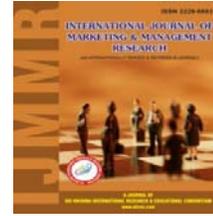




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## **GAP ANALYSIS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN BANKS USING ‘SERVQUAL’ MODEL – A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CATHOLIC SYRIAN BANK IN KERALA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Customer satisfaction has become a major source of concern in retail banking business. With exceptional progress in the establishment of banks in India, banks are increasingly interested in retaining existing customers and targeting new customers. In this paper, it is proposed that quality of service is an indicator of customer satisfaction. Measuring service quality involves objective feedback about existing customers of CSB LTD, Parappur with respect to their expectations and services offered. Performance of a bank may be evaluated with regard to a set of satisfaction parameters that indicate the strengths and weaknesses of an organization. Standard scale of SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman et al., has been used to conduct the survey. This study is based on five overall dimensions of customer satisfaction with services provided by CSB LTD, Parappur. The five dimensions used to measure service quality are tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. This study gives useful insights to boost customer satisfaction towards CSB.*

**KEYWORDS:** *SERVQUAL, Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Banking is no more a monopoly of the banks in a particular sector and has been

proved that only the most deserving would survive in the situation. Banks are required to cope up with stiff competition from Domestic as well as Foreign Players in the

Banking field in a globalised market. Reforms process has thus been instrumental to perceptible and positive changes in the approach and the attitude of Bank Personnel towards customers. It is a welcome feature that in many branches of the public sector banks, operations have been computerized and they are offering a majority of services which the private sector banks are claiming to offer.

Banking being a service business, the best strategy can only be to identify with the customers and offer them what they actually need. This objective can only be achieved through best customer service. Quality of customer service, therefore, plays a pivotal role in the prosperity of a Bank. A competitive environment and a deregulated market have made it imperative for banks to harness the best customer oriented practices and perceptions and to internalize them for providing added value to customers through their employees.

The dominant question that bothers the bank management today is how to improve customer service and gain competitive advantage. "The products are almost the same; however, it is the service that distinguishes one bank from the other". This needs to identify the quality dimensions that are most important to customers of a retail banking sector and the services that are actually offered or delivered to the customers.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Quality in service is very important especially for the growth and development of service sector business enterprises (Powell, 1995). It works as an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Ruyter and Bloemer, 1995). In past, quality was measured only for the tangible products because of less dominance of service

sector in the economy. Due to the increasing importance of service sector in the economy, the measurement of service quality became important. ISO standards is one of the measurement tools of service quality, where quality is defined as the totality of features and characteristics of a product, process or service. Crosby (1979), a renowned researcher in service quality, defined quality as the 'conformance to requirements'. The guru of quality movement Juran (1988, 1992) defined quality as 'fitness for use' while, Deming (1986) viewed quality as a process promising to result in products or services.

In late 1980s, Parasuramam et al., (1985, 1991, 1994) explained quality as a gap between what customers feel should be offered and what is provided. Even though there is no single definition on quality, they all have a single focus on how users look at it (Fiji, 1994; Parasuraman, 1985; Teas, 1994; Zeithaml, 1988; Khader, 1997). In 1996, Ramaswamy identified three different sets of measures for service quality that a company should be concerned with (Ramaswamy, 1996):

- \* Service performance measures are primarily internally focused and evaluate the current performance and hence it is ensured that it continues to be reliable to meet the design specification;
- \* Customer measures, on the other hand, are both internally and externally focused and aim at assessing the impact of the service performance on customers;
- \* Financial measures, which are indicators of the financial health of the organization.

The above theories and suggestions by other researchers such as, Liljander (1995), Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins (1983, 1987), Bolting and Woodruff (1988), Prakash and Lounsbury (1984), and Swan (1988) suggest many possible comparison standards including predicted service, ideal service, excellent service, desired service,

deserved service, needs and values, cultural norms, promises, adequate service, best brand norm, brand norm, product type norm, favorite brand' model, comparative expectations, equity and fairness.

