SERVICE QUALITY TOWARDS RETAIL STORES ON EXPECTED AND PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between expected service quality and perceived service quality in retail stores.

Theoretical framework: The study will be based on the Servqual model, which measures service quality by assessing the gap between expected and perceived service.

Design/methodology/approach: The research will be conducted using a survey method. A sample of customers from various retail stores will be asked to rate their expected and perceived service quality. The data will be analyzed using statistical techniques to determine the relationship between the two variables.

Findings: The findings of the study will show the extent to which customers' expectations are met by retail stores in terms of service quality. The results will also indicate areas where retailers need to improve in order to meet customers' expectations.

Research, practical and social implications: The research will provide insight into how retailers can improve their service quality to meet customers' expectations. The findings will also be useful for retailers in developing strategies to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. The results will also have practical implications for customers in terms of their expectations and perceptions of service quality.

Originality/value: This research paper is of immense value as it depicts the real-life service qualities that have been provided and the perceived quality of service. The wide variety of service quality and commitment of the employees to the customers and stores are also crucial (Liebrechtet al. 2021). The real-life examples are of immense significance as customer service is the need of the hour, applicable at any part of the world. Moreover, this paper has its originality by bringing forth the effectiveness of retail customer service and management of the same.

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QUALIDADE DE SERVIÇO PARA LOJAS DE VAREJO NA QUALIDADE DE SERVIÇO ESPERADA E PERCEBIDA

RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo desta pesquisa é investigar a relação entre a qualidade de serviço esperada e a qualidade de serviço percebida em lojas de varejo.

Referencial teórico: O estudo será baseado no modelo Servqual, que mede a qualidade do serviço avaliando o gap entre o serviço esperado e o percebido.

Desenho/metodologia/abordagem: A pesquisa será conduzida usando um método de levantamento. Uma amostra de clientes de várias lojas de varejo será solicitada a classificar sua qualidade de serviço esperada e percebida. Os dados serão analisados usando técnicas estatísticas para determinar a relação entre as duas variáveis.

Resultados: Os resultados do estudo mostrarão até que ponto as expectativas dos clientes são atendidas pelas lojas de varejo em termos de qualidade de serviço. Os resultados também indicarão áreas em que os varejistas precisam melhorar para atender às expectativas dos clientes.

Pesquisa, implicações práticas e sociais: A pesquisa fornecerá informações sobre como os varejistas podem melhorar a qualidade de seus serviços para atender às expectativas dos clientes. As descobertas também serão úteis para os varejistas no desenvolvimento de estratégias para melhorar a satisfação e a fidelidade do cliente. Os resultados também terão implicações práticas para os clientes em termos de suas expectativas e percepções da qualidade do serviço.

Originalidade/valor: Este trabalho de pesquisa é de imenso valor, pois retrata as qualidades de serviço da vida real que foram fornecidas e a qualidade percebida do serviço. A grande variedade de qualidade de serviço e o comprometimento dos funcionários com os clientes e lojas também são cruciais (Liebrechtet al. 2021). Os exemplos da vida real são de grande importância, pois o atendimento ao cliente é a necessidade do momento, aplicável em qualquer parte do mundo. Além disso, este trabalho tem sua originalidade ao trazer à tona a eficácia do atendimento ao cliente varejista e a gestão do mesmo.

Palavras-chave: Qualidade de Serviço, Lojas de Varejo, Esperado, Percebido, Servqual, Satisfação do Cliente, Lealdade do Cliente.

CALIDAD DEL SERVICIO HACIA LAS TIENDAS MINORISTAS SOBRE LA CALIDAD DEL SERVICIO ESPERADA Y PERCIBIDA

RESUMEN

Propósito: El propósito de esta investigación es investigar la relación entre la calidad de servicio esperada y la calidad de servicio percibida en las tiendas minoristas.

Marco teórico: El estudio se basará en el modelo Servqual, que mide la calidad del servicio evaluando la brecha entre el servicio esperado y el percibido.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: La investigación se llevará a cabo utilizando un método de encuesta. Se le pedirá a una muestra de clientes de varias tiendas minoristas que califiquen la calidad del servicio esperada y percibida. Los datos serán analizados utilizando técnicas estadísticas para determinar la relación entre las dos variables.

