

## **Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction: A Study on Southeast Bank Limited**

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**Abstract:** *Commercial banks provide various financial services to its customers. In the competitive banking arena, quality service is a burning issue as the success of obtaining customers' satisfaction. This paper focuses on the drivers of customer satisfaction for financial services and tries to know the relationship among service quality, price and customer satisfaction through the Southeast Bank Limited, Goneshtola Branch, Dinajpur. Data were collected purposively from 42 different customers. A questionnaire elicited information on socio-demographic variables along with human, technical, and tangible aspects of service quality and customer satisfaction. Three aspects of service quality—people, process through technology, and physical evidence are considered for this study. Results suggest that better human, technical and tangible aspects of service quality of the bank increase customer satisfaction. The research also provide the evidence of customer satisfaction and their retention through improved service quality and maintaining reasonable price of the services.*

**Keywords:** *Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Southeast Bank.*

**JEL Codes:** *G21, M30, M31*

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### **I. Introduction**

The banking sector has an important role in the economic growth and development of a country. In the banking industry, Bangladesh has 58 scheduled banks in which 40 national private commercial banks are operating financial activities and providing services to their customers (as Wikipedia visited on October 2, 2016). Now-a-days, the banking industry is facing various dynamic and unprecedented set of challenges, i.e. new technologies, economic uncertainties, fierce competition, more demanding customers, the changing climate in the market and so on. Moreover, quality service, customer satisfaction, customer retention and customer loyalty draw the big attention for sustainable development of the banking arena.

Providing service to the customers has become the prime focus for banking industry which has perceived a radical change in the market power. Service is an unseen thing which is essential from the person who extends it. The service is called efficient or effective which is extended properly by finding and realizing the necessity of the customer from time to time. Customer service is a dynamic shared process which needs frequent improvement. In this globalization era the dynamic information technology and communication system have reduced the whole world to a global village. For this reason customer service is a critical function and plays a vital role for the business. The customers at the present time are aware of the kind of service level available around the world and thus expect the best from their banks. The quality customer service will definitely increase profitability. A customer oriented bank gear up its various organizational activities like organizational restructuring, staffing, and coordination to satisfy the needs of customers.

During the latest two decades or so, regulatory, structural and technological factors have radically changed the banking environment in Bangladesh. In a scene banking business becomes gradually competitive and service quality continuously is a critical measure of organizational performance which is drawn the keen attention of banking institutions. Under these circumstances, the banks will have to face cleft challenges to retain the existing customers and to create new customers. The interest is mostly driven by the realization that higher service quality results in customers' satisfaction and loyalty, greater willingness to recommend to someone else, reduction in complaints and improved customer retention rates. However, success rate depends on the inventive strategies adopted by the banks including better customer services and sufficient gratification of customer expectations. Thus, customer satisfaction is quite a complex issue and there is a lot of debate and confusion about what exactly is required and how to go about it.

Customers are one of the key stakeholders for the banking organizations. The Customer Service Centre adds a new dimension to the banking sector where customers can not avail only the facilities of technologies such as the ATM, Easy Pay, Phone Banking and Website services but they can also consult round the week with the customer service officers regarding for applying of loan products, opening new accounts and providing detailed information on other services are provided by the banks. In the modern customer centric competitive arena, satisfaction, quality and loyalty prove to be the key factors reciprocally interrelated in a causal and cyclical relationship. The higher the (perceived) service quality leads to the more satisfied and loyal customers (Petruzzellis and Romanazzi, 2006). In particular, banking institutions realized the strategic importance of customer value and seem to be continuously seeking innovative ways to enhance customer relationships.

The Service providers in businesses are increasingly concerned to develop and maintain customers pleased as they are aware that satisfaction leads to increased and guaranteed income and is a key determinant of market share and profitability. Increasing competition and continuously evolving customer demands have led Bangladeshi banks to identify the drivers of customer satisfaction and customer retention. This is important since cost of acquiring a new customer is much more than cost of retaining the customer. Bangladeshi banks, as like international, are giving top priority to providing better service quality to satisfy their customers. Banks are paying greater attention for developing new concepts and strategies for high quality of services to identifying customer needs and expectations. So, the service quality and its effects on the customer satisfaction have become important issue to the banking researchers.