Among the contemporary instruments for measuring service quality, SERVQUAL has got attention by the researchers in various fields including insurance, bank, education, Information Technology (IT), etc. as it deals with users views regarding services (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1991, 1994). Although, a separate formality dimension in bank and restaurant service was identified by the research SERVQUAL is useful to measure the service quality of the bank (Witkowski, et al, 2001). Parasuraman and Zeithaml's SERVQUAL includes five dimensions of service that are relevant for measuring the service quality of banks by its clients. The dimensions are reliability (ability to perform the promised service, dependably and accurately), tangibility (physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel), responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence) and empathy (caring individualized attention the service provider gives its customers).

### **PERCEIVED QUALITY VERSUS OBJECTIVE QUALITY**

Researchers (Garvin 1983; Dodds and Monroe 1984; Holbrook and Corfman 1985; Jacoby and Olson 1985; Zeithaml 1987) have emphasized the difference between objective and perceived quality. Holbrook and Corfman (1985), for example, note that consumers do not muse the term quality in the same way as researchers and marketers, who define it conceptually. The conceptual meaning distinguishes between mechanistic and humanistic quality: "mechanistic (quality)

involves an objective aspect or feature of a thing or event; humanistic (quality) involves the subjective response of people to objects and is therefore a highly relativistic phenomenon that differs between judges" (Holbrook and Corfman 1985, p.33) Garvin (1983) discusses five approaches to defining quality, including two (product-based and manufacturing-based) that refer to objective quality and one (user-based) that parallels perceived quality.

### **QUALITY AS ATTITUDE**

Olshavsky (1985) views quality as a form of overall evaluation of a product, similar in many ways to attitude. Holbrook concurs, suggesting that quality acts as a relatively global value judgment. Exploratory research conducted by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) supports the notion that service quality is an overall evaluation similar to attitude. Unlike goods quality, which can be measured objectively by such indicators as durability and number of defects (Crosby 1979; Garvin 1983), service quality is an abstract and elusive construct because of three features unique to services; intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability of production and consumption (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985).

### **QUALITY VERSUS SATISFACTION**

Oliver (1981) summarizes current thinking on satisfaction in the following definition: "satisfaction is a summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer's prior feelings about the consumption experience".

### **EXPECTATIONS COMPARED TO PERCEPTION**

The writings of Sasser, Olsen and Wyckoff (1978); Gronross (1982) and Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982) and the extensive focus group interviews conducted by Parasuraman, Zeithamani, and Berry (1985), unambiguously support the notion that service quality, as perceived by consumers, stems from a comparison of what they feel service firms should offer (ie. From their expectations with their perceptions of the performance of firms providing the service.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in the selected branches of Catholic Syrian Bank in Thrissur District, where eight decades ago this bank was born. A descriptive research design was used for the study. Primary data were collected through questionnaire developed using five quality dimensions i.e., tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, with 21 questions aiming at reducing questionnaire size and as a result improving the response rate. The answers were offered using a 5 point Likert scale based on SERVQUAL by Parasuraman et al (1994). The customers have certain range of expectations bounded by desired service which were identified by separate ratings of “expected (E)” and “offered (O)” with identical questions. The secondary data was collected from various magazines like

journals published by Indian Banker’s Association, Annual Report of CSB, circulars books, and websites. The sample size was initially selected as 140. The state of Kerala is divided into 14 clusters from each of which a branch was chosen by random sampling. Equal number of respondents was picked from each of these branches. Finally by removing non-respondents and defective samples, the sample size was 128.

For data analysis, tools like Likert analysis, Chi-square test and correlation were used.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to identify the reasons for the gaps in services offered by the Catholic Syrian Bank Ltd and identify strategies to meet the expectations of the customers.

### RESULT ANALYSIS

The expectations of the customers and the perception on the offerings are analyzed using Likert scale. The differences are found out to identify the gaps in performance. The fraction of satisfaction on the expectation is considered to be the percentage of satisfaction. Table 2 shows the expectations, offerings, gaps between them and percentage of satisfaction.

