Role of Servqual Dimensions in Evaluating the Service Quality of Fast Food Restaurants in the Rural Kashmir

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Abstract

One of the most significant factors for the growth, success and decline of a service firm is the quality of services provided. It is certainly a key element that ensures the survival of a service provider in the aura of stringent competition. Service quality as a subject of research gained popularity due to its attribute of being qualitative. In reference to the fast food restaurant industry, service quality manifests itself to be the most significant factor responsible for the survival and prosperity of a fast food restaurant. Moreover, it plays a crucial role in customer retention which ultimately leads to brand loyalty, thus profitability. This study was intended to evaluate the quality of services offered by the fast food restaurants operating in the rural parts of Kashmir. Furthermore, the course of this study was based on the Servqual model of service quality developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988). Simple random sampling was conducted through a self-administered questionnaire developed on the blueprint of the original Servqual research instrument provided with a five point Likert-type scale. The research instrument was found to be internally consistent and reliable with the help of reliability analysis using spss. The sample size for the study was 250 but the response of 218 respondents was considered for analysis. Data analysis was performed through a reliable statistical tool IBM spss. A comprehensive customer satisfaction was recorded by this study yet the quality remained below par in certain service quality dimensions. It was suggested that certain corrective measures would be helpful for increasing the service quality equally on all the five dimensions of Servqual model. Moreover, it was concluded that Servqual model of service quality is so far the most reliable and suitable tool for measuring customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Fast Food, GAP Model, Likert scale, Rural Kashmir, Service Quality.

Overview

According to Philip Kotler, "Service is any act or performance that one party can offer to another and that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything" (Kotler, 2000). It is not just an action performed, but it is a reciprocation of skills, abilities and knowledge against a fair remuneration. Put together, a service is a desirable action or effort discharged to gratify a need or to clinch a demand. Services possess varied attributes such as perishability, which portends that unlike products, services cannot be stashed well ahead of time which makes it necessary that suitable plans must be undertaken so as to stretch a proper balance between the demand side and the supply of the services. Another attribute of the services is inseparability which is sometimes called as simultaneity represents that in order for the services to be consumed, both the provider and the consumer must be present at the same time. In essence, for a consumer to receive a haircut, both the barber and the consumer must be present at the time of service consumption. Similarly, variability means that a service can vary from one provider to the other or from one service encounter to the other with the same person or different. Lastly, intangibility manifests that services do not possess the tangible or physical qualities like products. In other words, services being intangible, could not be touched, seen, felt or heard before their acquisition (Pena, Silva, Tronchin, & Melleiro, 2013).

Although, service functions are the primary and significant components of every industry (Commun., 2000), the service sector is associated with the production of services only and not the goods. In the $63 trillion world GDP the contribution of services sector was approximately 68percent in the year 2001 (Economic Survey, 2010-12). The service industry, be it travel, leisure, entertainment or finance embraces activities requiring interaction and involvement between humans and machines. The services sector acts as the primary driver responsible for the growth of both developed and developing economies (Uwitonze & Heshmati, 2016). The findings of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) argued that the services sector works as the boulevard in the process of transforming the economies since there is no competitive advantage pertaining to the manufacturing sector

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in all the countries of the world (UNECA, 2015). The development of economy through the ambit of services sector is the exclusive path to promote structural economic adjustment and accelerating the growth of economy (Zhou, 2015). Thus, it could be concluded that irrespective of a particular economy or any nation, the services sector on a global context acts as a bridge that connects the economies with development and prosperity.

Being the fastest growing and the largest sector of Indian economy, services sector has the highest productivity in terms of labour (Mukherjee, 2013). India ranks among the top 10 World Trade Organisation members in service exports and imports.

Undoubtedly, service quality is a substantial ingredient of competition in varied markets, be it conventional service industries or manufacturing sectors. Ample studies have emphasised the relationship between the service quality and the competition amongst the service providing firms and their findings have revealed that the service quality tends to increase with the intensification of the competition (Mazzeo, 2003) (Olivares & Cachon, 2009). In this present global business scenario, the competition being intense, the high quality service delivery has been reckoned to be critically important for the success of the service organisations. Every single sector of the economy is under enormous duress to offer its customers high quality services. Referring to this, the needs and expectations of the customers too is changing at a meteoric velocity which as a consequence urges the service providers to make certain that they have varied courses of action in place which are meant to ensure that the dynamic preferences of the customers are met with efficacy (Todd & Greig, 2007).