The objective of this research is to unfold the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction through the Southeast Bank Limited which is one of the scheduled private commercial bank in Bangladesh. The purpose of this work implies the drivers of customer satisfaction for banking services and tries to grasp the relationship among service quality, price and customer satisfaction through the Southeast Bank Limited, Goneshtola Branch, Dinajpur. Data were collected purposively from forty two different customers. A questionnaire elicited information on socio-demographic variables along with human, technical, and tangible aspects of service quality and customer satisfaction. Three aspects of service quality—people, process through technology, and physical evidence are considered for this study. Results suggest that better human, technical and tangible aspects of service quality of the bank increase customer satisfaction. The research also provide the evidence of customer satisfaction and their retention through improved service quality and maintaining reasonable price of the services. The rest of this article is constructed as follows.

The literature review is depicted in the section two. In section three, the methodology is incorporated. Section four describes the result and discussion. Managerial Implications are reported in section five. Finally, the section six concludes the article.

## **II. Literature Review**

There are enough literatures that demonstrate the strategic benefits of quality in contributing to market share and return on investment. Maximizing customer satisfaction through quality customer service has been described in the literature as ‘the ultimate weapon’. The literature also unfolds, in all industries, when competitors are roughly matched, those with stress on customer’s service will win. In view of the above mentioned facts, an analysis of service quality perceptions from customer’s point of view may be sound and interesting at this juncture. Such an analysis will provide banks, a quantitative estimate of their services being perceived with intricate details such as whether banks are meeting the expectations of the customers or not.

Service quality, as perceived by customers, involves a comparison of what they feel the service should be (expectation) with their judgment of the services they received (perceptions) (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Service quality has been described as a form of attitude, but not equivalent to satisfaction that results from the comparison of expectations with performance (Parasuraman et al., 1988; and Bolton and Drew, 1991). The commonly accepted orientation defines service quality as the extent to which a service meets customers’ needs or expectations (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990). It is defined as the difference between customer expectations of service and perceived service. If expectations are greater than performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory and hence customer dissatisfaction occurs (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Lewis and Mitchell, 1990). Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed a measurement scale SERVQUAL, which has 22 items to assess service quality on five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility. Reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy dimensions are related to people aspect of service quality and tangible aspect is related to physical evidence. SERVQUAL instrument has been subjected to criticism (Brown et al. 1993). Several innovative IT-based services such as Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), anywhere anytime banking, smart cards, internet banking etc. are no longer alien concepts to banking customers (Rawani and Gupta, 2000). Service quality can be assessed in terms of interaction with service personnel, technology interface and physical evidence (Lenka et al., 2009).

Customer satisfaction is fundamental to marketing. Researchers have defined it in different ways. Satisfaction is described as an evaluation of an emotion” (Hunt, 1977). According to Engel and Blackwell

(1982) opinion customer satisfaction is “an evaluation that the chosen alternative is consistent with prior beliefs with respect to that alternative. Kotler (2000) expresses that satisfaction is a person’s feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product’s perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations. It is a judgment that the product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under or over fulfillment (Oliver, 1997). Howard and Sheth (1969) defined customer satisfaction as “the buyer’s cognitive state of being adequately or inadequately rewarded for the sacrifices he has undergone”. Customer satisfaction results when customers either confirm their pre-purchase expectations for a purchased service or positively disconfirm (exceed) their expectations regarding purchased services, resulting in some level of post purchase affect toward the experience (Cardozo, 1965). On the basis of above, customer satisfaction may be defined as positive feeling that comes from consumption of a product or service.

