# Impact of SERVQUAL and Interaction Quality on Customer Satisfaction and Delight in Transportation Services

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***Authors' contributions***

*This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Authors AAK and NAKT designed the study, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors NAKT and SJ managed the literature searches and analysis. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## ABSTRACT

The study is carried out in order to evaluate the relationship between the constraints that influence Customer Delight and Service Quality, for which Customer Satisfaction acts as mediator and Interaction Quality playing moderating role between SERVQUAL and Customer Satisfaction. For the purpose of data collection and analysis questionnaires were dispersed through convenience sampling technique, obtaining 83.33% response rate and, processed by running several statistical tests to find out the relevant data outcomes. There is an indication of positive results as entries were evaluated, which specify that there is direct relation between the variables. Study focuses on the by-road transportation services excluding cabs or for a single person's hiring of private vehicle. Hence, limited to provision of public travelling services within the city and also across the city. Research work will fill the area where the customer delight and satisfaction needs to be the prior by enhancing service interaction quality and service quality. And will serve this field as a new contribution and positive outcomes to this sector.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Transportation in Pakistan is widespread, serving a population over 170 million people, network of transportation is well established and both private and public sectors take part in provision of services to the public [1]. Services availed in this sector are not satisfactory as they do not quench the desires of the consumers. Transportation facilitation industry evolved in previous decades and became the major mean for people to travel from one area to another. But as the people became used to it there were number of deficiencies pointed regarding the services provision during their journey.

Terminology Customer Delight is defined as to a surprising degree exceeding expectations of an individual resulting as an exhilarating emotional state [2]. Delight is emotional bond created when an individual experiences unexpectedly fulfillment of his or her needs [3]. Whereas [4] describes Delight as, a result of unexpected and positive experiences related to performance of a service and product.

As the concept of delight evolved, [5] rendered their idea that, the firms should not only satisfy their customers but also focus to delight them. Also this area of study needs more exploration [6]. Satisfaction alone does not assure customer's behavior and it comprehends that delight has become vital area of investigation [7,8,9]. More efforts are required that illustrate clear path to understand the factors of the delight [3] as, it is tough task to delight customers indulged in regular interaction and availing services [10,11]. Business organizations are in a state where they feel that satisfaction levels are at average ranks this may not lead to customer loyalty [12]. Customer Delight has likely more influence on forthcoming customer behavior [13,4,14,2]. Delight derives the users to a new experience of very high pleasure levels and makes them valuable asset of an organization, as [15,16] argue that, to retain the customers and create an emotional attachment with brands the firms should go beyond the expectations of the consumers and delight them. Most effective way to raise retention ratio is through Delighting Customers [17]. Many research approaches indicate customer delight as a tool for creating loyalty [18,19]. This new era moves one step ahead of customer satisfaction and illustrates that the impact of customer delight is more effective on feelings of the end users, as [20] states that, findings regarding customer satisfaction demonstrate that delight has more strong contribution in creation of intensive positive attitudinal bond. Attributes like emotional associations, strong memories, higher ranks of loyalty, commitment, readiness to pay and encouraging word of mouth are acquired by organizations through delighting their customers [6,20,13,21]. Customer Delight is acquired through delivering superior services and quality products [22,23] and also by delivering reliable services [24,25,26]. Acquiring customer delight needs to consider various aspects, such as assessing what a customer has expectations from a service and how much times they encountered such events that have delighted them and lastly how much satisfaction is different from delight in the context of customer's point of view, thus [3] enlightens, Customer delight can be more significantly evaluated and explored when, the affective factors are recognized that influence in creation of delightfulness, evaluation of individual's experience of delightfulness and, how much delight and satisfaction is differentiated at consumer level.

The proposed study also investigates the influence of service quality and customer satisfaction on customer delight. There is progressive association between service quality and customer satisfaction [27]. The intellectual path is comprehensively examined for both satisfaction and delight [6,2,28]. As the service quality is enhanced higher satisfaction levels are obtained [29]. Marketers have a perception that there is positive connection between quality of service, satisfaction, loyalty and performance of an organization [30]. Also SERVQUAL have a positive impact on the productivity, performance of corporate, satisfying and retaining customers [31,32,33,34,35,36]. Study will demonstrate the moderating effect of interaction quality and effect of SERVQUAL and customer satisfaction on the customer delight.

As this study will elaborate the areas where the organizations must need to focus, which will in-turn can create attraction for investors and researchers towards this sector. Also research will be helpful in covering the area where the customer delight and satisfaction needs to be the prior, by enhancing service interaction quality and service quality. And will assist the stakeholders in value creation for the customers.