Literature Review

Service & Services Sector

The services sector acts as the primary driver responsible for the growth of both developed and developing economies. This sector of the Indian economy has manifested a rapid growth with momentous contributions to the gross domestic product and foreign direct investments (Uwitonze & Heshmati, 2016). A swift development of services requiring specific skills in the field of information technology was solely responsible for the rise in the service sector output (lashmi & Kumar, 2012) (Das & Raut, 2014). Hotels and restaurants, banking, real estate, research and education, transport, electricity, medical and health, communications and many more comprise the services sector and a significant credit of the growth in this sector goes to the rapid urbanization. It is by virtue of urbanization that a huge workforce is supplied to the services industry that boosts its growth. Moreover, the rise in demand for intermediate and final consumer services also adds on to the growth of services sector. Services are boundlessly used by different people in every sphere of life. From education to entertainment, finance to fast food, travel to telephone, advertisement to amusement parks, and market research to maintenance services and so on. The tremendous growth of services sector has resulted in its increased importance in the world economies (Singh & Kaur, 2014).

Service Quality

Service quality is the perception of the customer after the act of purchasing the service (Parasuraman et al., 1994). It is the level of discrepancy between a consumer's perception and his expectations along the quality dimensions (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988), and the customers' overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of the organisation and its services (Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994). The service quality is a significant element in the services industry with the help of which various services can be differentiated. The more the quality of the service provided, the more satisfaction the customers derive (Gupta & Chen, 1995) (Getty & Getty, 2003) (Tsang & Qu, 2000). A high service quality delivered to customers offers businesses an opportunity to differentiate themselves in competitive markets (Yavas & Benkenstein, 2007). In the present global business scenario, the competition is being intense and therefore, the high quality service delivery has been reckoned to be critically important for the success of the service organisations. Every single sector of the economy is under enormous duress to offer its customers high quality services. The works of Juran & Deming predominantly proposed the concept that product planning and quality are the preconditions for customer satisfaction which eventually led to the foundation of ISO 9000 standards. A substantial understanding of service quality and its distinction from product quality was however proffered by the literature published in late 70's and early 80's. The expectations serve as standards with which subsequent experiences are compared, resulting in evaluations of satisfaction or quality (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1993). The belief that service quality is likely to be a powerful determinant of customer retention is by and large confirmed by the works (Cronin & Taylor, 1992), (Gundersen, 1996) (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000), Parasuraman et al. 1994, (Poon & Low, 2005). Hence, with service quality kept in sync the loyalty and customer retention ascends and in turn leads to business profitability.

Fast Food Restaurants & the Indian Food Service Industry

The fast food restaurants also known as fast food

restaurants include casual fast food restaurants and food trucks. Casual fast food restaurants offer the customers proper seating provisions. These casual fast food restaurants are a hybrid of classic counter-service fast food restaurants and traditional table service restaurants. On the other hand, food trucks are fast food restaurants on the wheels. These fast food outlets do not offer seating provisions. They are often parked outside the premises of various worksites, be it a factory, an office, an institution and the like. A number of studies have been conduct over the realms of time which have often dealt with service quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and likewise, in context of the fast food restaurants (Aaijaz & Ibrahim, 2011) (Wu, 2013) (Khan, Hussain, & Yaqoob, 2013) (Aftab, Sarwar, Sultan, & Qadeer, 2016) (Patabandige & Yapa, 2016). In reference to the global economic brotherhood, Indian economy has a remarkable position in the present day and has a seventh rank in terms of nominal gross domestic product whereas third rank in terms of purchasing power parity. As per the estimations, India will be one among the top three global economies by the financial year 2050 (Dabas & Lunawat, 2017). Food services have emerged as the indispensable segment of the Indian economy. In a report by National Restaurant Association of India, the comprehensive market size of the Indian food services industry was estimated to be worth INR 5.99 lakh crores in the year 2022-23, with a compounded annual growth rate of 9percent (NRAI, 2019).