Hallazgos: Los hallazgos del estudio mostrarán hasta qué punto las tiendas minoristas cumplen las expectativas de los clientes en términos de calidad del servicio. Los resultados también indicarán áreas en las que los minoristas deben mejorar para cumplir con las expectativas de los clientes.

Investigación, implicaciones prácticas y sociales: la investigación proporcionará información sobre cómo los minoristas pueden mejorar la calidad de su servicio para satisfacer las expectativas de los clientes. Los hallazgos también serán útiles para los minoristas en el desarrollo de estrategias para mejorar la satisfacción y lealtad del cliente. Los resultados también tendrán implicaciones prácticas para los clientes en términos de sus expectativas y percepciones de la calidad del servicio.

Originalidad/valor: este trabajo de investigación tiene un valor inmenso, ya que describe las cualidades del servicio de la vida real que se han proporcionado y la calidad del servicio percibida. La amplia variedad de calidad del servicio y el compromiso de los empleados con los clientes y las tiendas también son cruciales (Liebrecht et al. 2021). Los ejemplos de la vida real tienen una importancia inmensa, ya que el servicio al cliente es la necesidad del momento, aplicable en cualquier parte del mundo. Además, este trabajo tiene su originalidad al poner de manifiesto la eficacia de la atención al cliente minorista y la gestión del mismo.

Palabras clave: Calidad de Servicio, Tiendas Minoristas, Esperada, Percibida, Servqual, Satisfacción del Cliente, Lealtad del Cliente.

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INTRODUCTION

This research paper is going to discuss the service quality of retail stores whether it is done pleasantly and efficiently. How the staff can improve the customer experience is the subject matter of this article. Expected and perceived qualities of services are also elaborated in this article. The main purpose of this research paper is to demonstrate the ways to level up the quality of the customer service in a retail store and the expected outcomes. A couple of theories have been used to demonstrate the same in alienation with the current topic.

The service quality in retail sectors plays a crucial role in generating a large consumer base and increasing overall profitability. As per the comment of Kourtesopoulou et al. (2019), the quality of service involves the way to manage customers timely, efficiently, and pleasantly. Therefore, service quality is directly related to the profitability of a retail company. It has been seen that increasing service quality leads the retail sector to improve customer satisfaction levels. Thus, the concept of service quality can be defined as the way of delivering services to consumers for meeting their requirements and improve their engagement.

Service quality plays a vital role in making a large customer base which is responsible for increasing sales and profits. The retail sectors are mainly affected by the number of consumers, and thus, the analysis of service quality in retail sectors has been chosen.

The objective of this study is to identify the factors that directly impacts the quality of service in retail sectors and to understand the influence of having good service quality in a retail organisation In order to provide service to consumers with quality, experienced and skilled staffs are required. As per the opinion of Laban and Araujo (2020), inadequate knowledge and experience to manage a large number of consumers lead the retail sector to have poor service quality. Furthermore, the inseparability of production along with labour intensity creates poor service quality in a retail company.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In contemporary days, the customer becomes more selective when choosing products. Thus, meeting customer criteria becomes a crucial part of a store to improve their productivity and profit margin. As per the statement of Shah *et al.* (2020), in present days, retail sectors are focusing on the quality of services to know consumers' requirements. By improving service quality, retail organisations can improve their customer base. Moreover, improvement in service quality leads the retail sector to have a competitive advantage while penetrating the competitive marketplace. By improving service quality, organisations can build customer

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loyalty which helps in increasing overall sales and leads sectors to have a high profit. The term service quality refers to the way of managing consumers in a particular manner. There are several factors that directly impact service quality and lead to providing a great customer satisfaction level. As per the views of Mukerjee (2018), tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are the main five components of customer service. It has been seen that these factors lead the entire organisation to create a large customer base and have a high-profit margin.

