

CONSUMER PERCEPTION ON SERVICE QUALITY OF ONLINE SHOPPING WEBSITES

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ABSTRACT

Online shopping is one of the most widely used words in the business world. It is very common in developing and developed countries. Now virtual store, market spaces are very commonly used word. In India during last ten years online shopping has grown very fast. A lot of online shopping websites have been developed. In the past decade, there has been a dramatic change in the way consumers have altered their way of shopping. Although consumers continue to purchase from a physical store, yet consumers feel very convenient to shop online since it frees the customer from personally visiting the store, online shopping has lots of advantages like it saves time, energy of the consumer while buying. In case of online shopping buying decisions can be made at home by comparing the products with the competitor's products with lots of varieties.

Keywords: *Online Shopping, Consumer Perception, Service Quality, Quantitative Measurement, Competence.*

Introduction

Service Quality is one of the top key result areas when it comes to measuring the performance of the retail environment, which is often evaluated by quantitative measurement criteria in terms of subjective and objective user satisfaction. To measure the service quality, authors developed various dimensions out of which Parasuraman's service quality model is most popular. According to this model service quality has following dimensions.

Tangibles

- The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and information material

Reliability

- The ability to perform the service accurately and dependably

Responsiveness

- The willingness to help customers and provide a prompt service

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Assurance

- A combination of the following
- Competence - having the requisite skills and knowledge
- Courtesy - politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness of contact staff
- Credibility - trustworthiness, believability and honesty of staff
- Security - freedom from danger, risk or doubt

Empathy

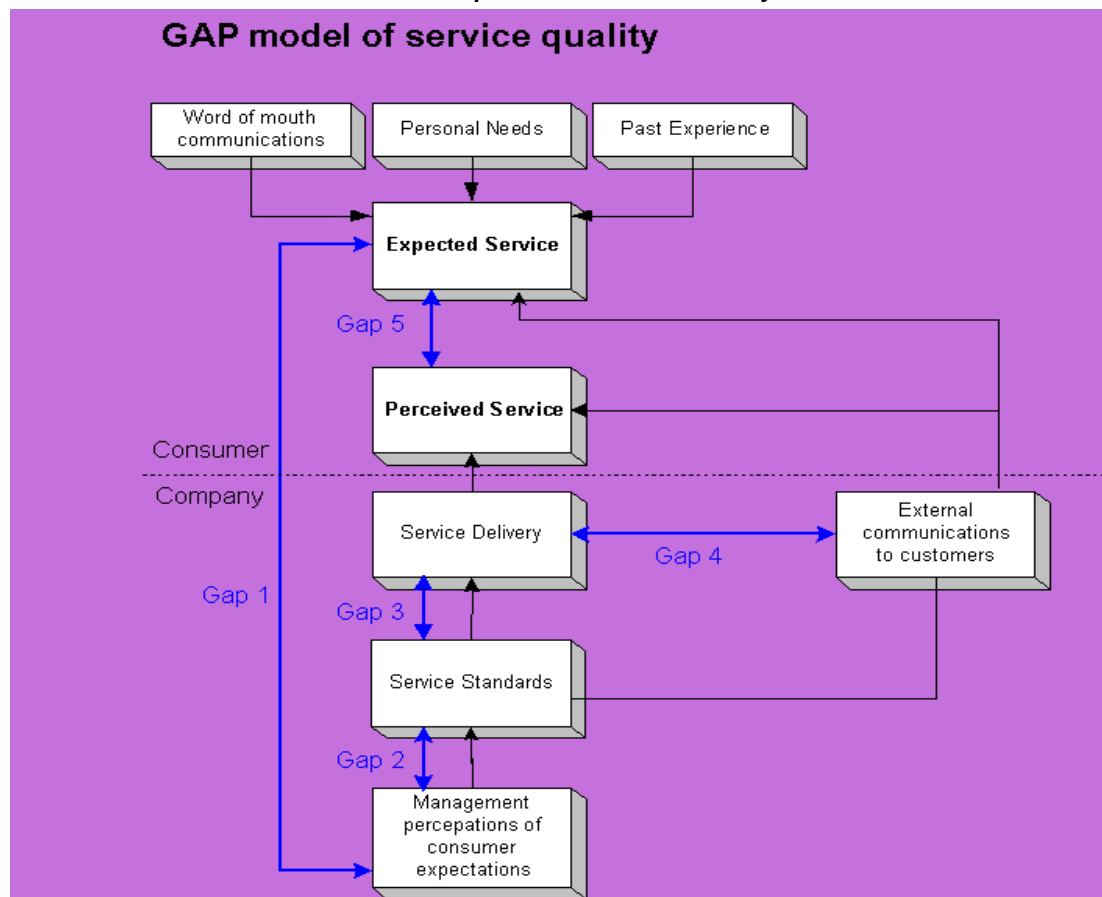
A combination of the following:

Access (physical and social) - approachability and ease of contact

Communication - keeping customers informed in a language they understand and really listening to them

Understanding the customer - making the effort to get to know customers and their specific needs
Generally quality is measured by the gap between expected & perceived service which is just a potential gap. Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1985) did an exploratory research and developed a conceptual model linking customer perceived quality deficiencies to intra-company deficiencies or gaps. In this conceptual model, they have identified five potential gaps. Various gapes are illustrated here under:

Chart 1: Gap Model of Service Quality

**Gap 1**

The difference between management perceptions of what customers expect and what customers really do expect

Gap 2

The difference between management perceptions and service quality specifications - the standards gap

Gap 3

The difference between service quality specifications and actual service delivery - are standards consistently met?

Gap 4

The difference between service delivery and what is communicated externally - are promises made consistently fulfilled?

Gap 5

The difference between what customers expect of a service and what they actually receive

- expectations are made up of past experience, word-of-mouth and needs/wants of customers
- measurement is on the basis of two sets of statements in groups according to the five key service dimensions

Reasons for the gaps can be following:

Gap 1

- Not knowing what customers expect
- lack of a marketing orientation
- Inadequate upward communication (from contact staff to management)
- Too many levels of management

Gap 2

- The wrong service quality standards
- Inadequate commitment to service quality
- lack of perception of feasibility - 'it cannot be done'
- Inadequate task standardisation
- The absence of goal setting

Gap 3

- The service performance gap
- Role ambiguity and role conflict - unsure of what your remit is and how it fits with others
- Poor employee or technology fit - the wrong person or system for the job
- Inappropriate supervisory control or lack of perceived control - too much or too little control
- Lack of teamwork

Gap 4

- When promises made do not match actual delivery
- Inadequate horizontal communication - between departments or services
- A propensity to overpromise

Gap 5

- Customers' perceptions & expectations did not match

Review of Literature

Customer perception has earned a lot of interest in recent times as a tool for assessing service quality in service-oriented organizations. Although numerous studies have addressed customers' perceptions of service quality in traditional service settings, a relatively small volume of literature has empirically examined service quality issues in the online retailing environment. The perceived service quality of the online retail sector in Nigeria is above average, but there is still room for improvement. The chi-square test shows that customer perception is not affected by demographics.

Suhail Ahmad Bhat and Mushtaq Ahmad Darzi state that one of the major motivators for people to engage in online purchasing is a lack of faith in the process. An online company that lacks trust suffers financial losses since the vendor won't provide the anticipated profits. Online retailers must foster an environment of trust and confidence if dot.com is to succeed in the future. Four e-service quality factors are included in the proposed model: online information, dependability, interaction, and security. Except for online information, three directly affect perceived utility and indirect e-trust.

Research Methodology

In modern time it is said that a business is much successful which fulfill the customer satisfaction and customer expectation very well. Keeping in this view study aims *to find out to examine the gap between perceived services and expected services from online shopping websites*. The proposed study has hypothesis is

H₀: There is no significant gap between perceived services and expected services.

The primary data has been gathered from customers of online shopping websites. A well-structured questionnaire was administered to collect the information about their perception and expectation with online shopping.

Data Analysis

In this section SERVQUAL model is done, which is used to measure the service quality. This model includes 5 service quality dimensions i.e. tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The researcher explored customer's expectation and perception levels on each dimension of service quality.