SERVQUAL Model of Service Quality

Servqual is a service quality model developed by eminent researchers Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, (1988). Since its inception it has been widely put in use for various researches across the globe. Service quality, a multifaceted concept, is perceived and assessed by consumers in light of an assemblage of certain vital components which were initially grouped in ten categories and later in only five (Parasuraman et al., 1985; 1988). These vital components were known as the five dimensions of service quality and were proposed in the Servqual model. Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy are the five dimensions of Servqual model. This model is based on a multiple item scale which was intended to evaluate the service quality by analyzing the possible differences between customer perceptions of a firms' performance and customer expectations thereof. Servqual has actually been applied as a basis for evaluating the service quality in multiple contexts such as retail apparel speciality stores (Gagliano & Hathcote, 1994), higher education (Galloway, 1998), hospital services (Hwang, Eves, & Desombre, 2003), and health club services (Walker & Baker, 2000). With certain suitable modifications, Servqual scale has been over the periphery of time used by a number of researchers and practitioners to evaluate the service quality in their studies (Atilgan, Akinci, & Aksoy, 2003) (Devi & Ross, 2003). As argued by (Lewis & Booms, 1983), Servqual is the most widely used instrument for measuring the service quality. Similarly, (Bojanic & Rosen, 1994) have referred to Servqual as an unmatched tool for managerial actions. Many researchers such as (Akbaba, 2006), conducted a research to measure the service quality in the hotel industry in Turkey using Servqual model of service quality. His study validated the usefulness of Servqual scale in service quality measurement. According to… literature, service quality is important in reference to its affirmative correlation with customer satisfaction, customer retention and business patronage, costs, profitability and competitive advantage, and the Servqual model significantly contributes in assessing the same.

Reseach Gap

Despite of the fact that a number of studies have been carried out globally to evaluate the quality of services in various economic sectors, yet not much work in this aspect has been done in fast food sector especially in the state of Jammu & Kashmir, known to the best of my knowledge. As commonly acknowledged by the name Heaven on earth, the state of Jammu and Kashmir is a world renowned tourist destination with millions of tourists flying in from diverse parts of world every year. As a consequence, it has become a multi cultural hub with a great influence of diverse cultures of the world. In view of this, there has been a rise in the fast food restaurant culture in Jammu & Kashmir in the past few years. Therefore, it becomes quite essential to evaluate the service quality associated with the fast food restaurants operating in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In order to bridge this research gap, this study has taken up the errand to evaluate the service quality of the fast food restaurants operating in the rural parts of Kashmir.

Research Methodology

Objectives of the Study

The principle intent of the present study is to evaluate the role of the dimensions of service quality in determining the service quality in the fast food restaurants operating in the rural parts of Kashmir. Furthermore, this study aims at analyzing the aspects where the service quality could be enhanced further to achieve the maximum profit for the fast food restaurants. Moreover, this study will emphasize the differences between the expectations and the perceptions of the customers in context of these fast food restaurants. Detailed outlines of the objectives of this study are as follows:

Conduct an assessment of the perceptions and the expectations of customers with respect to the fast food restaurants in rural Kashmir.

Perform a GAP analysis to identify the differences between customer perceptions and expectations.

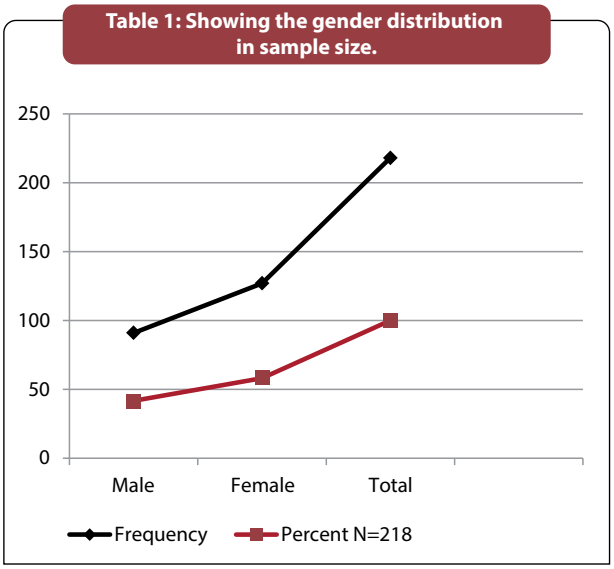
Determine the significance of service quality dimensions to find out which dimension influences service quality the most.