Figure 1: Five Dimensions of service quality
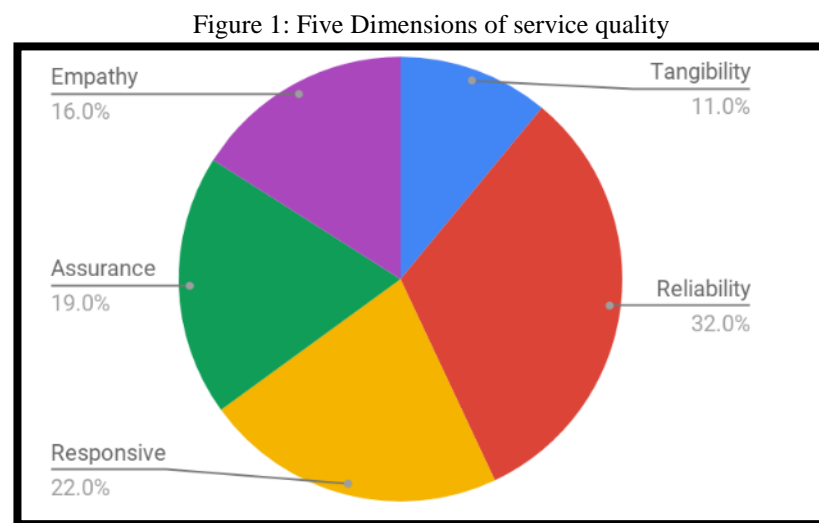
(Source: Kourtesopoulou *et al.* 2019)

The above figure 1 illustrates that the inclusion of reliability in service quality is one of the major impactful components as compared to others.

Required or Not Required Item

Required Item: Comparison of expected and perceived service quality towards retail stores

Not Required Item: Specific retail stores or brands being studied (e.g. "SERVICE QUALITY TOWARDS WALMART AND TARGET ON EXPECTED AND PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY")

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is termed as theoretical and systematic discussion of the existing methods, which are applied by the researcher to gather primary data. This part is of immense significance as it plays a pivotal role in selecting proper tools and techniques to receive

authentic and relevant information. The methodology portion also an emphasis on utilisation of a wide variety of methodological designs and tools to gather proper data followed by an analysis of the topic. Hence, consideration of the required tools to complete the research is on the map in meeting the requirements of the research. Additionally, the usage of appropriate research methodologies is healthy as a horse to resolve the existing complications of the study. Research design is therefore an efficient and excellent process of accumulating, analyzing followed by utilisation of proper information.

A detailed survey has been performed here in this research topic keeping the topic in mind. Survey is considered an efficient strategy giving a hand to the researcher in gathering sufficient information on the topic (Goan and Fookes, 2020). Many researchers have accepted this strategy as they provide proper and real-life information from authentic sources is cost-effective. In this research, the collection of data from real-life individuals as well as employees of the retail stores helped analyse the information with profound conclusions. A number of *close-ended* questions were framed to obtain information in a systematic way. Proper charts and graphs were used in his research after the survey session to visualise the whole process. The survey was justified as it has provided genuine information from the employees of the retail stores on improving the quality of service as well as all and sundry to gain knowledge about the perceived service quality.

The Servqual model is the superior way to compare the service quality of an organization and the service quality that is expected. The expectations and perceptions of customers are reflected through this model. According to Akter *et al.* (2019), theservqual model helps in assisting strategies to improve business quality by looking at the important concerns. Customers these days have become more demanding than before and their tastes have been changing by and by. In view of this, superior product quality is not good enough and customers expect decent customer service as well (Shah *et al.* 2020). This customer service is considered an *integral component* other than the physical products.

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Figure 2: Different components of the Servqual model
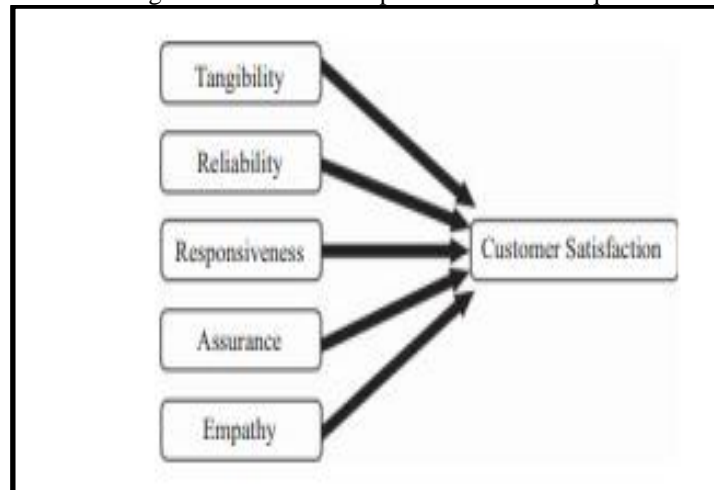
(Source: Shafiq*et al.* 2019)

