i.e. manager employee interface, employee role interface and the employee customer interface (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996). However the literature does not explore the relationship of organizational functioning on the functioning of the CCEs and its relationship with the customer judgment of quality. Therefore, the current study has been undertaken to specifically determine the relationship of organizational functioning on service quality of customer contact employees.

Job satisfaction & Organizational Commitment

During review of literature two variables seem to dominate the organizational functioning side of the equation. First was found to be job satisfaction. Job satisfaction as emotional response of an employee to a job situation, has received the most

attention of all work-related attitudes (Mathieu J.E. & Zajac D.M., 1990; Sharma & Jyoti, 2009). Researchers while researching this aspect in various industries have established relationship between job satisfaction and performance (Kogers Daniel K., 2001; Ostroff Cheri, 1992). In past, enough research has been conducted to establish that job satisfaction influences the attitude, behavior and performance of the employee.

However, in recent literature stress is shifting from job satisfaction to another dimension of organizational functioning i.e. organizational commitment (Randall Donna M., Fedor Donald B., & Longenecker C. O., 1990). Organizational commitment is defined as an individual's belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values and his/her willingness to exert effort toward organizational goal accomplishment and strong desire to maintain organizational membership (Balfour & Barton, 1996; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Organizational commitment has three dimensions i.e. Affective commitment -- which refers to the employee's emotional attachment, identification with and involvement in the organization; Normative commitment -- which relates to the employee's feelings of obligation to stay with the organization and continuance commitment – the commitment based on the costs that the employee associates with leaving the organization (Hackett Rick D., Byci Peter, & Hausdorf Peter A., 1994; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Therefore, review of literature found that researchers in the past have found that various aspects of organizational commitment and job satisfaction influence the employee attitude, behavior and performance. Marketing literature has also studied this relationship but the aspect of organizational commitment has been limited to affective commitment. Relationship based industries are unique from transactional based service industries because firstly, in a relationship based industry time and effort is spent in understanding the customer. Then effort is made by whole value chain and specifically CCEs to make each transaction successful. It is within this background that current study was undertaken. The study aims to study the relationship of job satisfaction and employee commitment on the service quality of CCEs in such a relationship based industry i.e. hotel industry.

Conceptual Model.

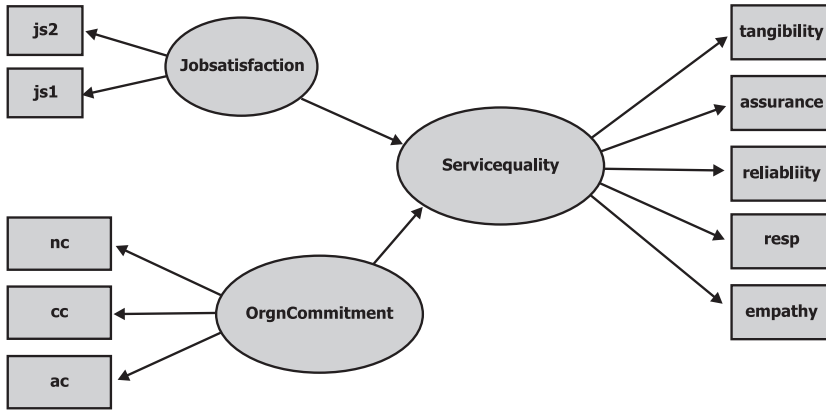
Based on review of literature a conceptual model was framed (figure 1). The literature suggests that there are likely many independent and situation specific relationships among the major variables. Therefore, following organizing framework is being tested, this would help in summarizing and illustrating relationships hypothesized in this study.

Hypothesis of the Study

Following hypothesis were proposed for the study

H1 : There is a significant relationship between service quality and job satisfaction

H1a : There is a significant relationship between tangibility and job satisfaction.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

H1b : There is a significant relationship between assurance and job satisfaction

H1c : There is a significant relationship between reliability and job satisfaction

H1d : There is a significant relationship between responsiveness and job satisfaction

H1e : There is a significant relationship between empathy and job satisfaction

H2 : There is a significant relationship between service quality and organizational commitment

H2a : There is a significant relationship between tangibility and organizational commitment.*

Similarly H2a1,H2a2, H2a3 hypothesis were made for three dimensions of Organizational commitment and H2b,H2c,H2d, and H2e were made for other dimensions of service quality across organization commitment with H2b2,H2b3 etc being for sub dimensions of organizational commitment.