Sample Design & Data Analysis Techniques

The target population for this study was the people in the rural areas who have atleast visited a fast food restaurant once. The technique of sampling used in the present study was Snowball sampling technique which is a non probability sampling technique and is employed when the target population is difficult to locate. Responses from a total of 300 customers were collected from selected fast food restaurants through the questionnaire developed in consonance with the Servqual scale (Parasuraman et al., 1988). After a thorough revision, 218 questionnaires were finalized to be included in the research analysis of this study. Most researchers consider a sample size of 200–500 respondents adequate for most of management researches (Hill & Alexander, 2006; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

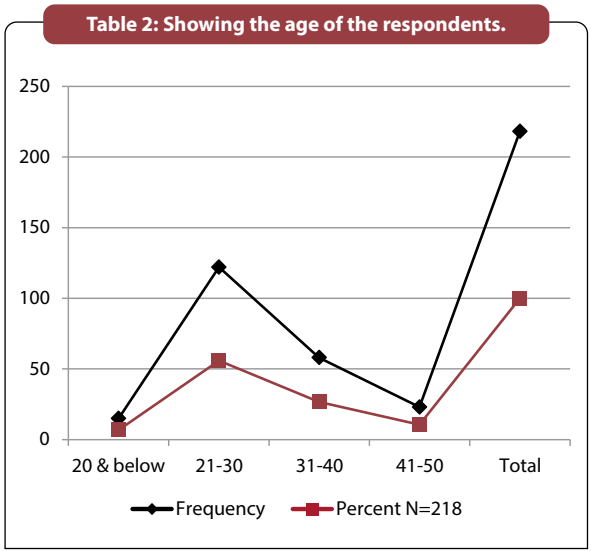
The data analysis techniques incorporated in the study were Cronbach's coefficient popularly known as Cronbach's α (alpha), Factor analysis, Pearson's correlation coefficient, statistical mean, gap analysis and t-test(2-tailed). As a part of the research analysis a frequency analysis was done for the purpose of examining the distribution of varied variables which are based on the demographic elements of the respondents such as gender, age, annual household income, occupation.

Table 1: Showing the gender distribution in sample size.



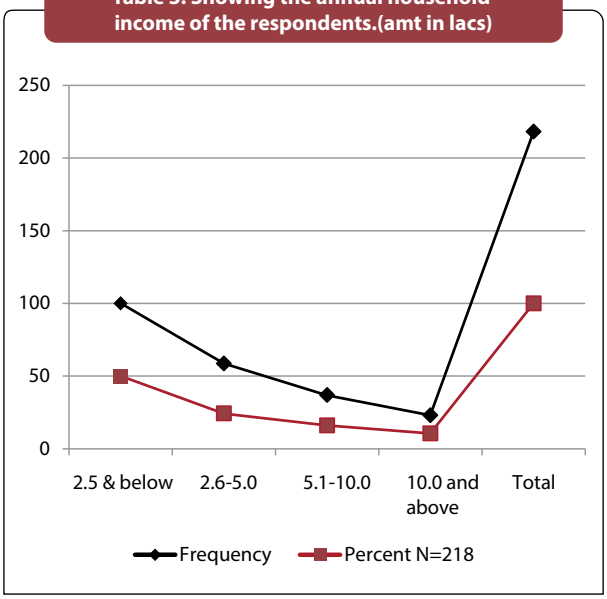
The above table 1 shows that 91 respondents were male forming approximately 42% of the sample size and 127 respondents were females forming approximately 58% of the sample size.

Table 2: Showing the age of the respondents.



The above table 2 shows that 15 respondents were of the age group of 20 and below, 122 respondents were of the age group of 21-30, 58 were in the third category and 23 in the fourth category respectively.

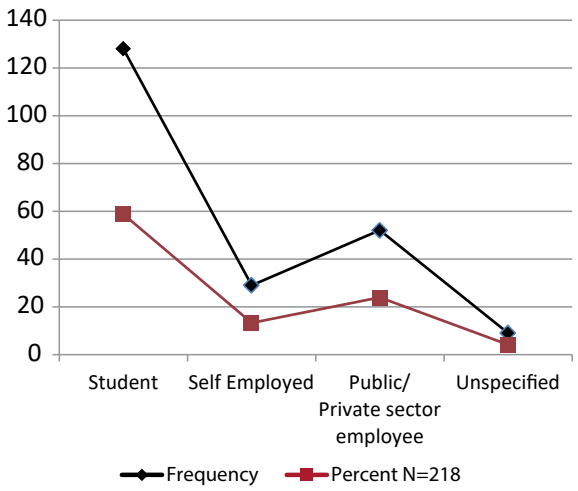
Table 3: Showing the annual household income of the respondents.(amt in lacs)



The table 3 above shows the annual income distribution of the respondents where approx. 47 percent of the respondents belonged to the income category of 2.5lacs and below. 26 percent of respondents belonged to the income category of 2.6lacs – 5.0lacs. 19 percent respondents belonged to the category of 5.1lacs – 10.0lacs and approximately 8 percent of the respondents were from the income level of more than 10.0lacs.