As shown in figure 2, the five major determinants of service quality are ***tangibility*** that is staff appearance, communication materials, equipment, and associated physical facilities. ***Reliability*** is performing the task accurately and effectively which is fundamental in retail stores. ***Responsiveness*** is the willingness to serve the customers as per their needs whereas ***empathy*** is the individualised caring services that are if pay priority and heed to the requirements of the customers (Kim-Soon *et al*. 2022). The other dimensions may exist as a form of security, courtesy, access and understanding. Apart from these dimensions, five gaps in this model are found. The first one is the ***knowledge gap*** where the information provided by the form to the requirements of customers is not enough. The second one is the standard ***gap*** where the performance standards are not complementary and the delivery ***gap*** is the mismatch between demand and supply. Last one is the communication and satisfaction gap, which is failure to perform the expected or desired services (Khoi *et al*. 2019). Hence, this model caters to the profitability and customer retention of the retail stores.

The theory of service is the knowledge of what is normal and permanent in providing services. It is the ***tacit form*** of support or providing services on a customer's requests as per their needs. As stated by Khamitov*et al.* (2020), two modes of service quality approaches can be found such as ***the descriptive*** and ***normative*** theory of service. The descriptive approach is the knowledge of past and present activities sans any modification to the latest requirements such as the historical papers. The latter describes the knowledge as well tools that need to be implemented in fostering better services and planning to improve the same. This is extensive as it requires ample cases for the material.

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Figure 3: Theory of service quality
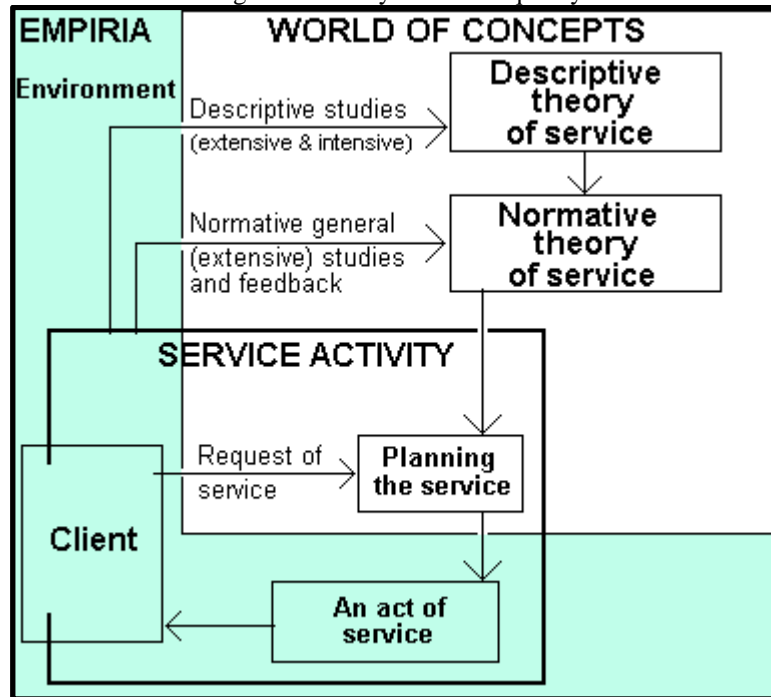
(Source: Khamitov*et al.* 2020)

As per figure 3, *request of service* is another important tool that is marked as the removal of the issues in existing services. The subdivisions of the theory of service cater to meeting the goals of the services. As stated by Kvale*et al.* (2020), *the technology* and *economy* of the services as well as *the quality and time* of services are of utmost significance when the retail stores are considered. Moreover, occupational health and safety needs to be paid attention along with the psychology and motivation of the activities performed (Kourtesopoulou*et al.* 2019). The special advantage of this theory is to benefit the customers and prevent *future illness*.

The service quality has undoubtedly practical as well as social implication in the modern era. Making the consumers feel committed and satisfied to a retail brand is a strategic mix to give a competitive advantage to the retailers. As per the view of Mukerjee(2018), service quality can never be undervalued as it is the primary need and must be adopted everywhere. The *customer-brand* relationship is of immense significance in practical life catering to the needs of adopting the expected service quality.