**TABLE 1**

DIMENSIONS (Attributes)	Expectations (E)	Offerings (O)	Gaps (E-O)	% of satisfaction
Physical facilities	5	3.7	1.3	74
Modern equipment & up to date technology	4.5	3.06	1.44	68
Employees are well dressed	4.84	4.4	0.44	90.9

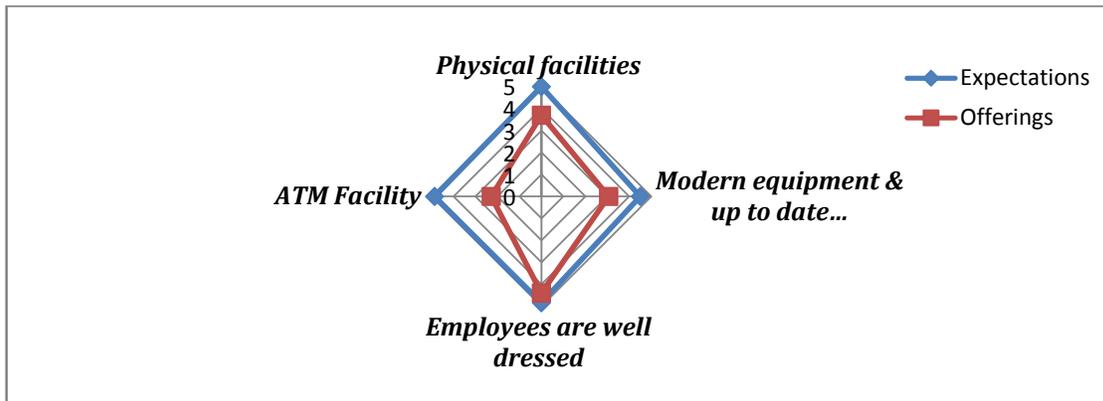
ATM facility	4.86	2.28	2.58	46.91
Follows promises	5	4.46	0.54	89.2
Dependable	3.86	2.64	1.22	68.39
Keeps promises at right time	4.98	4.42	0.56	88.76
Accuracy of records	5	4.7	0.3	94
Tells exactly about the performance of services	4.94	2.44	2.5	49.39
Receives prompt services	4.98	4.2	0.78	84.34
Willingness to help	4.92	4.06	0.86	82.52
Not busy to respond	4.9	3.38	1.52	68.98
Trustworthy	4.84	4.32	0.52	89.26
Safe in transaction	5	4.78	0.22	95.60
Staff is polite	4.8	4.02	0.78	83.75
Get adequate support from bank	4.92	3.82	1.1	77.64
Gives individual attention	5	3.48	1.52	69.6
Receives personal attention	3.66	3.2	0.46	87.43
Understands specific needs	4.06	3.08	0.98	75.86
Best interest at heart	4.72	3.68	1.04	77.97
Convenient operating hours	4.98	3.86	1.12	77.51

From the above table we can see that the percentage level of satisfaction by the customers fluctuating from each dimensions. Out of the total attributes the maximum satisfaction given to respondents was from the safety in transaction i.e., 95.60%. There is not as much gaps in services between the

customer's expectations and offerings provided by the branch.

The following charts show the gaps in services in each dimension separately. Increase in gaps in services lead to the decrease in percentage level of satisfaction and vice versa.

**CHART 1  
GAPS IN TANGIBILITY**



It is evident from the Chart 1 that the respondents are highly satisfied with the employees' dress code and the service gaps between its expectations and offerings are mere 0.44. They are less

satisfied with the ATM facility provided by the branch. All the other attributes of Tangibility are good enough to conduct the transactions.