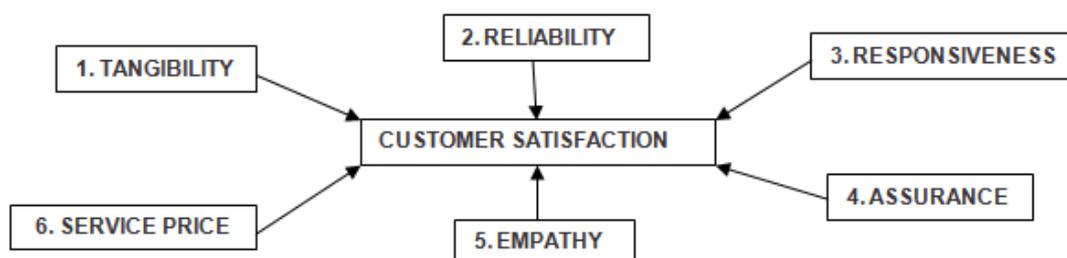
Researchers have studied the relationship between service quality and satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is a key consequence of service quality and can determine the long-term success of a service organization (Parasuraman et al., 1994). Parasuraman et al. (1988) specifically suggested that service quality is an antecedent of customer satisfaction. However, there is much debate whether customer satisfaction is an antecedent of service quality judgments (Parasuraman et al., 1985) or the other way round (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993). Some studies have shown that improved service quality will result in more customer satisfaction (Bitner et al., 1994). Customer Satisfaction is a leading criterion for determining the quality actually delivered to customers (Vavra, 1997). Thus, this research argues that service quality has a positive influence on customer satisfaction, i.e. has a positive impact of service quality on customer satisfaction.

### III. Methodology

The SERVQUAL model is followed in this research work which is developed by Parasuraman et al. in 1988. This model assesses service quality on five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility. The reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and dimensions are related to people aspect of service quality and tangible aspect is related to physical evidence. SERVQUAL instrument has been subjected to criticism (Brown et al. 1993). Therefore, the service price dimension is added to the said model. So, the SERVQUAL model is revised for assessing service quality on six dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and service price (cost of availing services).

#### 3.1. Theoretical Framework

The following theoretical framework is applied for this article.



**Fig.-1:** Conceptual Framework

#### 3.2. Research Questions and Hypothesis Development:

The following questions have been arranged on various factors of customer satisfaction;

- Question 1:* Is there a positive significant relationship between *tangibility* and customer satisfaction?
- Question 2:* Is there a positive significant relationship between *reliability* and customer satisfaction?
- Question 3:* Is there a positive significant relationship between *responsiveness* and customer satisfaction?
- Question 4:* Is there a positive significant relationship between *assurance* and customer satisfaction?
- Question 5:* Is there a positive significant relationship between *empathy* and customer satisfaction?
- Question 6:* Is there a positive significant relationship between *service price* and customer satisfaction?

The following hypotheses have been rendered on various factors of customer satisfaction;

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Hypothesis</u>
Tangibility	<b>H<sub>0</sub></b> = There is no significant relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction; <b>H<sub>1</sub></b> = There is a significant relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction;

Reliability	<b>H<sub>0</sub></b> = There is no significant relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction; <b>H<sub>1</sub></b> = There is a significant relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction;
Responsiveness	<b>H<sub>0</sub></b> = There is no significant relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction; <b>H<sub>1</sub></b> = There is a significant relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction;
Assurance	<b>H<sub>0</sub></b> = There is no significant relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction; <b>H<sub>1</sub></b> = There is a significant relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction;
Empathy	<b>H<sub>0</sub></b> = There is no significant relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction; <b>H<sub>1</sub></b> = There is a significant relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction;
Service Price	<b>H<sub>0</sub></b> = There is no significant relationship between price and customer satisfaction; <b>H<sub>1</sub></b> = There is a significant relationship between price and customer satisfaction;

**3.3. Data and Variables:**

In this research, qualitative survey method is applied for data collection. The primary data are collected through the closed-ended questionnaire with 22 questions which are intended to measure the attitude towards the customer satisfaction. The figure 2 shows the Five-point Likert scale which is used to quantify the data. There are 42 respondents are selected purposively who are attended to the survey.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral or Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

**Fig.-2: The 5-point Likert scale**

This research identifies the customer satisfaction (CS) as dependent variables against the six independent variables are quality dimensions such as Tangibility (TAN), Reliability (REL), Responsiveness (RES), Assurance (ASS), Empathy (EMP), and Service Price (PRI). The statistical software, SPSS 17.0 version, is used for the analyses. In this work, the statistical tools, i.e. descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression analysis are used for data analysis.