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Figure 4: Global retail sales
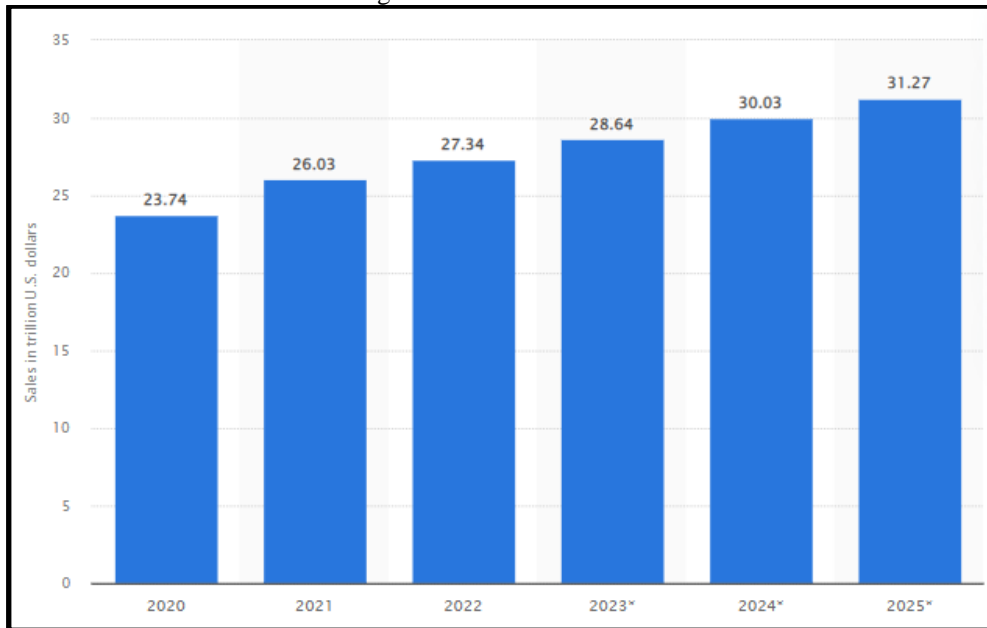
(Source: Statista, 2022)

It is clear from figure 4 that retail sales across the globe were projected to 31.7 trillion U.S. dollars by 2025, which were 23.74 in 2020. Therefore, the journey of goods and services is being increased exponentially through the decade by and by fostering the needs of service quality.

This quality of service has a higher social value as it caters to the requirements of the customers and makes them feel confident to visit the retail shops again. Moreover, this customer-friendly approach is important to build a social rapport between the consumers and the retailers for mutual benefits (Laban and Araujo, 2020). Additionally, retail sales would certainly be enhanced while there is no gap between expected and perceived service quality. Thus, it is not difficult to understand why the service quality in the retail sector has higher societal value in today's world.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Proper analysis of accumulated information was done in a quantitative method. The effectiveness of service quality in the retail sector was associated with the responses of the survey and a perfect analysis was made. Relevant data was received with the help of the responses from the employees of the retail sectors of the country to come to a feasible conclusion.

Figure 5: Response gathered for the demographic aspect of respondents based on age
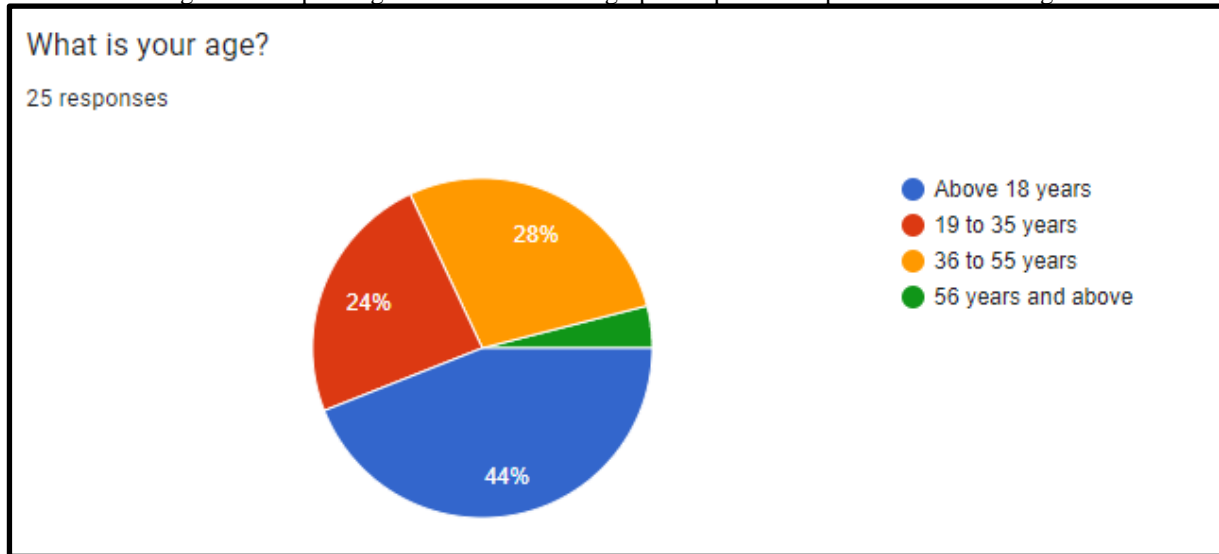
Source: Google Form