The table 4 above shows the profession of the respondents where 128 respondents were students, 29 respondents were self employed, 52 respondents were employees and 9 respondents chose not to share their profession forming approximately 59, 13, 24 asnd 4 percent of the sample size respectively.

Table 4: Showing the occupation of the respondents.



Data Analysis and Results

Test of Validity and Reliability

An internal consistency analysis known as Cronbach's – α was performed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the research instrument (questionnaire). The Cronbach's α reliability analysis was performed through statistical application software known as IBM SPSS (version 20). The value of the Cronbach's coefficient came out to be 0.928 for N of items 44.

Table 5: showing the Cronbach's coefficient for the overall questionnaire.

Cronbach's - α	N of items
.928	44

The Cronbach's coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater internal consistency. The accepted threshold for Cronbach's α is .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), however, even lower values (in the .60's) are common (Peterson, 1994).

Cronbach's – α was performed on each dimension individually and it was found that the values of Cronbach's coefficient in all the dimensions were more than the accepted threshold therefore validating the reliability and validity of the research instrument.

In order to evaluate if the data was significant and viable enough to be considered for factor analysis,

Table 6: showing the Cronbach's coefficient for the overall questionnaire.

Dimension	N of items	Cronbach's – α
Expectation		
Tangibles	5	.808
Reliability	4	.792
Responsiveness	4	.746
Assurance	5	.836
Empathy	4	.751
Perception		
Tangibles	5	.812
Reliability	4	.798
Responsiveness	4	.745
Assurance	5	.841
Empathy	4	.757

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy along with Bartlett's test of sphericity was performed.

Table 7: Showing KMO and Bartlett's test for factor analysis

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.699
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	571.230
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

The values above .60 in the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test are considered adequate for factor analysis whereas in this study the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test came out to be .699 which was quite more than the basic criterion. Along side of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test, the Bartlett's test of spherecity returned the results of .000 which is below the level of .01 considering the data significant enough for factor analysis.

The first objective of this study was to assess the perceptions and the expectations of the customers in the fast food restaurants in rural Kashmir with respect to the customer satisfaction they derived from the quality of the services provided. In the same context, statistical means of the perceived and expected service quality was calculated and through the calculated statistical means, the service quality gap analysis was performed on each variable individually so as to address the second objective of the study which was aimed at performing a gap analysis to observe the differences between the customer perceptions and the customer expectations in regard of the service quality provided by the fast food

restaurants. A detailed analysis of each dimension along with the detailed explanation follows as here under:

Table 8: Showing means of perception and expectation in tangibility with GAP score.

Tangibility			
Variables	Values		
	Perceived Mean	Expected Mean	GAP
1. The restaurant will be appealing in terms of its appearance and ambience. 1. The restaurant was appealing in terms of its appearance and ambience.	4.05	3.94	.11
2. All machines and equipments used would be of modern technology. 2. All machines and equipments used were of modern technology.	3.78	3.66	.12
3. The staff must be neatly dressed and following a professional dress code. 3. The staff was neatly dressed and followed a professional dress code.	4.02	3.89	.14
4. The restaurant will have neat and tidy washroom(s). 4. The restaurant had neat and tidy washroom(s).	4.14	3.95	.18
5. The restaurant will have an adequate and convenient parking facility. 5. The restaurant had adequate and convenient parking facility.	3.66	3.39	.28
AVERAGE TOTAL	**3.93**	**3.77**	**.16**

From the data analysis, it was observed as in the table above, that the perceived mean of every variable is on the higher side since the scale used had 1 as the lowest value and 5 as the highest. As was evident from the results above, variable one and variable four have the highest mean value in the perceptions and the expectations with values 4.05 and 3.95 respectively showing the high customer satisfaction. Further, variable five in both the perceptions and expectations shows a low mean representing a relatively lower customer satisfaction.

The gap analysis found out that there is a positive gap between all the variables of the tangibility dimension representing customer satisfaction. Since the more the gap score, higher will be the customer satisfaction, variable five showing the highest gap score at .28 whereas variable one with relatively lesser gap score at .11. It was thus found that the customers were satisfied with the overall tangibility dimension of the service quality.