The degree of satisfaction towards service quality of online shopping websites is set from 1 to 5 (5 is from the highest expectation/perception, whereas, 1 is the lowest expectation/perception). Following criteria is used for analysis part:

- The score among 1.00-1.80 mean lowest expectation/perception The score among 1.81-2.60 mean low expectation/perception The score among 2.61-3.40 mean average expectation/perception The score among 3.41-4.20 mean high expectation/perception The score among 4.21-5.00 mean highest expectation/perception.
- The mean quality gap score has been calculated by subtracting the expectation mean score from perception mean score. The positive gap projects that customers' expectations were met while negative gap score shows that customers experienced less as compare to the expectations. The analysis is divided into following sub-sections

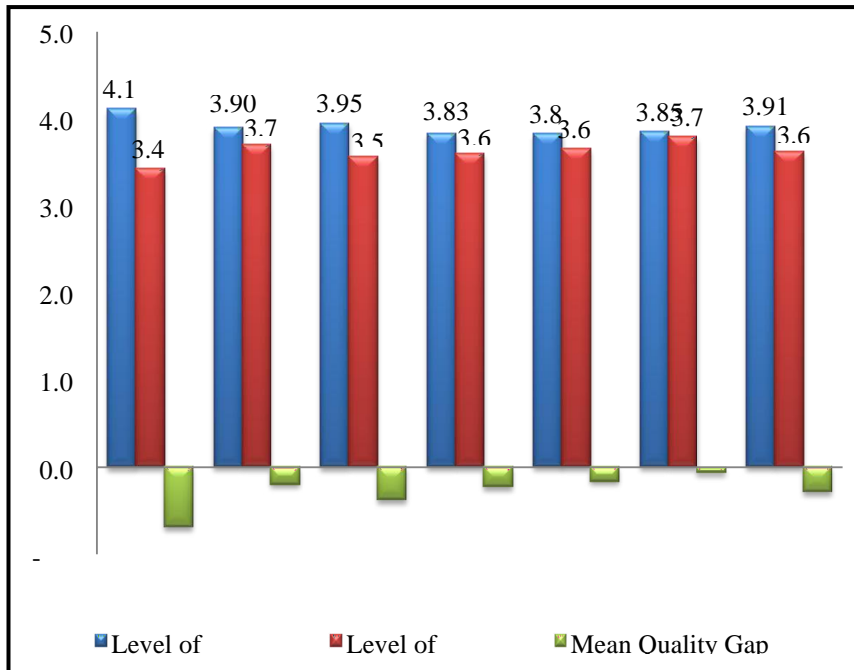
Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Reliability Dimension

Reliability dimension projects the service provider's ability to perform the service accurately and dependably, to measure the customers' expectations & perceptions concerning reliability dimension their views were demanded on six statements as shown in table 4.1.1

Table 1: Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Reliability Dimension

Reliability	Level of Expectation		Level of Perception		Mean Quality Gap Score
	Mean	Level	Mean	Level	
The Website when it promises to do something in a certain time it does so	4.11	High	3.43	High	-0.68
All relevant order confirmation details are sent to email	3.90	High	3.70	High	-0.20
Order cancellation and returns are confirmed within specified time	3.95	High	3.57	High	-0.38
The online website services performs the service right from the first time	3.83	High	3.60	High	-0.23
Order tracking details are available until delivery	3.82	High	3.66	High	-0.16
The website is available all the time	3.85	High	3.79	High	-0.06
Overall Mean Score	3.91	High	3.62	High	-0.29

Chart 1: Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Reliability Dimension



It can be observed from the table that customers' expectations are high for all the factors related to the reliability, where their expectations are highest with the mean score of 4.11, which projects that every time customers desire the availability of demanded service on time.

On the counter side perception level for all statements is also high. Even though for all the statements level of expectation & perception is high but the gap score for all the statements is negative, which highlights the customer dissatisfaction with reliability dimension.