In the above diagram, 44% of the respondents were above 18 years of age. Out of them, only a limited proportion of respondents contributed as 56 years and above. 40% and 36% respondents were males and females respectively while 24% were uninterested to mention the same.

Figure 6: Designation of the respondent
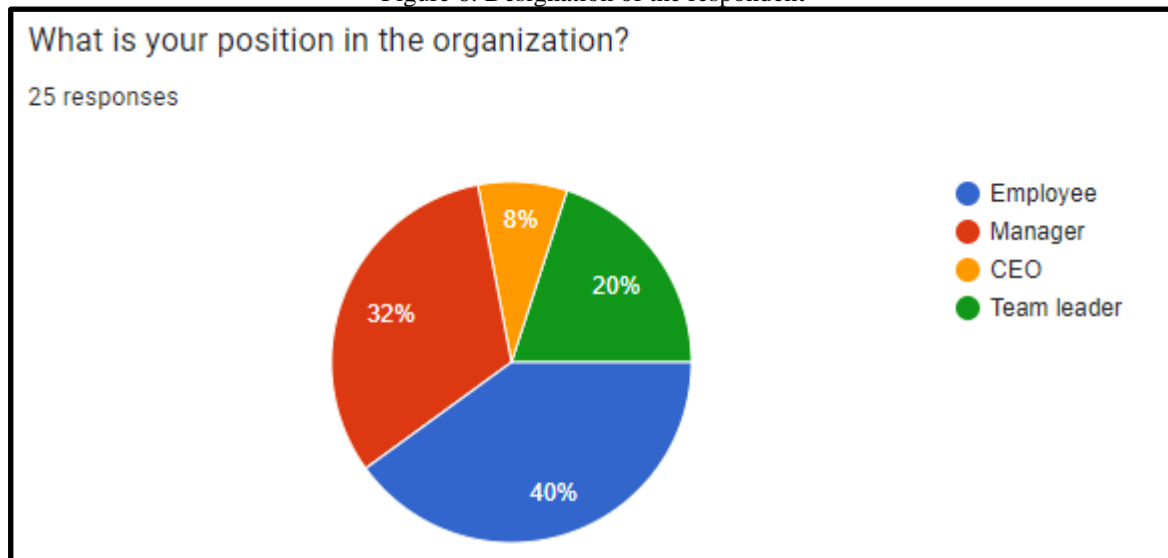
Source: Google Form

From the above figure, 40% of the members were employees of the organisation, 32% contributed as managers and 20% were team leaders. The response received from the CEO was worth its weight in gold as the experience was taken for further analysis along with various sources of information. a mixed response was found while service quality was considered the

fundamental factor in retail sectors. Overall, it can be said that service quality may not act as the most critical factor in the retail sectors.

In this diagram also, the responses were mixed and the majority preferred to remain in a position of neutral. 20% of respondents refused to state that the decision-making strategies of the main company do not influence its performance.

Out of the 25 respondents, more than 50 % saw eye to eye with the fact that service quality is essential for the retail sector. Although 20% of the respondents did not agree with the fact of the above statement, most of the respondents provided a positive response.