**IV. Results and Discussion**

**4.1. The demographic characteristics of the respondents**

The demographic factors of the respondents are gender, age, income, education level, marital status, and occupation. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents through the number and percentage. The male and female respondents are 30 and 12 respectively among the 42 sample. In percentage, the total sample is separated as 71.4 percent male and 28.6 female. In case of age factor, it is found from table 1 that out of 42 respondents 16 people, i.e.38.1%, are of age between 40-49 that is highest. The second highest 13 people are of age between 30- 39, i.e. 31.0%. The table1 also shows that the highest number of peoples', i.e. 11, income fall in the range of Tk.5000 - Tk.15000 which means 26.2% people have the income between taka 5000 and 15,000. In addition, 10 people, i.e.23.8%, income are in between Tk.26000 - Tk.35000 where only nine people, i.e. 21.4%, income are in the range of Tk.16000 - Tk.25000. It is remarked in case of education character that above two-third respondents have graduation and post-graduation degree. The marital status shows that above 80% respondents are married. Finally, above 35% respondents are engaged with business and 31% respondents are private service professionals.

**Table 1 : Demographic statistics of the Customer**

Demographic Characters	Gender		Age (Years)		Monthly Income (Taka)		Education		Marital Status		Occupation		
	Male	Female	Below 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 and above	Below 5000	5000-15000	16000-25000	26000-35000	36000 and above
Frequency	30	12	1	5	13	16	2	5	6	11	9	10	6
Percent	71.4	28.6	2.4	11.9	31.0	38.1	4.8	11.9	14.3	26.2	21.4	23.8	14.3
	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>
	SSC	HSC	Bachelor	Post Graduate	Public service	Private service	Business	Independent	Student				
	3	9	17	13	4	13	15	4	6				
	7.14	21.43	40.48	30.95	9.5	31.0	35.7	9.5	14.3				
	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>				

**4.2. Descriptive Statistics of the variables**

In this paper six dimensions of service quality such as Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, and Service Price have been taken as independent variable and Customer Satisfaction as the dependent variable to determine the relationships among the variables.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the variables**

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TAN	42	3.00	4.75	4.029	.439
REL	42	2.60	4.60	3.923	.566
RES	42	3.00	5.00	4.119	.545
ASS	42	2.67	5.00	4.151	.683
EMP	42	2.00	5.00	4.016	.637
PRI	42	1.50	5.00	3.381	.949
CS	42	2.00	5.00	3.905	.627

For conducting this research, the printed copies of questionnaire are served to the forty two customers (respondents) of Southeast Bank Ltd., Gonestola branch, Dinajpur. The above table 2 describes that the averages of independent variables, i.e. Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, and Service Price from the respondents are 4.029, 3.923, 4.119, 4.151, 4.016, and 3.381 respectively and the standard deviations of the said variables are 0.439, 0.566, 0.545, 0.683, 0.637, and 0.949 respectively. On the other hand the mean of the dependent variable is 3.905 and standard deviation is 0.627.

**4.3. Correlation between the variables**

In statistics, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is a widely measure of the correlation (linear dependence) between two variables X (independent) and Y (dependent), giving a value range between +1 and -1 inclusive. A value of 1 implies that a linear equation describes the relationship between X and Y perfectly, with all data points lying on a line for which Y increases as X increases; while -1 implies that all data

points lie on a line for which Y decreases as X increases, i.e. variables are negatively correlated. A value of zero implies that there is no linear correlation between the variables. The correlation coefficient value (r) range from 0.1 to 0.29 is considered weak, from 0.3 to 0.49 is moderate and from 0.5 to 1 is considered strong correlation (Stigler, 1989).

**Table 3: Pearson Correlations Analysis**

Variables	TAN	REL	RES	ASS	EMP	PRI	CS
TAN	1						
REL	.559**	1					
RES	.554**	.668**	1				
ASS	.351*	.737**	.656**	1			
EMP	.376*	.527**	0.291	.380*	1		
PRI	.426**	.692**	.563**	.661**	.420**	1	
CS	.498**	.639**	.569**	.547**	.686**	.524**	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson Correlation Analyses are employed among variables. Table 3 implies the correlation analyses among all dependent and independent variables. The result reveals that there are significant positive correlations between tangibility and customer satisfaction (r=0.498, p<0.01), reliability and customer satisfaction(r=0.639, p<0.01), responsiveness and customer satisfaction(r=0.569, p<0.01), assurance and customer satisfaction(r=0.547, p<0.01), empathy and customer satisfaction(r=0.686, p<0.01), and service price and customer satisfaction (r=0.524, p<0.01). It is meant that all the independent variables have high influences on the customer satisfaction, but empathy has the greatest influence on the customer satisfaction.