Research Methodology

In the current study job satisfaction and the three components of organizational commitment were treated as independent variables and service quality as the dependent variable. Data was collected for this descriptive study with help of two sets of self-administered structured questionnaires, one filled by CCEs and second by customers of those hotels. The final questionnaires were distributed to 200 employees and 250 customers in the four hotels in Chandigarh region. 150 questionnaires from employees and 150 questionnaires from customers were received back yielding in response rate of 75 percent for employees and 60 percent for customers. To maintain representatives of the employees a count of employees was taken from the human resources of the hotel. The sample comprised 58 per cent (87) males and 42 per cent (63) females. 72 per cent (108) of the employees were in the age group 18-25 years, while, 28 per cent (42) of the employees were in the age group 26-40 years. Overall, a similar distribution of employees was found in four hotels. Sample of customers comprised of 60 percent males and 40 percent females from age group of 20-60 yrs.

Figure 2: Outline of research methodology

Type of Research					
Exploratory		Descriptive (relationship between Service quality and Job satisfaction and Organizational Commitment)		Causal	
Sample Selection					
Non Probability Judgmental Sampling		Probability Sampling			
Classification of Data					
Primary Data		Secondary Data			
Data Collection Method					
Questionnaire SERVPERF,JS,OC	Archival Records	Interviews	Direct Observation	Participant Observation	Physical Artifacts
Data Analysis					
Correlation, Regression					

Psychometric Properties

The data was collected, from the customers, with help of an customized adapted instrument which used items from SERVPERF (Cronin & Taylor, 1994) for measuring service quality across five sub dimensions i.e. reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness. The data from employees was collected with help of a questionnaire which used Hackman and Oldham's (1975) Job Diagnostic Survey measure to measure job satisfaction and Meyers 1993 three-component scale of affective, normative and continuance commitment to measure organizational commitment. These instruments were adapted based on feedback received during pre testing of the questionnaires. The survey instruments were written in English and were pre-tested on 10 CCEs and 10 customers from two hotels in Chandigarh, which were not part of the final sample. Exploratory factor analysis was done to adapt the scales. The final instrument had 6 items to measure AC, 6 to measure CC, 6 to measure NC, 2 to measure Job satisfaction and 15 to measure service quality along with close ended questions to measure demographic variables.

As the instruments were adapted an in-depth analysis was undertaken to test psychometric properties of the scale. Following previous research (Kostova & Roth, 2002) the analysis of the psychometric properties of the instrument included analysis of its content and face validity, reliability and factor structure. The internal consistency method (using Cronbach coefficient alpha) was used to examine the reliability of the scale. According to works of Nunnally, 1978, for purpose of basic research, a Cronbach alpha of 0.70 or higher is sufficient (Nunnally, 1978). Cronbach alpha for the adopted scale met this limit. It was found that Cronbach alpha values for all three

constructs was higher than .70 i.e. OC = .780, JS = .712, SQ = .877. Each construct is measured using multiple 5-point Likert scale. Face validity and content validity of the instrument and its items was concluded by various researchers with experience in conducting survey research via the pretests. Several methods were used to control the potential biases associated with the survey method. One such method was interviews through snow balling sampling. Due to the importance placed on inter-personal relationships and social capital in India, and in other emerging markets (Hitt, Ho-Uk, & Yucel, 2002), the use of social or business network connection, was expected to help mitigate this risk of lack of honesty in responses. Data collected was analyzed using correlation, regression and chi square tests.

To check the validity of applying the parametric or non parametric tools, the data was tested for assumption of normality. Shapiro Wilk test was used to do exploratory data analysis and to test for assumption of normality. The results of the test highlighted that p values for all the variables except JS was more than 0.05. As data analysis was to be done dimension wise and for overall service quality analysis was re run for overall dimension and it was found that the p value was > .05. Hence the null hypothesis of the Shapiro Wilk test i.e. the data is normally distributed, was accepted, highlighting that the current set of data was normally distributed and hence fulfilled the assumption of normality for parametric test. Therefore, parametric tests for correlation and regression were done.