Also, it will be helpful to the transport sector in acquiring constructive results for the future.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

In last few decades travelling for people became easier through innovation in automotive sector globally. But still many people face a serious issue of non-availability of sufficient amount of travel services. For the purpose of travelling mostly people use by road services and in Pakistan these facilities are inadequate. In last couple of years Government focused on this problem and launched many projects in same prospect. These steps by Government are based on facilitating people travelling within a city spots. But still mostly passengers suffer a lot during journey to their native places. Idea behind this study work is to explore the area of knowledge of constraints that have impact on the customer delight. And also to judge the validity of these variables in this industry as to what extent they impose their influence.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

## 2.1 SERVQUAL and Customer Delight

SERVQUAL is defined as purchase intention as a result of an individual's judgment about an overall superiority of a service [22,37,38]. Service quality is perceived judgment about brilliance of a service [39]. SERVQUAL is a component that hints towards Customer Satisfaction [40]. SERVQUAL and customer satisfaction have a valid relationship which is evaluated on the basis of reliance on each other [41]. For determination of Customer satisfaction in services sector SERVQUAL is the most reputable paradigm [42]. Initially [22] illustrated that SERVQUAL can be defined on the basis of 10 dimensions. Redefined on the basis of five dimensions such as tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy [37,43] also defined these dimensions.

### 2.2.1 Tangibles

This includes appearance of physical facilities, equipment, employees, and communicating materials.

### 2.2.2 Reliability

Reliably and accurately performing the promised service. As to perform duties on time, correctly and dependably.

### 2.2.3 Responsiveness

Provision of prompt services and willingness to assist customers.

### 2.2.4 Assurance

Capability of employees to gain trust and confidence, through knowledge and courteousness.

### 2.2.5 Empathy

Caring and individualized attention provision to customers by firm.

Delight is a pleasurable experience that goes beyond satisfaction of consumer [17].

Delight is a composition feeling like joy, thrill and exhilaration [11]. Customer delight was also defined by [4] as surprising and progressive level of performance that creates positive emotional reaction. Customer delight is a positive surprise that exceeds the expectations of customers [13]. The levels of excitement have a direct association with delight [44]. Customer delight is also described on the basis of fulfillment of three human needs such as security, justice and self-esteem [5].

### 2.2.6 Justice

Honest deals with best concern for customers, spending earnings on constant enhancement of product and services, and on basis of loyalty patterns rewarding customers, also not earning higher profits with provision of enough and relevant choices of services.

### 2.2.7 Esteem

Valuing customer's identity while dealing, providing customized service, also respecting opinion and treating prior to lift self-image, and providing flexible list of options to avail facilities.

### 2.2.8 Security

Providing secure environment to customers and making them feel like at home, by keeping surrounding clean and neat to keep mind at peace of client, also offering easy refund program, along with maximum trails of a service or product to increase self-reliance.

### 2.2.9 Trust

Taking responsibility of mistakes and admitting it honestly, responding to the issues and handling it in tactful manner. Organizations always keep their word and consistently perform above the industrial standard that is beyond the expectations.

### 2.2.10 Variety

It seeks customer's consideration by a surprising them. Businesses break the industrial pattern by regularly upgrading, and upcoming with new products and services.

Delighting Customers need careful and optimum level of service deliverance especially in services industry [3,45,46,47,48,49,50,51]. Customer Delight is achieved by a superior service experience that is surprising, improved and positive feelings booster [5].

In the light of these studies there seems to be a strong correlation among SERVQUAL and Customer Delight. Thus it can be hypothesized

> H1: There is direct impact of SERVQUAL on Customer Delight

## 2.2 Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator

Customer Satisfaction plays role of mediator between SERVQUAL and customer delight and is defined as, the instant emotional state which is blend of expectations and user's feelings that results after experiencing a product or service usage [52]. Post purchase reaction of a user to the difference between significant perceived expectancy and actual performance of product or service [3]. According to [53] satisfaction is the sensation of fulfillment of internal cravings. Customer satisfaction can be defined as meeting the expectations of the customers [54].

There is long-lasting and progressive linkage among quality of service and customer satisfaction [27,55]. Therefore, SERVQUAL is important because it directly stimulates the level of customer satisfaction [54]. Also, Quality enhancement boosts customer satisfaction [56,57,58]. Higher level of customer satisfaction is achieved through improved quality of service [29]. Major point of focus in latest era is Customer Delight and is achieved through astonishing or prime level of customer satisfaction [12,59]. Satisfaction of esteem needs leads to Customer Delight [5].

In consideration of relevant studies there is possibility that, Customer Satisfaction mediates relationship between SERVQUAL and Customer Delight. Thus it is hypothesized that:
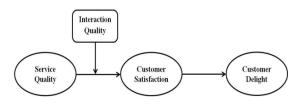
> H2: Customer Satisfaction plays role of mediator in between SERVQUAL and Customer Delight.

