

# Impacts of consumer-oriented behavior on Service quality

<sup>1.</sup> Dr. Shailesh Tripathi

Director-Innocent Hearts Group of Institutions, Jalandhar

<sup>2.</sup> Prof. Rajendra Mishra

Professor -The Business School, Jammu University

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## Abstract:

Consumerism has an additional challenge of differentiation. The unique strategy in a service provision is a constant trend and culture-oriented. This is a service base for delivery of high-quality services. This paper is proposing to examine various factors enhancing contribution to the service quality perceived by customers, this paper aims to study the parameters of accelerating relationship between the customer-oriented behavior and service quality.

**Keywords:** Service quality, Unique services, Customer oriented behavior

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## I. Introduction:

Over the decades, the service sector has become a dominant element of growing economy. Thus, in a context where increasingly productive capacities and other tangible resources are easily copied, the services are presented to increase the products (Porter 1986). The dominance of the service sector is confirmed by the fact that 70% of world GDP is concentrated in this sector, which comprises 70% of the workforce (Grznic 2007). The growing interest in service quality lies in the belief on the part of professionals and academics, that this quality is critical to the success of any business organization as it affects customer satisfaction, influences the purchasing behavior and, ultimately, the profitability of the organization (Zeithaml and Bitner 2003) and brand evidence (Clemes et al 2011).

The conceptualization and measurement of perceptions of quality have been the most debated and controversial topics in services marketing literature (Brady and Cronin 2001). This measurement, however, has focused on the experience cognitive services (Edvardsson 2005). In the hotel industry, more specifically, attributes such as imprecise standards, short distribution channels, intense exchange of information between employees and customers and fluctuating demand were identified as factors that further complicated the task to define, deliver and measure the quality of service (Akbaba 2006). With the gradual growing of competitiveness, it is increasingly vital for the hotel industry the ability to define service quality, identify the dimensions of this quality and their relative importance to customers (Fick and Ritchie 1991). Therefore, it behooves organizations to focus on quality to provide excellent service in order to improve the experience and build customer loyalty, seeking ways to add value to the service (Grönroos 2003).

In order to thrive in this industry, one must understand how customers perceive the quality attributes of products or services and their importance and performance compared to other competitors (Testa and Sipper 2006, Sohrabi et al 2012). White et al (2010) points out that, since the perceived quality is a major determinant affecting customer satisfaction of services, it is necessary to study and identify the criteria by which customer evaluate service excellence. Thus, the service provider can prioritize their effort to meet those attributes considered most important by customers.

To better understand the role that quality service plays on the customer experience, the researchers turn to examine employee interaction with customers and delivering what is increasingly called "emotion labor" (Line and Runyan 2012). This aspect has been showing increasing importance beyond the tangible attributes of service quality evaluated in recent research. These results contribute to the view that the market is currently developing, valuing the relationships between employees and customers to maximize the positive outcomes of service interactions. Research has shown that consumer orientation has positive effects on sales performance, quality perception by the consumer, and construction of buyer-seller relationships and customer satisfaction. This is an essential factor for success in organizations in the service sector (Castellanos-Verdugo 2009).

Nóbrega (2009) provides an overview of consumer orientation that she calls "servant behavior", by which a service-oriented culture would be the basis for development and delivery of high-

quality services. This approach refers to perform activities that provide benefits to those we serve, listing attributes that a servant company should build, which are: responsibility, simplicity, renunciation, initiative, desire to help, welfare practices and utility. Moreover, between the trends in research on service quality in the hotel industry, Line and Runyan (2012) highlight the convergence of the researchers for the examinations of employees' interactions with customers and the delivery of what is increasingly called "emotional work". Thus, the research will be able to better understand the role that it plays a quality service on the customer experience.

### **Quality services in the hospitality industry;**

In data from 2008 (ASCON-2008), the hotel industry in Brazil had 25,000 lodging facilities, including hostels and small hotels. White et al (2010) estimate that the industry move has approximately \$8 billion a year and has an income of about \$2 billion a year. Still in this scenario, great opportunities for this sector meet to the nearest events like the Confederations Cup in 2013, the FIFA World Cup Football in 2014 and the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. For this period, the Ministry of Tourism (2010) predicted in a favorable scenario, increasing the number of hotel establishments from 26,914 in 2010 to over 35,000 by 2014.

