

## Customer Expectations of Services

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### Abstract

Expectations are the perceived-value that customers seek from the purchase of a good or service. They are shaped from the previous experiences and thus, goods or services are praised or criticised because of expectations. Usually customers have two different levels of expectations namely the desired service and the adequate service. The desired service is less subject to change than the adequate service level. A zone of tolerance varies across customers that expands or contracts within the same customers. The main objective of this paper is to spotlight on the expectation of service and the factors which persuade the customer expectation of service theoretically based on Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry model. The research methodology is exploratory in nature and secondary data have been used to gather information. The findings of the study state that organisations need to take a look at their customer profiling and then figure out how its current service levels match up with the expectations of their customer base as it forms the root for both service quality assessment and customer satisfaction. Hence, this study will help the service providers to understand and then concentrate on implementing the customers' expectations.

### Key Words

Customer service, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry model, Tolerance.

### Introduction

Marketing is a distinctive function that reflects and shapes the activities of an organisation. It is a fundamental role for business success as it is concerned with the creation and retention of customers, thus it paves the way to understand the customers well. Generally, expectations are formed through pre-buying experience, discussions with other people and through marketing activities offered by the suppliers. These

expectations differ from customer to customer and from situation to situation and hence prone to be dynamic in nature. According to Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, "Customer expectations are the standards of or reference points for performance against which service experiences are compared, and are often formulated in term of what a customer believes should or will happen"<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, knowing what the customers expect is essential for any organization in delivering quality service. Thus, this paper endeavours about the customer expectation of services and the other various factors which influence the customers on their expectations towards the required services.

### Statement of the Problem

Expectations denote as an anticipation or prediction of a future event. Customers' expectation and experience of service vary for every single organization and thus an organisation should always have clear picture of the criteria on the evaluation of the customers' expectations. Therefore, it is significant to understand and meet customer expectations for any organization to provide an excellent service quality because consumers compare the perceptions of performance with various reference points. Hence, this theoretical study explores to focus on what the customer expects and proceed with perceptive steps in delivering an outstanding quality service. Keeping in mind the significance of the customer's expectations on services on various attributes the researcher has made an attempt to draft a theoretical paper on the same.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To focus the concept, types and the various factors that persuade customer's expectation on their service.
2. To highlight suggestion and conclusion of the study.

### Research Methodology

A research design gives a detailed outline of how an investigation is going to take place. In this study conceptual research design is applied as it is flexible in nature. The main purpose of the design is to gather information for clarifying a concept. Secondary sources of data were used to collect information from back volume books, journals and websites.

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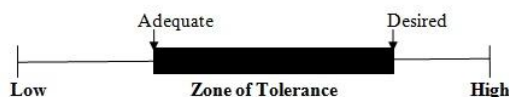
Customer expectations are conviction about service delivery in which the performance of the service is adjudicated. It aids as a benchmark against which the contemporary and ultimate destined are contrasted.

### Concepts

1. **Desired Service** - It is the level of service which a customer anticipates to receive -the “wished for” level of performance. It is a blend of what the customer believes “can be” and “should be”<sup>2</sup>.
2. **Adequate service** - It is a minimum level of service a customer will accept from the service provider.
3. **The Zone of Tolerance** – Heterogeneity is an important feature of service in which customers learn to anticipate variation in service delivery. A Customer who accepts this variation develops a zone of tolerance, which is the difference between desired service and adequate service. If the service is below the adequate service, the customer satisfaction with the company is eroded. If the service performance is outside the zone of tolerance that is at the top end where the performance exceeds the desired service, customers will be very delightful.

### Service Level Expectations

There are two different types of expectations about service namely desired service and adequate service.



**Source:** Valarie A. Zeithaml, Leonard L. Berry, and A. Parasuraman, “Understanding Customer Expectations of Service”, *Slogan Management Review*, 32, 3, 1991, pp.39.

## Factors influencing Service Expectations

Expectations play a crucial role in customer evaluation of their services and are both controllable and uncontrollable. Therefore, marketers need to understand and have a control over these factors since expectations are considered as an important aspect of customers’ satisfaction.

### • Sources of Desired Service Expectations

The determinants of desired service expectations comprise of enduring service intensifiers and personal needs.

**Enduring service intensifiers:** These are the personal factors which are fixed over a period of time and that deep a customer’s sensitivity to how a service should be provided to the best. It is of two types namely customer’s derived expectation and personal service philosophies. Customer’s derived expectations are created from other expectations or may be through other persons or group of people whereas personal service philosophies are the customers own internal view with regarding the service offered by the service provider. It is also known as personal view of each individual.

**Personal needs:** The second factor which influences the desired service expectation is customer’s own personal needs that underlie the attitude on the meaning of service and decorous conduct of service provider. It includes the physical, social, psychological and functional needs.

### • Sources of Adequate Service Expectations

Adequate service is influenced by five factors namely transitory service intensifiers, perceived service alternatives, customer self-perceived service roles, situation factors and predicted service.

#### 1. Transitory service intensifiers

These are the individual short term and personal factors which emphasize customer’s sensitivity to a service. Normally in a personal emergency situation, services are urgently needed which raise the level of adequate service expectation and thereby the zone of tolerance becomes narrower.

## 2. Perceived service alternatives

If a customer is able to get a similar alternative service from other service provider or if they can provide the service for themselves is referred as perceived service alternative. In such a case, their adequate service is higher than those of the customers who believe it is not possible to get better service elsewhere.

## 3. Customer Self -perceived service role

It is defined as customer perceptions of the degree to which customers exert an influence on the level of service they receive. In other words, it is the input a customer believes he/she required to present in order to produce a satisfactory service encounter.

## 4. Situational factors

As time is unpredictable, the circumstances/ situations also change from time to time. As a result it is beyond the control of the service providers who lower the service quality since the expectations at that point of time may vary from customers to customers.

## 5. Predicted service

The final factor which influences the adequate service expectations is predicted service which is the level of service a customer believes to occur or they are likely to get. It is a function of firm's explicit and implicit service promises, word-of-mouth communications, and the customer's own past experiences.

## Suggestion and Conclusion

Customers may hold both explicit and implicit performance expectation for attributes, features, and benefits of product and services. As a momentum of truth, no one knows what customers expect because it is as diverse as their education, values and experience. These customer expectations are strongly influenced by both satisfaction and delight which forms the basis for both service quality assessment and customer satisfaction. In the present competitive environment, expectations are required to be exceeded for commercial success so that the customers are delighted with the outcome. To conclude, expectations play a

crucial role in customer evaluation of service and marketers need to understand the factors that shape them.

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