**CHART 2  
GAPS IN RELIABILITY**

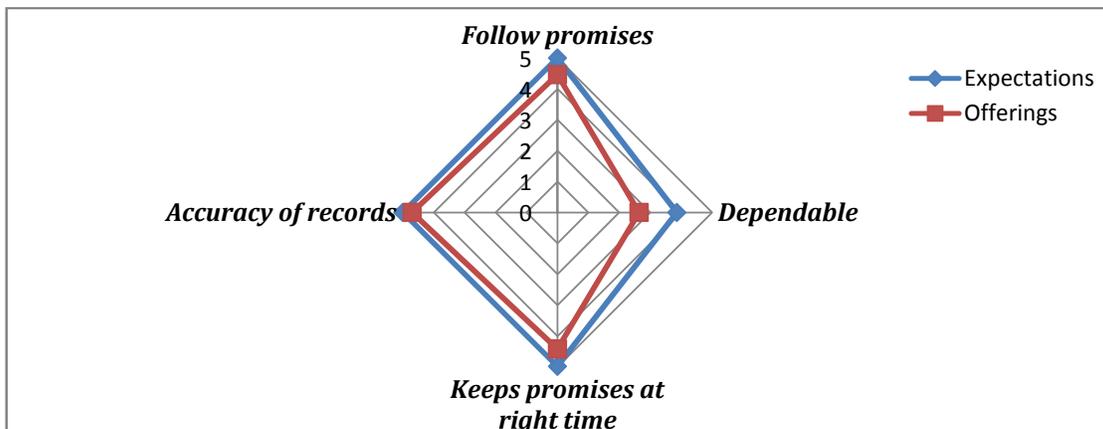
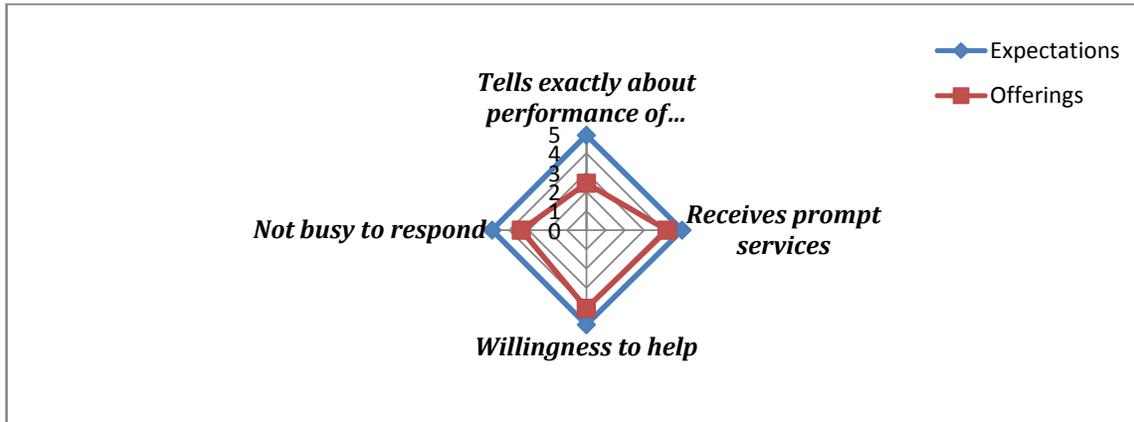


Chart 2 shows that the Reliability of the branch to its customers depicted a better result. There is not as much difference between the gaps in services of Reliability. The customers have the full trust of

accuracy of records kept by the employees and its service gap is only 0.3 which means higher satisfaction. Therefore, more clients are interested to make account with the branch.

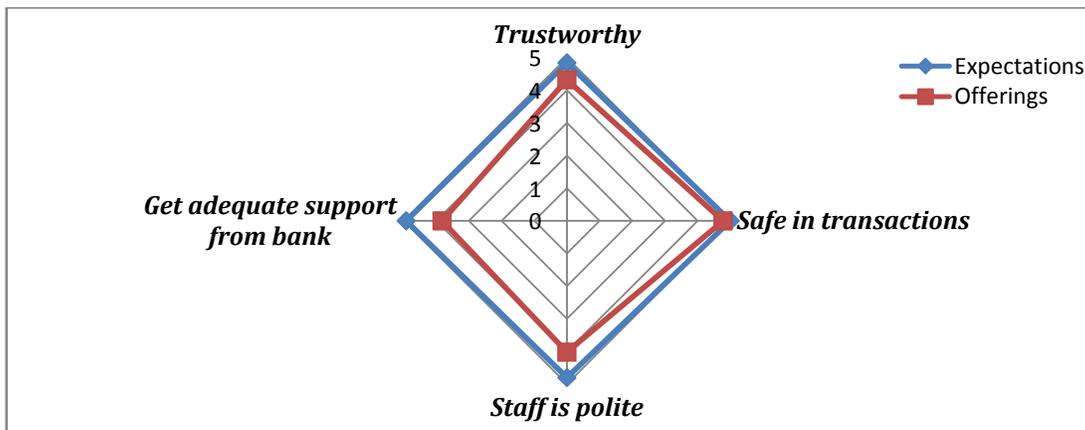
**CHART 3  
GAPS IN RESPONSIVENESS**



The Chart 3 depicts the service gaps in Responsiveness. The employees provide prompt services to the customers and the respondents marked its service gap as 0.78. The customers are not as much

satisfied with the information about the performance of services rendered by the bank. Timely information is preferred by the customers. It will retain and attract the customers.