Table 1 : Tests of Normality

Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Sig.
resp	.956	.585
reliability	.956	.146
assurance	.936	.117
tangibility	.966	.317
empathy	.920	.600
sqlty15	.981	.059
ac	.938	.132
cc	.986	.129
nc	.953	.576
js	.946	.040
oc	.950	.329

Findings and Discussion

Correlation Analysis was done to test empirically the relationship between five dimensions of Service quality and Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Normative Commitment and Job Satisfaction. Results of the study highlighted that service quality was significantly correlated with both the dimensions of organizational functioning i.e. job satisfaction and organizational commitment (table 2). This led

to acceptance of H1 and H2. However, for more in-depth analysis the observed dimensions of the latent variables were individually analyzed. The results highlighted that dimensions of responsiveness ($r=0.342$), reliability ($r=0.374$), Assurance ($r=0.405$), Tangibility ($r=0.336$) and empathy ($r=0.457$) was significantly correlated to Job satisfaction. Therefore, leading to acceptance of H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d and H1e. The correlation results between service quality and job satisfaction were in accordance with previous researches which established that an increase in employee satisfaction increased their motivation to strive for service excellence (Chahal & Mehta, 2011; Gutek, Groth, & Cherry, 2002).

Further analysis indicated that out of the three dimension of Organization commitment, only normative commitment was significantly correlated to the five dimensions of service quality i.e. responsiveness ($r=0.322$), reliability ($r=0.325$), assurance ($r=0.206$), tangibility ($r=0.322$) and empathy ($r=.292$). Therefore, the results partially support hypothesis H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d and H2e. However, only normative commitment was significantly correlated to five dimensions of Service quality, thus we accept Hypothesis H2a1, H2b1, H2c1, H2d1 and H2e1. The results, of current study, further indicated Affective Commitment to be significantly correlated to continuance Commitment, Normative Commitment and Job Satisfaction. The correlation was found to be strong in case of Continuance Commitment ($r= 0.510$), moderate in case of Normative Commitment (0.400) and the correlation was weak between Affective commitment and Job Satisfaction ($r=0.255$).

Table 2: Correlation Results for predictor variables and service quality

		ac	cc	nc	js	oc
resp	Pearson Correlation	.098	.034	.322**	.342**	.181*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.235	.684	.000	.000	.027
reliability	Pearson Correlation	.098	.088	.325**	.374**	.206*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.231	.285	.000	.000	.011
assurance	Pearson Correlation	.083	.112	.206*	.405**	.164*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.310	.173	.011	.000	.045
tangibility	Pearson Correlation	.139	.095	.322**	.336**	.225**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.089	.248	.000	.000	.006
empathy	Pearson Correlation	.141	.107	.292**	.457**	.220**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.085	.191	.000	.000	.007
sqly15	Pearson Correlation	.117	.093	.330**	.411**	.218**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.152	.260	.000	.000	.007

However, the result highlighting correlation between service quality and normative commitment were contradictory to past research which as only considered affective commitment (Caruana Albert & Peter, 1998; Chahal & Mehta, 2011). In a research conducted on Call-centre employees Malhotra and Mukherjee indicated that affective job commitment had most significant impact on service quality, even more than job satisfaction (Malhotra Neeru & Mukherjee Avinandan, 2004). Based on this literature many companies in the past have centered their human resource policies on

affective commitment. This strategy might have worked in other industries but results of current study highlighted that in high relationship based industries normative part of organizational commitment was more important.

Regression Analysis

To further test the strength relationship across predictor variables and dependent variable stepwise regression analysis was done. The mathematical representation of research model for the above relationship is displayed as follows:

$$Y = \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \beta_nx_n$$

Where Y = Service Quality i.e. the dependent variable

X1, X2, X3, Xn = predictor variables. In present study these are Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment, Continuance Commitment and Job Satisfaction. $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_n$ Corresponding Beta coefficients of X1, X2, X3 and Xn

The model summary output for regression showed Model with one variable to explain the variation in service quality i.e. job satisfaction an adjusted r square = 0.21. Adjusted r square explains the variation explained by the model and therefore, model with 1 variables was interpreted. The results indicate that model 1 explains a moderate amount i.e. 21 percent of variation in the service quality. This prediction value of the model is on the lower side of the scale. However, services are a process based industry. Processes are inherently more difficult to patent and easier to imitate. Therefore, in service industries imitation is a reality (Claude R. Martin Jr & David A. Horne, 1993). Inimitability, if any, in this industry lies in lending causal ambiguity to the service process i.e. a competitors lack of understanding of why and how of the process. Organizational functioning variables, like job satisfaction and organizational commitment, are links that allow service companies to innovate and implement strategies faster and carry customer satisfaction across the value chain of a firm (Zeithaml, 2000). This linkage lends the value chain speed and a certain degree of complexity thereby rendering it difficult to imitate. Therefore, in such a competitive imitation based landscape 21 percent predictability based on organizational functioning variables could also go a long way in determining the competitive advantage in this industry.