Figure 7: Expected service quality
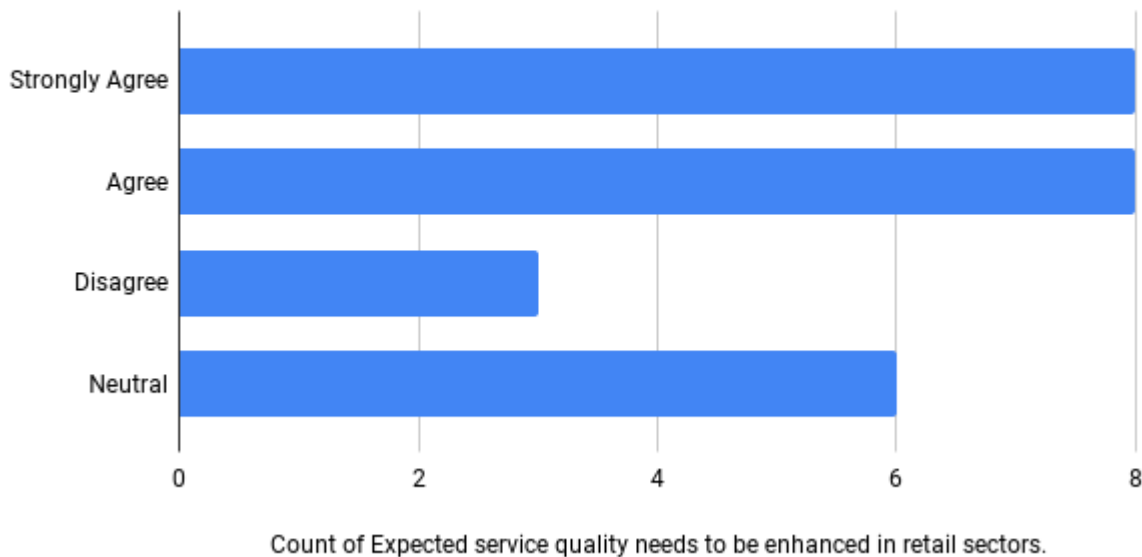
Source: Google Form

From the above diagram, it is crystal-clear that the service quality must be enhanced in the retail sector to alleviate many disputes as more than 60% of the respondents agreed upon the fact. Nobody disagreed with the fact of the importance of the enhancement of the service quality.

More than 70% of the respondents are inclined to the fact that service quality and customer service are interlinked.

28% of the respondents agreed upon the fact that commitment is crucial while 28% had different views on this fact.

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New strategies can be implemented for effective and enhanced customer service to be provided to the customers.

50% respondents agreed to the fact of customer friendly approaches in the retail shops whereas 24% still refused. In their opinion, it is at times hard to deal with arrogant and stubborn customers.

More than 60% of the respondents argued on the importance of receiving customer feedback from time to time. Hence, it is not difficult to understand that regular feedback from customers is quite helpful for making strategies and implementing them in the stores.

Figure 8: Reputation of the store
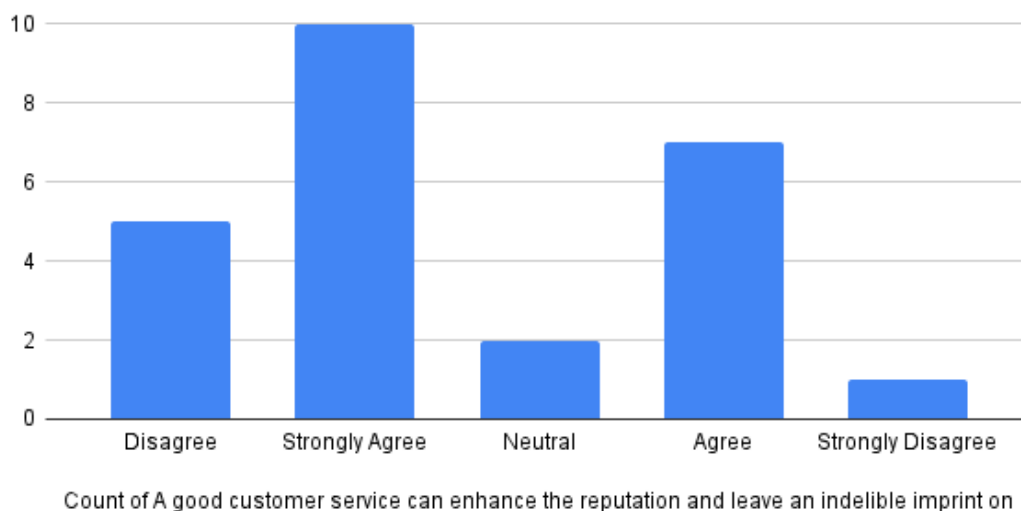
Source: Google Form

From the above diagram, 70% of the respondents saw eye to eye with the fact that decent customer service is the order of the day. Only 20% of the respondents refused to believe the same.