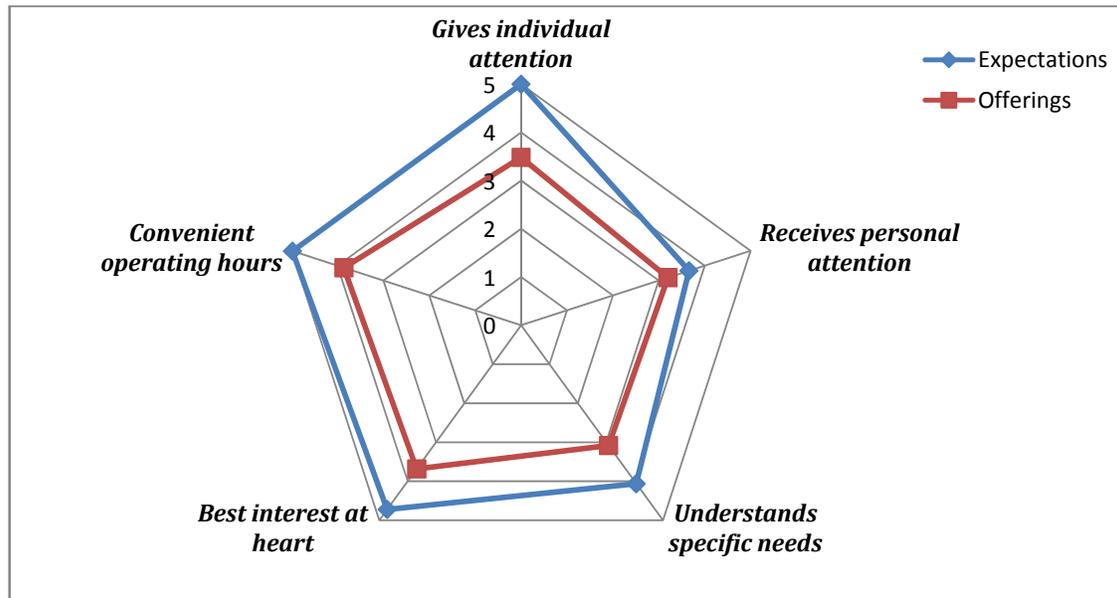
**CHART 4  
GAPS IN ASSURANCE**



From Chart 4 it can be seen that gaps in Assurance are less compared to other dimensions. Respondents expected safety in transactions and they are provided the services near to their expectations. The

gaps in service is only 0.22. Their trustworthy, politeness and supporting role are also adequate from the customers' perception.

**CHART 5  
GAPS IN EMPATHY**



From Chart 5 the service gaps can be seen in Empathy. The customers have the opinion that they could get the personal attention and its service gap is only 0.46. They opine that the employees can understand their specific needs and operating hours are convenient to them. The gap in services of getting individual

attention is 1.52 which we can say it as a more gap under Empathy.

The values are aggregated for each dimension for getting a better view of performances in each dimension. The table 3 shows the consolidated values for each dimension.