A further analysis of ANOVA statistics revealed p value = .000 (F = 30.117, df = 1, Mean square = 8.713) i.e. p value was $p < 0.05$, therefore indicating that the null hypothesis of no linear relationship should be rejected and that only one of the independent variables was significant predictors of service quality.

Table3 : ANOVA

Model		Sum of quares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.713	1	8.713	30.117	.000
	Residual	42.817	148	0.289		
	Total	51.53	149			

The beta coefficients and the constant were used to create the prediction (regression) equation. For the second step, using variable model, regression equation becomes

$$Y = \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \beta_nx_n$$

$$\text{Predicted service quality} = 2.869 + 0.286 * \text{job satisfaction}$$

Table 4: Coefficients(a)

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.869	0.189		15.206	0.000		
	js	0.286	0.052	0.411	5.488	0.000	.987	.987

The t-test was evaluated to interpret the significance of b coefficient. P values for job satisfaction was $p = 0.000$. These p values were less than 0.05 highlighting that the independent variable is a significant predictor of the dependent variable i.e. job satisfaction is significant predictors of service quality. Tolerance value under collinearity was closer to one, indicating that multicollinearity was low.

For a conceptual measurement excluded variables were also evaluated. If all the variables are put into the equation then the model would read as

$$\text{Predicted service quality} = 2.869 + 0.286 * \text{job satisfaction} + 0.013 * \text{affective commitment} - 0.017 * \text{continuity commitment} + 0.167 * \text{normative commitment}.$$

Results of the excluded variables output table, highlighted that significance values i.e. p levels for none of these variables was significant and therefore, these variables were excluded from the equation. However, partial correlation value was highest for normative commitment (0.159). If we add the value back into the equation the model would read as

$$\text{Predicted service quality} = 2.869 + 0.286 * \text{job satisfaction} + 0.167 * \text{normative commitment}$$

Table 5: Excluded Variables

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Tolerance
1	ac	.013	0.172	0.864	0.014	0.935
	cc	-.017	-0.216	0.829	-0.018	0.931
	nc	.167	1.953	0.053	0.159	0.954

These 3 excluded variables are not significant and their p values were more than 0.05 however, normative commitment had beta whose value was close to the independent variables included in the model. The Tolerance statistics, after adding the variable, was found to be nearer to one, indicating low multicollinearity and acceptability of the model. The results of the study highlight that variability in service quality can be predicted up to 21 percent with help of 2 predictor variables i.e. job satisfaction and

normative commitment. Therefore, only two variables of organizational functioning add to competitive dimensions of a service i.e. job satisfaction and normative commitment.

Therefore, in the study we found Job satisfaction and Organizational commitment to be significantly correlated to service quality. An analysis across observed dimensions indicated that Service quality was influenced by only normative commitment. Study accepts H1 and partially accepts H2. Within these results support H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d and H1e and in H2 these results support accept Hypothesis H2a1, H2b1, H2c1, H2d1 and H2e1.

Conclusion

Results of the study indicated that service quality depends on 2 variables i.e. job satisfaction and normative commitment. Normative commitment was found to have strong relationship with affective and continuance commitment. These results were contradictory to past research conducted by Caruana Albert & Peter, 1998 and ; who higlighted only role of affective commitment. To target normative commitment, in customer contact employees, a service provider needs to target job characteristics such as task significance, autonomy, identity, skills variety and perceived organizational support or dependence, and the degree that employees are involved in the goal-setting and decision-making processes. Therefore the results of the study imply that in a relationship based industry the human resource managers to should target normative commitment and job satisfaction strategies and recruit younger employees as CCEs with good educational qualification. This would help the CCEs to place the customer interest before any personal goals. Therefore, due to unique characteristics of relationship based service industries the traditional managerial functions need to be altered. This would help improve the service quality of CCEs and also allow these companies to compete on a Global level.

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