In the reality of the hotel industry, thus improving customer satisfaction is a critical issue for managers whose seek to maintain the balance between guest accommodation and sustaining a competitive advantage (Castelli 2003). In service delivery, quality assurance arises during the process, mainly due to its characteristics. The nature of services makes it difficult to measure and maintain quality (Harris and Harrington 2000). Respecting these characteristics, service provision, thus arises directly from the buyer-seller interactions. Clearly, what happens in these interactions has a significant impact on the service perceived by consumers (Grönroos, 2003).

In this sense, an important indicator of service quality can be defined from the perspective of the customer, as they are formed simultaneously with the process of production, delivery and consumption of the service. Thus, most of the research focuses on the question of how the quality of service is perceived by customers and how this quality can be measured (Edvardsson 2005, Akbaba 2006).

Although there are several models (scales) to measure service quality and customer satisfaction, they are often too generalized and difficult to be applied in the hotel industry (Grzinić 2007). That's because, unlike the Total Quality Management, mainly focused on companies that deal with products, services are provided with specific features such as heterogeneity, inseparability of production and consumption, perishability and intangibility (Ghobadian 1994) - hindering its measurement.

**The SERVQUAL model** thus provided a conceptual framework for the appropriate survey and measurement of service quality in the service sector. The model proposed by Parasuraman et al (1988) is based on the customer evaluation of the quality of service, focusing on the difference between their expectations and perceptions. The authors cite five dimensions able to define quality in service. They are: reliability, security, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness.

There are some criticisms, such as that the five dimensions are not universal and are connected to a context, there is a high degree of inter-correlation between them (Grzinić 2007).

Nevertheless, the SERVQUAL is still the most used literature on quality of services, either in whole or in modified form by the authors in accordance to the objectives and context of the research (Briggs et al 2007, Gu and Ryan 2008, Marcovic and Raspor 2010, Prayag 2007). In many studies of perceived quality in hotels, were identified dimensions of great importance beyond the tangible aspects of the service, as "courtesy and competence of the staff of the hotel", "employees", "understanding and caring", "friendliness", among others (Akan 1995, Akbaba 2006, González et al 2005, Meiet al. 1999, Naseem et al 2011, White et al 2010). These results corroborate the trend appreciation of the relationship between customer and employee perception of the service experience, highlighted in this research.

### **Customer orientation on the hospitality industry :**

The concepts of quality of service, often remain product oriented, even in companies that say explicitly give priority to customers. The hotel industry, therefore, being a service of high interaction with the consumer, should pay special attention to the needs and expectations of its client as to the service being provided. Give attention to details and develop the relationship between employee and customer shows up as an important trend in achieving competitive advantage in this field. The client, in service providing organizations, is the reason behind the company. Therefore, it needs to create a culture focused on him, in order to know him deeply, understand their needs and meet their expectations (Castelli 2003).

A customer-oriented behavior is the ability of the service provider to help consumers, which leads not only to an increase in customer satisfaction and a positive relationship with employee performance (Boles et al 2001,

Brown et al (2002) but also a level of emotional commitment to the organization of these consumers, and more importantly, for retaining these consumers, especially in the case of services with high interaction, as seen in the hotel industry.

Research has shown that customer orientation has positive effects on sales performance, quality perception by the consumer, and construction of buyer-seller relationships and customer satisfaction. This is an essential factor for success in organizations in the service sector (Castellanos-Verdugo et al 2009). In the analysis of observations of their research, Briggs et al (2007) suggest that most customers were not looking for excellence reflected in a clean, pleasant staff, accurate and value for money. Many customers were emphasized that "the little things that count" an aspect capable of exceeding customer expectations. Customers seem to be very happy when they experience a useful service, friendly and helpful, it also provides accurate and represents value for money. A customer orientation focuses primarily on the realization of the interests and needs of customers and deliver appropriate solutions to their requests (Bellou 2009).

Nevertheless, in an environment of high contact as the hotel industry, the physical evidence (tangible) gives strong clues as to the quality of the service provider to communicate a message to the customer about the establishment before and during the meeting, and strongly influences assessing the overall experience (Briggs et al 2007, Lovelock and Wright 2001).