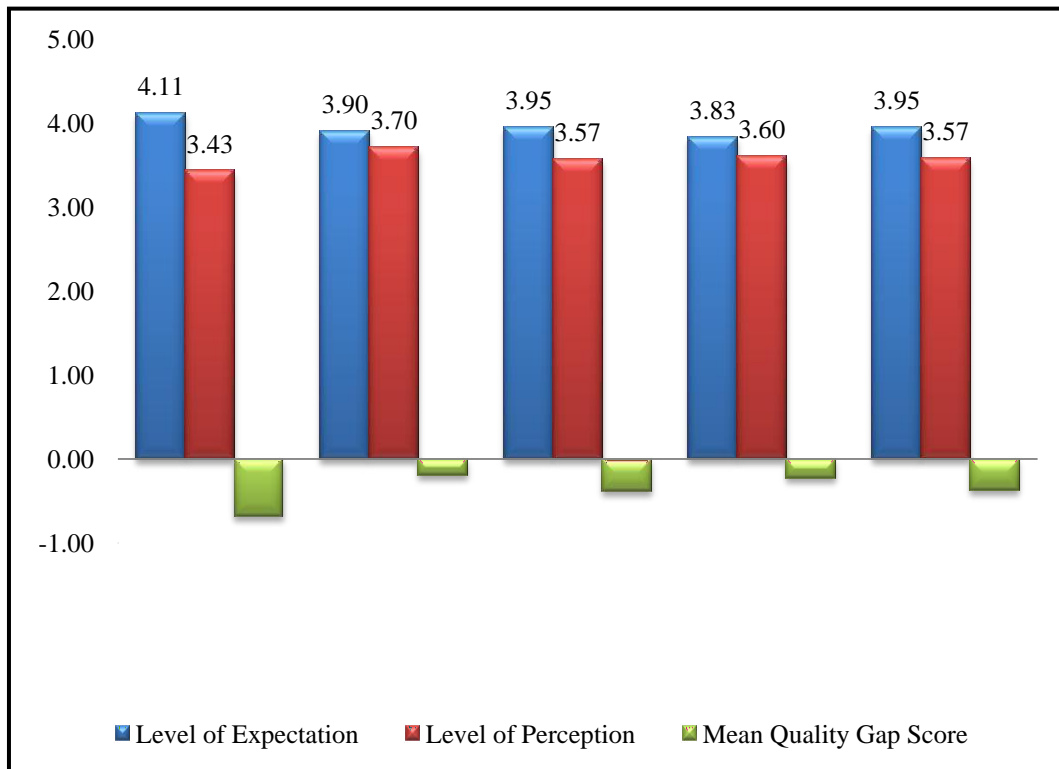
Table 1 shows that overall expectation concerning "Reliability" dimension is high (3.91) & the overall perception towards "Reliability" dimension is also high (3.62) but the mean quality gap score is negative (-0.29) which shows that online shopping websites are not completely able to perform the promised services accurately.

Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Responsiveness

Responsiveness dimension is related with the employees' willingness to help customers and provide prompt services. The table reveal the respondents' expectations & perception concerning to responsiveness dimension.

Table 2: Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Responsiveness Dimension

Responsiveness	Level of Expectation		Level of Perception		Mean Quality Gap Score
	Mean	Level	Mean	Level	
Automated or human e-mail responses give customers prompt Service	4.11	High	3.43	High	-0.68
Website addresses are included in all existing documentation, publicity and advertising channels	3.90	High	3.70	High	-0.20
Email responses are relevant and accurate and appropriate to customer requirements	3.95	High	3.57	High	-0.38
The website shows sincere interest in resolving any problems	3.83	High	3.60	High	-0.23
Overall Mean Score	3.95	High	3.57	High	-0.37

Chart 2: Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Responsiveness Dimension

It is clear from the table that customers' expectations are high for all the factors concerning responsiveness dimension while for all the factors perception is also in high range only, which clearly indicates the customer dimension. The difference between expectation & perception is highest (-0.68) for the statement that "Automated or human e-mail responses give customers prompt Service". It means Automated or human e-mail responses need major improvement.

The overall customers' expectations concerning responsiveness dimension is high (3.95), while the overall customers' perception is also high (3.57). The mean quality gap score is negative (-0.37) which shows that there is lack of willingness of online shopping websites to help customers & provide prompt services

Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Assurance Dimension

Assurance dimension includes Employees' knowledge, courtesy and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. The expectation & perception scores of customers related to assurance dimension are presented in table 4.3.1.