Service quality has great implications in the modern world. It is of unquestionable doubt that service quality leaves an imprint on the minds of consumers which needs to be at a superior level. 72% of respondents considered that service quality has utter significance.

36% of respondents have agreed that training can have a beneficial impact on the future. 20% of respondents made it clear that training is not that essential and on-the-job training can be fruitful in this regard.

Table 1: Questions and responses of the respondents

Serial number	Question of the survey	Responses with highest percentage
1	What is your age?	Above 18 years of age
2	What is your gender?	Male
3	What is your position in the organization?	Employee
4	Service quality acts as the most important element in case of Service sector organizations.	Disagree
5	Retail stores are highly dependent upon the strategic methods applied by the main company.	Agree, Neutral
6	Service quality plays the pivotal role while retail sectors are concerned.	Neutral
7	Expected service quality needs to be enhanced in retail sectors.	Agree
8	Perceived service quality is inextricably linked with the customer service.	Strongly Agree, Agree
9	Commitment to the customers is the need of the hour as per the future market trends.	Agree, Disagree
10	Implementation of novel strategies can be a significant approach towards customer service.	Agree
11	Providing authentic and customer -friendly approaches is linked with reputation of the store.	Agree
12	Feedback of the customers is also necessary to receive their viewpoints.	Agree
13	A good customer service can enhance the reputation and leave an indelible imprint on their minds.	Strongly Agree
14	Service quality has supreme level of implications in today's world.	Agree
15	Training can be provided to the greenhorn employees to make them more practical.	Agree

Source: Google Form

Table 1 mentioned the questions of the survey asked to the respondents, and the response of the Likert scale with the highest percentage.

The concept of service quality is directly linked with customer satisfaction level. From the survey, it has been seen that getting the customers' viewpoints and the implication of customer-friendly approaches is an important way to improve service quality. Moreover, it can be noticed that improving the service quality can enhance the company's name in the marketplace.

CONCLUSION

The chapter has predominantly focused on the information collected through primary sources that include surveys with the concepts of this topic related to service quality of retail stores. The conclusion can be drawn that this current research has been performed by *primary quantitative* research. Different suitable methods, purposes, values, and associated and relevant theories have been discussed. Therefore, it can be concluded that the service quality is of immense significance in today's world along with expected and perceived service quality. The

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importance of training has much significance while the retail stores are considered. The drawbacks of the survey procedure which is used to conduct this survey generate some limitations. Using the Likert scale to measure the answer and involving only close-ended questions in the survey leads to limited research. Furthermore, the short timeline and insufficient cost to gather other resources lead to this study to limitations. There is an unquestionable doubt about the future scopes of the research in stabilising the service qualities in several retail stores. On the other hand, the viewpoints of the customers and their opinions on the importance of service quality cannot be ignored and considered one of the pillars of the study (van der Goot and Pilgrim, 2020). Limitations of service quality can be a major risk affecting the process of providing commitment to the customers and can be elaborated in a significant manner. Moreover, there is a scope to build effective strategies and budgetary planning and training of the employees regarding the need of improving the service. Lastly, a positive impact would be kept while there is a commendable service and the possibility of a positive review is inevitable.

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APPENDIX: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1. What is your age?

- Above 18 years
- 19 to 35 years
- 36 to 55 years
- 56 years and above

Q2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Q3. What is your position in the organization?

- Employee
- Manager
- CEO
- Team leader

Q4. Service quality acts as the most important element in case of Service sector organizations.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q5. Retail stores are highly dependent upon the strategic methods applied by the main company.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q6. Service quality plays the pivotal role while retail sectors are concerned.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree

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- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

Q7. Expected service quality needs to be enhanced in retail sectors.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

Q8. Perceived service quality is inextricably linked with the customer service.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

Q9. Commitment to the customers is the need of the hour as per the future market trends.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

Q10. Implementation of novel strategies can be a significant approach towards customer service.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

Q11. Providing authentic and customer -friendly approaches is linked with reputation of the store.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

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- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

Q12. Feedback of the customers are also necessary to receive their viewpoints.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

Q13. A good customer service can enhance the reputation and leave an indelible imprint on their minds.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

Q14. Service quality has supreme level of implications in today's world.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree

Q15. Training can be provided to the greenhorn employees to make them more practical.

- Strongly Disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly Agree