Brady and Cronin (2001), by proposing a new hierarchical approach to the measurement of service quality from an empirical and qualitative research, conclude that the construction of quality of service is consistent with a model that links perceptions of service quality in three actionable dimensions, named as: results, interaction and environmental quality. The dimension interaction for example, has three subdimensions named attitude, behavior and expertise that are directly related to the behavior of the employee.

In her hypothesis, Bellou (2009) raises the positive relationship between customer orientation, learning orientation and the quality of service delivered to patients in a hospital. In the results, the author reinforces the positive relationship between perceived service quality and customer orientation, both internal and external. The results also indicate that employee's tend to identify and customer orientation as factors that are important to improve patients' experience with health care.

For Brunner-Sperdin et al. (2012), in addition to the service environment, the role of human factors in providing high quality service has been widely recognized in the literature. Employees who are in direct contact with consumers are able to substantially affect the perception of customers in service environments. Thus, customer satisfaction, loyalty or evasive behavior is strongly influenced both by the appearance of frontline employees as their competence and behavior.

In defining their hypotheses, Castellanos-Verdugo et al. (2009) make some comments about the quality of the relationship between consumer and service provider. The first is customer orientation, referred to as an organization and the individuals within it concentrated its efforts to understand and satisfy customers. The customer orientation, thus can be defined as the tendency or predisposition of employees to meet the needs of customers in the context of service provision (Brown et al., 2002).

Naseem et al (2011) point out that in their results that, although it is essential to anticipate the needs of customers in each phase of service, it is also important to meet their expectations. Moreover, the quality of service provided by attendants, their techniques for dealing with customers and flexibility influence the feeling of gratification by customers.

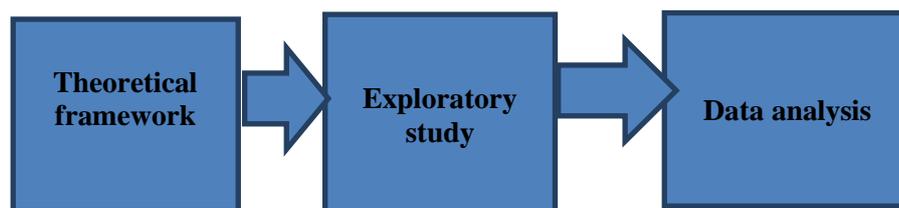
### **Methodology:**

In order to achieve our objective, we conducted a bibliographic and exploratory research, the nature of which is predominately qualitative. This approach could be developed through material already published, made especially for scientific articles available in the SCOPUS database and SCIENCE DIRECT database.

Exploratory research aims to know the study variable, its meaning and context in which it operates. Malhotra (2001) states that exploratory research aims to explore an issue or situation to provide criteria and understanding. Also, according to the author, it is significant in any situation in which the researcher does not have sufficient understanding to proceed with the research project.

In this work, bibliographical and exploratory approach used the concepts of service quality, service quality in the hotel industry, consumer behavior and business-oriented server. The research was structured in three stages: theoretical framework, exploratory study and data analysis.

Figure 1- Phases of the research method



### Results and discussion:

As presented in the literature review, it is important that companies identify the factors that customers consider in forming their perception of service quality. Thus, companies can focus on the most important factors and thereby provide an excellent service and aggregate value for the client.

As Fick and Ritchie (1991) said, it is increasingly vital for the hotel industry the ability to define service quality, identify the dimensions of this quality and their relative importance to customers. In order to thrive in this industry, one must understand how customers perceive the quality attributes of products or services and their importance

and performance compared to other competitors (Testa and Siper 2006, Sohrabi et al 2012). According to Henning-Thurau et al. (2002), it is possible that customer orientation plays an important role in terms of economic success for service companies, due to the intangible nature of services and its high level of integration and interaction with the customer.

The analysis of the relationship between servant behavior and service quality fits in this context when trying to identify factors that influence the perception of quality by customers, in addition to cognitive factors largely explored in the literature. The servant behavior, in turn, presents seven potential attributes or dimensions in explaining the variation in quality of service. Thus, this paper proposed to systematize the literature review around these 7 characteristics in order to relate the customer-oriented behavior with service quality.