**4.4. Linear Regression Analysis:**

The regression analysis is applied for understanding how the typical value of the dependent variable changes when any one of the independent variables is varied.

**Table 4: Model Summary**

R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.637	.575	.40870

Predictors: (Constant), TAN, REL, RES, ASS, EMP, PRI

Table 4 depicts that the value of R square is 0.637 which means independent variables (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibility) of the model can explain 63.7 % of dependent variable (customer satisfaction).

The table 5 describes that though Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness and Assurance, and Service Price have positive influence on the customer satisfaction, but the results are insignificant. On the other hand, Empathy has the most significance impact on customer satisfaction (B= .486 and t= 4.030).

**Table 5: The Regression Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.479	.684		-.700	.488
PRI	.015	.099	.023	.153	.879
TAN	.123	.191	.086	.642	.525
REL	.091	.212	.082	.429	.670
RES	.291	.180	.253	1.615	.115
ASS	.080	.156	.087	.512	.612
EMP	.486	.121	.494	4.030	.000

It is obvious that the service quality is not the only attribute for influencing the customer satisfaction. Findings revealed that improved people, process, and physical evidence aspect of service quality help in increasing customer satisfaction. These results confirmed the past research results. Improved human, technical and tangible aspects of service quality increase customer satisfaction (Lenka et al., 2009). Efficient interpersonal interactions between customers and employees can improve customer satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1985; and Hartline et al., 2000). Physical evidence aspect of service quality includes parking, furniture, brochure, ATM card, etc. Due to intangibility of services, customers evaluate services on the basis of physical evidence. Good quality physical evidence helps in increasing customer satisfaction.

### **V. Managerial implications**

A better understanding of customer needs is the crucial and important issue that the bank management should realize. Along with this managerial decisions also focus on what services the customers expect from them in terms of service quality. Moreover, the bank managers should find out the deviation prevails between the expected service quality and actual quality provided to the customers and then managers should innovate the finest ways to increase customer satisfaction with respect to improved service quality features. In addition, the managers can use the results of this study to increase their understanding of which service quality dimensions have the strongest association with overall customer satisfaction. When serving the customers, observations need to be done periodically on the level of fulfillment of customer needs and the degree of customer satisfaction with the bank. Such doing may help the bank to reduce the gap between the perceived service and the rendered service. As a result customers' loyalty will increase and they will recommend others to deal with the bank. From the correlation and regression analyses, empathy is found as the most remarkable dimension among others. The bank management has to put serious attention to make the employees more skilled, to ensure the necessary training facilities to increase the caring and concerning attitude towards the customers' satisfaction. Based on the findings empathy is more important aspect where the managers need to work on and can be increased by improving the present conditions prevailed like absence of attention in serving customer complaints, insufficient time spent for giving special attention to the senior citizens, physically challenged and so on.

### **VI. Conclusion**

The Bangladeshi banks have been rivaling with similar products to the consumers. So, the service quality is realized as the prime distinguisher among the banks providing better quality of the service to the customers. However, the model of understanding the major factors that influence customer satisfaction in the banking sector in Bangladesh which will prospective to help the banks' management and the financial institutions to enrich the quality of service delivered to the customers at least in the context of the Dinajpur town and other such towns. This paper inspects the view of service quality of banking services delivered to customers in the district branch of Southeast Bank Limited and the relative modifications attached with the various elements of service quality using the modified SERVQUAL model. The factors in this research are relevant to have an idea that how the customers grab and organize information about the service quality of any organization. From the study it has been seen that all the independent variables (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibility and price) have positive relationship with the dependent variable (customer satisfaction). It can be seen from the table 5; empathy has great impact on customer satisfaction among the service quality variables. In view of the findings, the condition of high standards of service quality and maintaining a significant level of customer satisfaction will lead to improved financial performance and customer retention. At the same time as this research found that improvement in the quality aspects of these dimension could enhance overall satisfaction and in turn may boost the financial performance of Southeast Bank Limited. Finally, this research will encourage further study and useful guidelines for such type of researches.

Although this research has reached its aim, there are some unavoidable limitations. The population of the experimental group is small; only forty two people might not represent the majority of the total customers of Southeast Bank Limited. The purposive sampling procedure is made rather than more sophisticated survey methods. The study also suffered from inadequacy of data and reluctance to providing information by the customers through the questioner.

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