In other words it could be inferred that the customers were satisfied with the appearance and ambience, use of modern equipments, aesthetic arrangement of the staff, cleanliness of washrooms and of course the convenience of the parking facility of the fast food restaurants.

Table 9: Showing means of perception and expectation in reliability with GAP score.

Reliability			
Variables	Values		
	Perceived Mean	Expected Mean	GAP
1. The requests of the customers would be honoured within a short time. 1. The requests of the customers were honoured within a short time.	3.93	3.77	.16
2. The staff would be readily available for any assistance of the customers. 2. The staff was readily available for any assistance of the customers.	4.20	3.93	.27
3. The services would be delivered within the exact time as committed. 3. The services were delivered within the exact time as committed.	3.68	3.55	.13
4. The staff would be dependable in terms of resolving problems if any. 4. The staff was dependable in terms of resolving problems if any.	3.74	3.68	.06
AVERAGE TOTAL	**3.89**	**3.73**	**.24**

Data analysis in the table above represents the output results regarding the reliability dimension of service quality. Likewise the tangibility, the reliability too displayed a positive correlation between the service quality and the customer satisfaction. From the results, it was inferred that the customers were satisfied the most with the assistance handling by the staff with the highest perceived service quality mean

of 4.20 followed by the time taken to honour the customer requests with perceived value of 3.93, then the dependency on the staff in case of problems with mean value of 3.74 and lastly with the exactness of time in which service was delivered to the customer with the perceived mean value of 3.68.

The gap analysis represented that with positive gaps throughout all the variables of the reliability dimension of service quality, it was inferred that the customers were satisfied with the overall reliability of the fast food restaurants in rural Kashmir.

From the above table exhibiting the data analysis results of the responsiveness dimension of the service quality, it was inferred that the customers were satisfied at the highest level with staffs' willingness to offer any help to the customers displaying a mean score of perceived service quality at 4.02 which was followed by grievance redressal system bearing a mean value of 3.99. Furthermore, the data showed that the customers were satisfied with the prompt service delivery of the fast food restaurants with a mean value of 3.98 and the instant request handling by the staff with mean value of 3.82.

The gap analysis revealed that all the variables exhibited a positive gap with variables one and four displaying highest gap score of .34 and .30 respectively and variables two and three with gap scores of .16 and .17 respectively. With an overall all gap score of .24, it was inferred that the customers were satisfied with the overall responsiveness of the fast food restaurants in the rural Kashmir.

Table 10: Showing means of perception and expectation in responsiveness with GAP score.

Responsiveness			
Variables	Values		
	Perceived Mean	Expected Mean	GAP
1. The restaurant must be having a prompt service delivery. 1. The restaurant had a prompt service delivery.	3.98	3.65	0.34
2. All the customer requests would be instantly honoured by the staff. 2. All the customer requests were instantly honoured by the staff.	3.82	3.66	0.16
3. Every staff member would be willing to offer any help. 3. Every staff member was willing to offer any help.	4.02	3.85	0.17
4. The staff will be quite helpful in redressing any grievance. 4. The staff was quite helpful in redressing any grievance.	3.99	3.70	0.30
AVERAGE TOTAL	**3.96**	**3.71**	**0.24**

The data in the above table as extracted after data analysis made several inferences regarding the assurance offered by the fast food restaurants of rural Kashmir. It was observed that customers were

Table 11: Showing means of perception and expectation in assurance with GAP score.

Assurance			
Variables	Values		
	Perceived Mean	Expected Mean	GAP
1. The interaction with the staff would be decent and satisfactory. 1. The interaction with the staff was decent and satisfactory.	4.04	3.94	0.10
2. The staff will have proper and adequate knowledge of their jobs. 2. The staff had proper and adequate knowledge of their jobs.	4.09	3.94	0.15
3. The staff members will be supported by their superiors. 3. The staff members were supported by their superiors.	3.74	3.58	0.16
4. Every staff member will work towards making customers feel safe and comfortable. 4. Every staff member worked towards making customers feel safe and comfortable.	3.99	3.81	0.18
5. The restaurant managers will assure the safety of customer's transactions. 5. The restaurant managers assured the safety of customer's transactions.	4.09	3.99	0.10
AVERAGE TOTAL	**3.99**	**3.85**	**0.14**

most satisfied by the knowledge of the staff in context of their jobs and safety assurance offered by the restaurant managers to their customers for the transactions they made with the mean value of 4.09 each. It was further revealed that the customers were also satisfied by the decency in the interaction with the staff, staff's initiatives towards making their customers feel safe and the support provided by the managers to their subordinates with mean values 4.04, 3.99 and 3.77 respectively.