Based on service-oriented culture as a main foundation for development and delivery of high-quality services, Nóbrega (2009) developed the concept of a sense of service and company server, concepts required for organizations that want to achieve excellence in service quality directed to their customers. In his research, Nóbrega (2009) highlights the intangible aspects of services as a way of differentiating against competitors. From the characteristics of the individual servant, the constituents are developed of the company server: servant behavior (individual); strategy servant; server products; server processes, server and servant leadership culture. Among the aspects of servant behavior, Nóbrega (2009) highlights seven, from qualitative research about the connotations of service: responsibility, simplicity, renunciation, initiative, willingness to help, welfare practice, and usefulness. It is this sort of behavior that the servant uses in this study to systematize the literature review.

Although the literature has not found the end of servant behavior as the author points out, we found some dimensions and attributes that fit the descriptions for each proposed conceptual dimension of this type of behavior.

In the dimension of responsibility, Nóbrega (2009) highlights the conduct to act with responsibility, commitment, consistency and expected performance. Ladhari (2009) and Marcovic and Raspor (2010) indicate the importance given by the clients to readiness and adequate knowledge of the team to respond to questions and requests. The responsibility also involves the provision of the service as it has been contracted, demonstrating consistency and security (Brunner-Sperdin 2012, Getty and Getty 2003). Also in this sense, Briggs et al (2007) highlight the importance of continued training for the personal contact to identify customer needs, differentiating them according to the purpose of his stay.

As for simplicity, Nóbrega (2009) emphasizes the need for things to be made simple, but important in value to the customer, without generating a sense of inferiority to the service provider. Among the concepts that underpin this definition, Getty and Getty (2003), Castellanos-Verdugo et al. (2009) and Ladhari (2009) highlight the importance

of the service providers act with courtesy, politeness and respect to the customer. Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) also speak of the pattern of staff accompanying the client to the door of their accommodation, and who are keen to say goodbye properly. Despite the qualitative work, Brady and Cronin (2001), highlight the attitude of apologizing in front of a mistake.

To Nóbrega (2009), the servant behavior is also composed of resignation, which takes the service provider to leave wishes their own space to take care of the other. This kind of behavior refers to the valuation of building customer relationship over the monetary aspect, as the achievement of goals, for example (Ariffin and Maghzi 2012). Henning-Thurau et al. (2002) highlight the efforts of the hotel staff to treat the customer well and do their best to fulfill your needs.

Taking the initiative is to act proactively, developing activities responsive to the client (Nóbrega 2009). This

aspect was the most found in the literature review, due to its characteristic responses to customers and anticipate their needs, high perceived importance in several areas of expertise in services (Brady and Cronin 2001).

Willingness to help in the context of servant behavior, means to act with a sense of proximity, complicity, and reciprocity in order to serve and help others (Nóbrega 2009). Because this behavior is intrinsic to the very nature of human character, Briggs et al. (2007) indicates the importance of the recruitment and selection of qualified, competent, and helpful staff. To perform this behavior, the hotel employees must inspire confidence (Marcovic and Raspor 2010), devoting time and customer empathy (Brunner-Sperdin 2012, Castellanos-Verdugo et al 2009), be friendly and warm (Brady and Cronin 2001), being flexible (Naseem et al 2011) and offer basic assistance, such as the loading of baggage (Ariffin and Maghzi 2012).

The welfare practice, according to Nóbrega (2009), concerns the pleasure to serve and tendency and willingness to do good to people and communities. For Castellanos-Verdugo et al. (2009), one of the signs of this behavior is the equal treatment of customers, regardless of volume/value of purchase. Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) reinforce this thought by stating the importance of hospitable behavior, motivated by genuine need to please and take care of the guests and not deliberately to impress them, and seem like a natural extension of features, independent of any control systems and incentives.

Finally, the usefulness aims to give meaning to activities, seeking to perform actions that are useful, that generate results, value and productivity (Nóbrega, 2009). Among the points of the literature review that relate to this concept, we can mention offering special rates and upgrades when appropriate (Briggs et al. 2007); knowledge of customer needs and any changes of it by the hotel staff (Castellanos-Verdugo et al 2009), offering fast service, with objective responses and understanding of the specific needs of guests (Marcovic and Raspor, 2010) and fast action to solve problems (Ariffin and Maghzi 2012, Ladhari 2009). Besides the effort to meet all customer requests (Getty and Getty 2003), anticipating and meeting the expectations (Naseem et al 2011).