**TABLE 3**

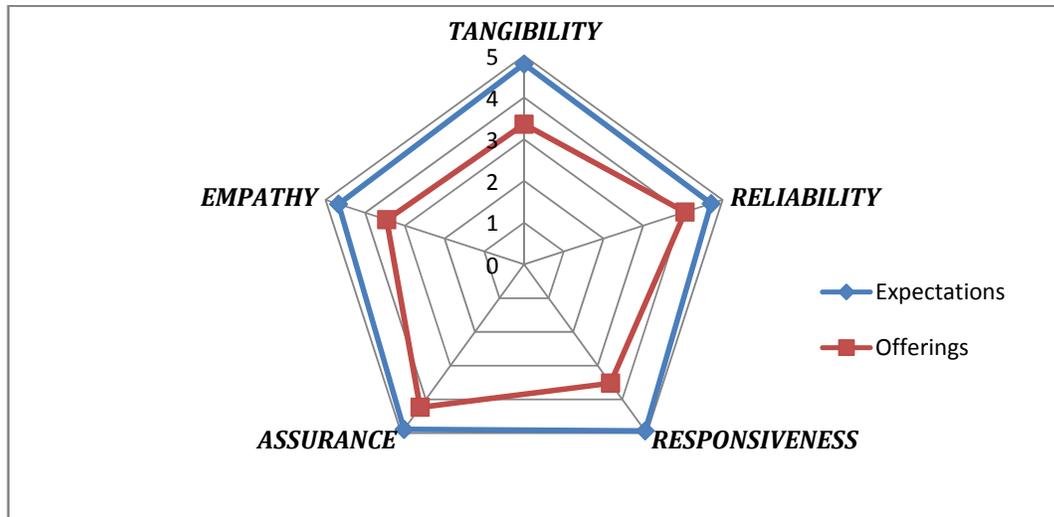
<b>DIMENSIONS</b>	<b>Expectations (E)</b>	<b>Offerings (O)</b>	<b>Gaps (E-O)</b>	<b>% of satisfaction</b>
<i>TANGIBILITY</i>	4.80	3.36	1.44	70
<i>RELIABILITY</i>	4.71	4.06	0.66	86.09
<i>RESPONSIVENESS</i>	4.94	3.52	1.42	71.33
<i>ASSURANCE</i>	4.89	4.24	0.66	86.61
<i>EMPATHY</i>	4.67	3.46	1.21	74.08

The table 3 shows that the percentage levels of satisfaction by the customers were fluctuating among dimensions. Out of the total dimensions the maximum satisfaction given to the respondents were Assurance i.e., 86.61%. Its service gaps indicated as 0.66 and this is same in the case of Reliability. Tangibility of the

branch is scored as the less amount of satisfaction out of its overall dimensions. There is not as much gaps in services between the customer's expectations and offerings provided by the branch. Increase in gaps in services lead to the decrease in percentage level of satisfaction and vice

versa. The chart 6 shows the gaps in dimensions.

**CHART 6**  
**GAPS IN FIVE DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY**



It is evident from the Chart 6 that there is not as much difference between the gaps in services. The service gap is very less in the case of Assurance as compared to others and the Reliability also reached the same position. On the basis of this pictorial representation, Assurance is ranked first. The customers feel confident and safe due to this factor. Reliability got the second position which is very near to the Assurance. It is the descriptor of the functional and outcome quality. The Empathy and Responsiveness achieved the third and fourth positions respectively. Tangibility is in the fifth position and implies that the branch should be able to perform what they purport to perform. Every bank tries to increase their value in the minds of customers as well as the quality of services rendered.

### RANKING ANALYSIS

On the basis of mean score calculated for individual dimensions, it was found that customers have ranked assurance dimension of CSB as first. The customers feel confident and safe due to this factor. It

also includes employees being knowledgeable and courteous to customers. 89.26% of customers are satisfied and feel that CSB is trustworthy. 95.60% of customers feel safe in doing transactions with it. 83.75% of customers are satisfied and feel that employees of the bank are polite.

Reliability is ranked second by the customers of the bank. The reliability is the descriptor of the functional and outcome quality (Brady and Cronin, 2001). This implies that the banks should be able to perform what they purport to perform—whether it is the functional quality aspect or the outcome quality aspect. 89.2% customers are satisfied and feel that their promises are followed by CSB. 68.39% of customers are satisfied and feel that the bank is dependable. 88.76% of customers feel that the bank provides services at the right time. 94% of customers experience that their records are kept accurately.