Table 3: Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Assurance Dimension

Assurance	Level of Expectation		Level of Perception		Mean Quality Gap Score
	Mean	Level	Mean	Level	
The website has adequate security features	4.11	High	3.43	High	-0.68
The website has a good reputation	4.11	High	3.43	High	-0.68
I feel I can trust this website	3.90	High	3.70	High	-0.20
The company delivering the right product at the customer site.	3.95	High	3.57	High	-0.38
The security & privacy policies are easily accessible	3.83	High	3.60	High	-0.23
Overall Mean Score	3.98	High	3.54	High	-0.44

Chart 3: Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Assurance Dimension

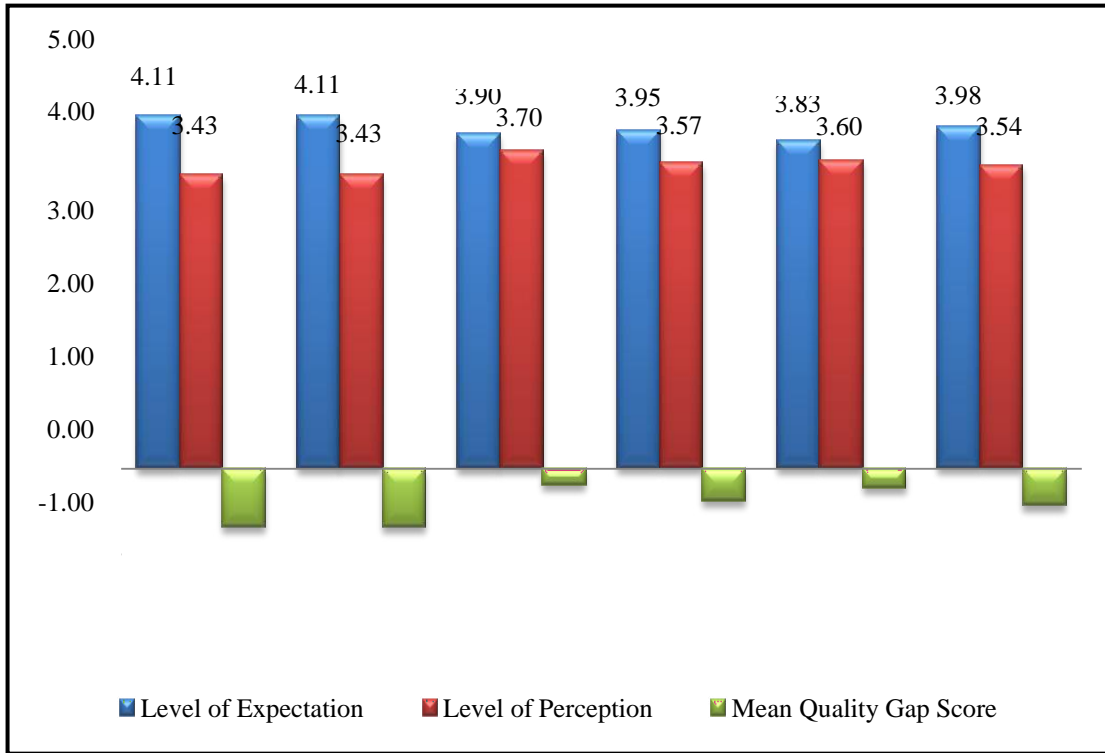


Table shows that overall expectation concerning “Assurance” dimension is high (3.98) wherein the overall score of perception towards “Assurance” dimension is at also high level (3.54), with “I feel I can trust this website (3.70)” receiving maximum score in this category. The mean quality gap score is negative (-0.44) which shows that online shopping websites don’t have enough knowledge & courtesy to inspire trust & confidence among customers.

Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Empathy Dimension

Empathy dimension is related with Caring, individualized attention given to customers or the ease of access, approachability and effort taken to understand customers’ requirements. To measure customers’ expectation & perception concerning empathy dimension, they were asked four statements as presented in table

Table 4: Customers' Expectation & Perception Concerning Empathy

Empathy	Level of Expectation		Level of Perception		Mean Quality Gap Score
	Mean	Level	Mean	Level	
Links on pages are provides for related products or services.	4.11	High	3.43	High	-0.68
Graphics and animation do not detract me from use (e.g. Pop-ups)	3.90	High	3.70	High	-0.20
It is easy to print from websites	3.95	High	3.57	High	-0.38
I always find my desired products	3.83	High	3.60	High	-0.23
Overall Mean Score	3.95	High	3.57	High	-0.37

The analysis of empathy dimension projects that customers’ expectations are perceptions are high for all statements. The minimum gap (-0.20) has been identified for the statement “Graphics and animation do not detract me from use” and maximum gap (-0.68) has been found for the statement “Links on pages are provides for related products or services”

Table shows that overall expectation concerning “Empathy” dimension is 3.95 wherein perception towards “Empathy” dimension is 3.57. The mean quality gap score is negative (-0.37) which shows that online shopping websites don’t give complete individual attention to customers.