**Table 1- Presence of aspects related to the servant behavior**

Attributes/ references	Responsibility	Simplicity	Resignation	Initiative	Willingness practice	Welfare practice	Usefulness
Nobrega (2009)	Responsibility, commitment, consistency, and performance	Simple things, but necessary in value, without feelings of Inferiority	Giving up own desires, space or recovery in favor of another	Proactive actions, with efficient response to client	Proximity, complicity and reciprocity to serve the other	Trend, pleasure and willingness to do good to people	Useful actions, that give results, value and productivity
Brady & Cronin (2001)		X		X	X		
Henning Thura et al	X		X	X		X	X
Getty & Getty (2003)	X	X	X	X			X
Briggs et al (2003)	X			X	X		X
Constellanos Verdugo et al (2009)	X	X		X	X	X	X
Ladhari (2009)	X	X		X	X	X	X
Marcovic & Raspor (2010)	X				X		X
Nassem et al (2011)					X		X
Ariffin & Maghzi (2012)	X	X	X		X	X	X
Brunner Sperdin (2012)	X			X	X		

Table 1 gives an overview of the relationship between the aspects considered by the authors as determinants in service quality and attributes of the server behavior. This relationship was expected, mostly because the dimensions of quality proposed by Parasuraman et al (1988) present some dimensions correlated with the attributes studied, such as responsiveness and empathy.

The relationship explicit in the table, however, classifies the relevant papers in order to group them around a new concept - servant behavior - and thus, enhance its importance.

Table 1 makes clear that aspects of servant behavior more common in the literature were those relating to the responsibility, willingness to help and usefulness. The dimension of conduct emphasizes the responsibility to act with responsibility, commitment, consistency and expected performance. Willingness to help means acting with closeness, complicity, and reciprocity, to serve and help others. The utility, in turn, seeks to give meaning to activities, seeking to perform actions that are useful, that generate results, value and productivity (Nóbrega 2009).

Willing to deep the discussion, we propose Table 2, where the authors are presented with the concepts for determining the quality of services that most closely resemble the dimensions of the servant behavior and related concepts.

As an extension to the previous table, in Table 2 were listed the authors that presented more similarities with the proposed concept of servant behavior. In this way, the work of Castellanos-Verdugo et al (2009) and Arrifin and Maghzi (2012), in correspondence with 6 dimensions and Henning-Thurau et al. (2002), Getty and Getty (2003) and Ladhari (2009) in correspondence with 5 dimensions each were analyzed. Sperdin-

Brunner (2012) and Brady and Cronin (2001) showed similarities in 3 dimensions, but it was chosen to be analyzed the most recent article for more resemblance with the concept worked.

**Table-2 Service Quality orientation towards customer:**

Nóbrega (2009)	Henning-Thurau et al. (2002)	Getty; Getty (2003)	Castellanos-Verdugo et al. (2009)	Ladhari (2009)	Ariffin; Maghzi (2012)	Brunner-Sperdin (2012)	Elements of the author
<b>Responsibility</b>	Commitment	Consistency in service delivery	Constant customer contact	Answers and consistent attention to customers	Accordance with the contracted services	Security in service delivery	Responsibility, commitment and consistency
<b>Simplicity</b>	Careful dealing with the client, filling their needs	Courtesy, politeness and respect	Education in dealing with requests	Respectful treatment	Respectful dealing and customer proximity	Not emphasized	Simple things, but necessary in value without feeling inferior
<b>Resignation</b>	Not emphasized	Willingness to listen to the customer	Not emphasized	Not emphasized	Priority relationship over the money	Not emphasized	Abandoning own desires in favor of another
<b>Initiative</b>	Motivation, empowerment	Anticipation of needs	Attitudes beyond the responsibility	Anticipating customer demands	Not emphasized	Responsiveness	Acting proactively and responsive
<b>Willingness to help</b>	Not emphasized	Not emphasized	Dedicating time to the customer	Patience with requests	Help with luggage	Empathy	Sense of closeness, complicity, in order to help
<b>Welfare practices</b>	Extensive social skills	Not emphasized	Good treatment, regardless of the size of the purchase	Not emphasized	Hospitality as a natural feature of staff	Not emphasized	Pleasure, tendency and willingness to do good
<b>Usefulness</b>	Consideration of the customer's perspective	Efficiency; effortful requests	Knowledge about customers' needs	Quickness in solving problems	Solving problems	Not emphasized	Perform useful actions with results, value and productivity