Attributes under empathy is ranked third by the customers. This factor ensures individual attention to customers, keeping

their interest and needs as priority. 75.86% of customers feel that CSB understands needs of the customers. 77.97% of the customers are satisfied and feel that CSB provides services in their best interest. Giving time and personal services are important in banking services. CSB should focus on understanding the requirements of customers and giving them individual attention. It will allow the bank to understand individual customer better and meet their needs with personalized services. Banks need to ensure that the customers are able to register their complaints. It should be remembered that customers who complain tend to be more loyal than those who had a problem but failed to complain (Raddon, 1987). Customers are delighted with the convenient working hours, and around 76% of customers are satisfied with the operating time provided by the bank.

Responsiveness, which entails willingness to help customers and deliver prompt services, is ranked fourth by the customers. 49.39% of customers are satisfied and feel that the bank tells the customer when services will be performed. 84.34% of customers feel that the bank is providing prompt services. 82.52% of the

customers are contented with the willingness shown by employees to help. 68.98% customers are satisfied with responses given by employees.

Tangibility is ranked fifth. The ambience, which constitutes physical facilities along with employees, is noticed by customers upon entering the bank. These create first impression. 74% of customers are satisfied with the physical facilities provided by CSB. 68% of customers are satisfied with the modern looking equipment and up to date technology provided by the bank. 90.9% of customers perceive that the employees of CSB are well dressed and appear neat and 46.91% of customers are satisfied with the ATM services provided by CSB.

#### CHI-SQUARE TEST

A Chi-square test was conducted to statistically check if dimensions play different roles in the perception of service quality. The hypotheses for the test were: *All dimensions are equally affecting the service quality* ( $H_0$ ) and *All dimensions are not equally affecting the service quality* ( $H_1$ ). Table 10 describes the Chi-square test.

TABLE 10

DIMENSIONS	<i>Offerings</i> (O)	<i>Expectations</i> (E)	<i>Gaps</i> (O-E)	$(O-E)^2$	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
<i>TANGIBILITY</i>	3.36	4.81	1.44	2.07	0.43
<i>RELIABILITY</i>	4.06	4.71	0.66	0.43	0.09
<i>RESPONSIVENESS</i>	3.52	4.94	1.42	2.00	0.41
<i>ASSURANCE</i>	4.24	4.89	0.66	0.43	0.09
<i>EMPATHY</i>	3.46	4.67	1.21	1.47	0.31
TOTAL	$\sum \chi^2 = 1.3304154$				

For Degree of freedom of 4 and level of significance at 10% the table value was 7.779 which is higher than the calculated value. The  $H_0$  was accepted which shows that there is no significant difference between the effect of each dimension in perception on service quality.

## SUGGESTIONS

Some suggestions were put forward to the bank based on the insights from analysis.

- Bank should concentrate on relationship management. It can help the branch to make more business and goodwill among the public. All these ultimately lead to profitability. It may be fruitful to conduct more awareness among the public through local Medias.
- The bank should provide close interaction between bank service and web based e-commerce, digital certifications and even service through direct electronic payments. The bank should provide more convenient international transactions which means internet along with general trends.
- Every employee should take precautions to keep customers experience safe. They should take continued efforts to safeguard online banking transactions and traditional banking business.
- The satisfaction of ATM facilities is less compared to others. The management can take necessary steps to recover from these problems.
- In globalization era, international market offers immense

opportunities for the banking sector. The bank should expand its foreign exchange transactions.

- Bank should be able to come up with some unique innovative schemes in order to compete with other banks especially new generation banks.
- The bank should initiate various savings schemes for women. Because they have more savings mentality than men which will direct to an increase in profit.

## CONCLUSION

Quality is a critical success factor in service industries. The primary objective of the study was to measure service quality of CSB Ltd using gap model. The gap model provides a good starting point for the analysis or modifications in terms of other approaches. In gap model, problem with average approach is taken to aggregate service quality measurement. The gap model can be used to find out the minimum level of customer expectations and perceived performance with respect to the expectations. These techniques for service quality model can be accommodated in a framework of service quality improvement that measure service quality gaps select an optimal combination of attribute levels to deliver customer satisfaction.

Learning to understand customer needs will enable banks to enhance customer services and reduce the customers banking costs. These results should be useful to CSB LTD. Gap analysis between expectations and deliverables should be carried out regularly to measure the current level of satisfaction for customers and to know what the pluses and minuses

of the bank are, so as to improve those factors on which it is losing out.

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