The gap analysis revealed that like all the preceding dimensions of service quality assurance also had positive gaps in all the five variables representing the customer satisfaction. The overall gap score of .14 exhibits that the customers are well satisfied by the overall assurance provided by the fast food restaurants in rural Kashmir.

Table 12: Showing means of perception and expectation in empathy with GAP score.

Empathy			
Variables	Values		
	Perceived Mean	Expected Mean	GAP
1. Customers will get individual attention by the staff. 1. Customers received individual attention by the staff.	3.64	3.57	0.07
2. The restaurant staff will understand the needs of the customers. 2. The restaurant staff understood the needs of the customers.	3.85	3.71	0.14
3. The hours of operation would be very convenient. 3. The hours of operation were very convenient.	3.81	3.70	0.11
4. The staff and the managers will act in the best interest of the customer. 4. The staff and the managers acted in the best interest of the customer.	3.83	3.74	0.09
AVERAGE TOTAL	**3.78**	**3.68**	**0.10**

The data analysis shows that even though the gap scores of some variables in the empathy dimension of service quality are low showing a less customer satisfaction yet the overall perceived mean value at 3.78 represents a significant level of customer satisfaction with empathy provided by the fast food restaurants to their customers. The customers, as exhibited by the data above were satisfied by the restaurants' way of understanding the needs of the customers at mean value 3.85 followed by the managers' actions in the best interest of the customers 3.83, the convenience in the hours of operation 3.81 and lastly the individual attention given by the staff to their customers with mean value 3.64.

Table 13: Showing Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Paired Sample Test			
		Service Quality	Customer Satisfaction
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.813
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	218	218
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.813	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	218	218

The gap analysis puts forth that the overall gap score being positive represents that the customers were satisfied by the empathy provided by the fast food restaurants of rural Kashmir.

Furthermore, this study performed a t test for each dimension to reveal the most significant dimensions that satisfied the customers the most.

It was found that there was an overall significance in the model with most of the dimensions below the p-value of >0.05. Furthermore, it was found that the customers were most satisfied by the Tangibility, Reliability and Responsiveness as given by the p-value of < 0.05 and relatively least satisfied by Empathy with p-value >0.05.

In order to examine the nature and strength of the correlation between the service quality and the

customer satisfaction in the fast food restaurants of rural Kashmir, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated. The value of Pearson's correlation coefficient varies between +1 and -1 representing a positive and negative correlation respectively. The significance is calculated at 0.01 level. As is evident from the data in the table above, it is quite clear that there is a highly positive relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality with the value of Pearson's coefficient at .813. As regards the significance which was calculated at 0.01 level, the significance values at .000 are less than the value of 0.01 which represents that the relationship between the customer satisfaction and service quality is significant.

Table 14: Showing paired sample t test outcomes.

Paired Sample Test		
Variables	t-statistic	Sig. (2-tailed)
Perceived Tangibility & Expected Tangibility	3.323	.00
Perceived Reliability & Expected Reliability	2.871	.00
Perceived Responsiveness & Expected Responsiveness	6.733	.00
Perceived Assurance & Expected Assurance	1.626	.106
Perceived Empathy & Expected Empathy	.683	.496

Conclusion

The analysis of data laid out that there is an overall correlation between the service quality offered by the fast food restaurants in rural Kashmir and the customer satisfaction. The individual mean and gap score analysis exhibited that the customers were satisfied with the tangibles of the fast food restaurants as well as with their reliability. Moreover, the fast food restaurants were successful in satisfying their customers in responsiveness too. Although, the gap analysis represented that there is an overall customer satisfaction in the fast food restaurants in rural Kashmir yet there were few dimensions which could not play fairly enough to satisfy the customers relatively more namely the assurance and empathy with p-values greater than 0.05 as analyzed by the t - test.

Suggestions

This study further suggests that there is enough scope where the service quality could be made better so as to achieve the higher customer satisfaction. The dimensions such as assurance and empathy need to be worked upon. The fast food restaurants in rural Kashmir need to keep customers more informed and make them more comfortable and take care of their needs. Prioritizing their customers and making them feel they are unique and special would definitely raise the customer satisfaction in both the assurance and empathy dimension and therefore the overall service quality.

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