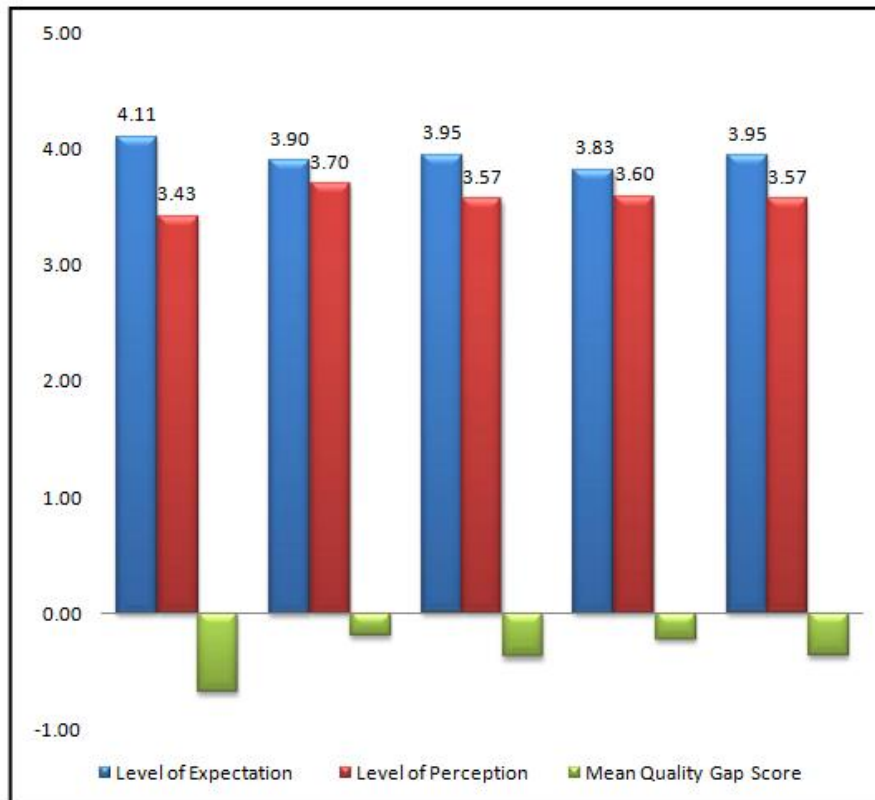


Chart 4: Customers’ Expectation & Perception Concerning Empathy Dimension

Customers’ Expectation&Perception Concerning Tangibles Dimension

Tangibles are related with the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and information material. The customers’ expectation & perception concerning tangibles are presented in table 4.5.1

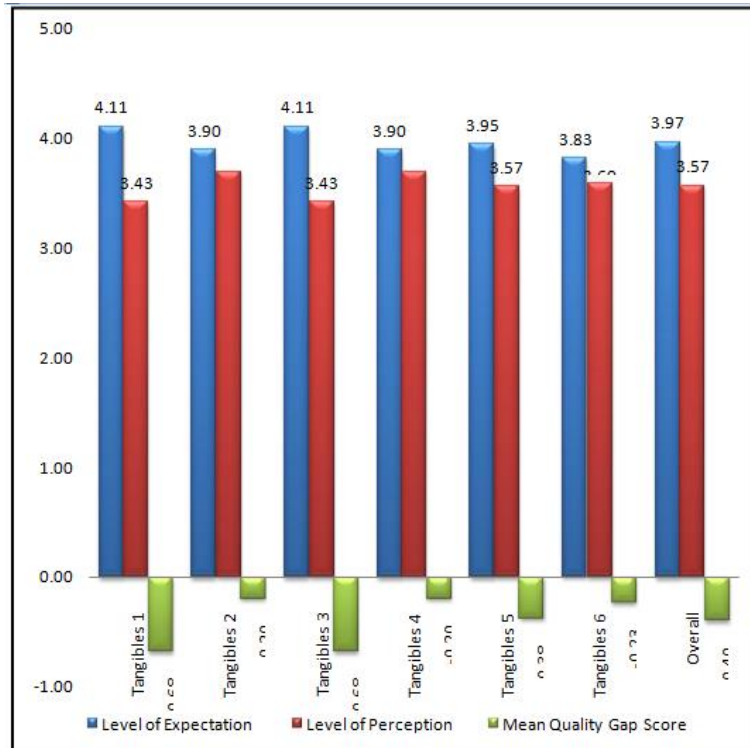
Table 5: Customers’ Expectation & Perception Concerning Tangibles Dimension