A common thread among these works is that they deal with aspects of quality, service-orientation (2012) and Brunner-Sperdin (2012). Brady and Cronin (2001) and Ladhari (2009) also relates the construct of service quality with the relation between employee and customers. orientation) and Brunner-Sperdin (2012). Brady and Cronin (2001) and Ladhari (2009) also relates the construct of service quality with the relation between employee and customers.

This reinforces the connection made between these articles and the servant behavior aspects considered in this work. Besides confirming the conceptual aspects proposed by Nobrega (2009),

some authors have added knowledge to concepts such as "safety in service provision" (Brunner-Sperdin 2012) in responsibility dimension; "priority to the relationship to the detriment of the money" (Ariffin and Maghzi 2012), in relationship marketing with customers. Castellanos-Verdugo et al. (2009) research on employee-customer relationship quality. Henning-Thurau (2002) integrates concepts of relational benefits and relationship quality. The influence of service personnel in the expectations and the desired satisfying emotional experiences are related by Ariffin and Maghzi 2012, in resignation dimension and "extensive social skills" (Henning-Thurau 2002) in willingness to help dimension. These results therefore collaborate to establish the relationship between service quality and employee behavior in the proposed objectives of this study.

### **Conclusion:**

In this paper we addressed the themes of quality services, consumer orientation and employee's behavior in the hospitality industry. The considerations on issues contributed to the creation of the framework for better understanding and development of the study to be performed. In reviewing the literature, we noticed the importance of the intangible dimensions of service provision in the definition of customer satisfaction and quality perceived by him. Several studies highlight aspects such as courtesy of the hotel staff, understanding and care of employees with customers, selecting qualified and attentive staff, plus genuine need to please and take care of customers. In the literature review it was highlighted the importance of service quality to maintain the competitiveness of enterprises. A customer orientation and servant behavior, in turn, appear to be important factors to consider in developing organizational strategies. The considerations of Nobrega (2009) on the behavior servant complement these findings, emphasizing the relevance of aspects such as responsibility, simplicity, renunciation, initiative, willingness to help, welfare practices and usefulness in the composition of the concept of service-oriented company: fully directed to meet the needs and welfare of its customers. Service quality and its evaluation by SERVQUAL has been extensively explored over the years, which shows a theoretical necessity of exploring the subject from different approaches. By relating the behavior servant with quality service, this paper demonstrates, in the proposed context, the relevance of the relationship built between employee and customer in the construction of quality perception and satisfaction of the latter. As the theoretical results, so this work positively related dimensions of servant behavior with the perception of service quality. Thus, it is intended to corroborate the results of previous studies showing that intangible and emotional relationship between employees and customers are important in building customers' perceptions about the quality of service consumed.

Although there were not found in literature authors that use the same term "servant behavior" as Nobrega (2009) proposed, were found in studies on service quality aspects that are related to the concepts given to each of the dimensions of this type of behavior. In most of the studies, the intangibles that referred to the behavior of the employee dedicated to the customer was responsible for explaining much of the variation in customers' satisfaction or quality perceived by them. Among the study's results, Table 1 makes clear that aspects of servant behavior more common in the literature were those relating to responsibility, willingness to help and usefulness. Later, relation between elements of Nobrega (2009) and service quality aspects reinforces the connection made between these and the literature reviewed journals servant behavior aspects considered in this work. These results therefore collaborate to establish the relationship between service quality and servant behavior in the proposed objectives of this study. The results of this study should be interpreted considering some limitations. The subjective nature and purely theoretical theme of this work can be interpreted in different ways. To minimize this aspect, future research may focus on the empirical aspect to confirm through empirical research and testing more sophisticated statistical correlation theory presented here.

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