Tangibles	Level of Expectation		Level of Perception		Mean Quality Gap Score
	Mean	Level	Mean	Level	
Information is found on minimum clicks	4.11	High	3.43	High	-0.68
Navigation is consistent and standardized	3.90	High	3.70	High	-0.20
Finding your way on websites is easy	4.11	High	3.43	High	-0.68
There are well programmed search options	3.90	High	3.70	High	-0.20
Instructions are directly available	3.95	High	3.57	High	-0.38
Opening of new screen is kept to minimum	3.83	High	3.60	High	-0.23
Overall Mean Score	3.97	High	3.57	High	-0.40

Table 5 shows that overall expectation concerning “Tangibles” dimension is high (3.97) wherein expectations are also high for all the factors. The overall satisfaction of perception towards “Tangibles” dimension is at high level (3.57), with “Navigation is consistent and standardized (3.70) & There are well programmed search options (3.70)” receiving maximum score in this category.

The mean quality gap score is negative (-0.40) which shows that tangibility of online shopping websites are somewhere lacking.”

Chart 5 Customers’ Expectation & Perception Concerning Tangibles Dimension



Hypothesis Testing

H₀: There is no significant gap between perceived services and expected services

H₁: There is a significant gap between perceived services and expected services

Here, difference between perceived services & expected services has been calculated. It was found that for all the five dimensions of SERVQUAL i.e. Reliability, responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Tangibles difference was negative. Although there is a negative difference between perceived services & expected services which leads to the customer dissatisfaction, still to measure significance of difference between mean scores t- test is applied as shown in table

t-Test Results to Measure significant gap between perceived services and expected services

Attributes		Mean	S.D.	t- values	p- value	Result
Reliability	Expectation	3.91	1.003	3.29	0.0011	Significant
	Perception	3.62	1.03			
Responsiveness	Expectation	3.81	0.98	4.022	0.0001	Significant
	Perception	3.47	0.97			
Assurance	Expectation	3.84	1.01	3.505	0.0005	Significant
	Perception	3.53	1.03			
Empathy	Expectation	3.79	1.039	3.579	0.0004	Significant
	Perception	3.46	1.087			
Tangibles	Expectation	3.83	1.01	3.325	0.0009	Significant
	Perception	3.53	1.07			

Level of Significance = 5%

At 5% level of significance significant difference has been identified between perceived services & expected services. It means customers' expectations are not meeting and it can be concluded that there is a significant gap between perceived services and expected services. The result shows that customers are expecting more and getting less and this gap between expectations and experience it may lead to dissatisfaction.

Conclusion

This study summarise that The degree of satisfaction towards service quality of online shopping websites is set from 1 to 5 (5 is from the highest expectation/perception, whereas, 1 is the lowest expectation/perception). The results projected that overall expectation concerning "Reliability" dimension is high (3.91) & the overall perception towards "Reliability" dimension is also high (3.62) but the mean quality gap score is negative (-0.29) which shows that online shopping websites are not completely able to perform the promised services accurately. In the responsiveness dimensions result shows that online shopping websites don't have enough knowledge & courtesy to inspire trust & confidence among customers. Overall expectation concerning "Empathy" dimension is 3.95 wherein perception towards "Empathy" dimension is 3.57. The mean quality gap score is negative (-0.37) which shows that online shopping websites don't give complete individual attention to customers. Overall expectation concerning "Tangibles" dimension is high (3.97) wherein expectations are also high for all the factors. The overall satisfaction of perception towards "Tangibles" dimension is at high level (3.57), the mean quality gap score is negative (-0.40) which shows that tangibility of online shopping websites are somewhere lacking. At 5% level of significance significant difference has been identified between perceived services & expected services. It means customers' expectations are not meeting and it can be concluded that there is a significant gap between perceived services and expected services. The result shows that customers are expecting more and getting less and this gap between expectations and experience it may lead to dissatisfaction.

So, the reliability and responsiveness of the delivery system is the key success factor for any online business and this will attract the consumers repurchase intention.

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