## 2.3 Interaction Quality as Moderator

Interaction Quality moderates impact of SERVQUAL on Customer Satisfaction and is defined as, interactive expectations of users from service dealer during service deliverance process [60,61,62,63]. Interaction Quality influence critically quality of service in the mind of customer [64,65,66]. Such as loyalty, Interaction Quality plays important role towards customer satisfaction while experiencing a quality service [67,68]. Studies have also shown positive results such as [69] confirms that, service interaction quality has positive impact on customer satisfaction, loyalty and other behavioral effects. Behavior of an employee while delivering service affects the perception about the service outcome [70]. The behavior of an employee during facilitation of service is expected to be vital in determining customer satisfaction [71]. Furthermore, earlier proceedings on Service quality propose interaction quality as an antecedent of customer satisfaction [39,72]. Interaction quality is the major element of customer satisfaction [73]. To lead towards customer satisfaction, SERVQUAL with enhanced Interaction Quality plays an important role [74]. Thus it is hypothesized that:

> H3: Interaction Quality moderates the impact of SERVQUAL on Customer Satisfaction.

**Theoretical Framework**



## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Sample and Data Collection

For data collection self-administered questionnaires were distributed through

convenience sampling technique. For pilot testing 45 questionnaires were collected back from respondents and the results showed satisfactory outcomes to proceed for further data collection. Response rate was 83.3% as total of 180 questionnaires were dispersed in order to obtain response and acquired 150 useable questionnaires.

## 3.2 Measures and Scales Used

Questionnaire comprises of 55 items and demographics section. Items were measured at 5 point Likert Scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. Customer Delight consist of 25 items of 5 dimensions [75] and SERVQUAL include 22 items [37]. Customer Satisfaction comprised 4 items [76], and Interaction Quality also comprise of 4 items [77]. SPSS 20 used for statistical tests such as frequencies, reliability of scales, correlation and regression. Also, AMOS 21 is used for mediation through boot strapping technique.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows demographics for sample size N=150 to observe the outcome of service quality and customer satisfaction along with interaction quality on customer delight. Sample comprises of 64.7% of male and 35.3% of female and are further categorized under marital status as single (88.7%) and married (11.3%), under four age groups of 20 to 40 years (20-25= 87.3%, 26-30= 9.3%, 31-35= 2.7% and 36-40= 0.7%), with qualification level of Intermediate (8.7%), Bachelors (73.3%), Masters (17.3%) and MS/M.Phil.(0.7%), and employment status as employed (20.0%), unemployed (2.7%), Student (76.0%) and other (1.3%).

In Table 2 Reliability of the survey items is shown and Cronbach's Alpha value depicts good level of consistency service quality ($\alpha$=73%), customer satisfaction ($\alpha$=80%), interaction quality ($\alpha$=77%) and customer delight ($\alpha$=92%). These values of Cronbach's Alpha indicate that all the variables have reasonable value and will give reliable outcome in analyzing these variables.

Table 3 gives correlational linkage between variables will be positive and closer to +1 will have strong relationships. Correlational mean values illustrate all the components having positive and significant satisfactory strong relationships between them, as mean values for service quality in terms of customer satisfaction, customer delight and interaction quality are 56%, 48% and 59% respectively, for customer satisfaction mean values of interaction quality and customer delight are 72% and 73% respectively, and interaction quality correlating customer delight at 67%. So here it is observed that all the variables have a rational positive strong association and this indicates they are interdependent.

Table 4 illustrates linear regression analysis and through analyzing these results it is noticed that SERVQUAL, Customer Satisfaction and Customer Delight have strong association between them and alter each other up to reasonable extent. Results depict individual impact of variables in Table 4.1, as 1 unit change in SQ will bring 86% (0.856 unit) change in CD and shows positive relationship (R = 0.586) while variance in CD due to SQ is 34% ($R^2$ = 0.344, $\Delta R^2$ =0.339) and can be generalized on population (F=77.443). Also Table 4.2 shows, 1 unit change in SQ will bring 113% (1.132 unit) deviation in CS, and shows positive relationship (R=0.562), while variance in CS due to SQ is 31% ($R^2$=0.316, $\Delta R^2$=0.311), and can be generalized on population (F=68.329). Also in Table 4.3, 1unit change in CS will cause alterations of 53% (0.532 units) in CD with positive association (R=0.734) along with variance ($R^2$=0.539, $\Delta R^2$=0.535) of 54% in CD due to CS, and is generalizable (F=172.739).

Table 5 demonstrates Moderated regression analysis for interaction quality as moderator for service quality and customer satisfaction. As interaction quality along with service quality deviates customer satisfaction ($\beta$=19%) for positive and significant relationship (R=76%), with variance of 57% ($R^2$=58% and $\Delta R^2$=57%). Table 6 comprehend that there is indication of partial mediation, as through boot strapping technique it is noticed that partial the total effect of customer satisfaction on customer delight is 86% with significant p-value= 0.003. Direct effect having mean value of 37% with p-value=0.003 and indirect effect 49% with p-value=0.002 depicting partial mediation.

**Table 1. Demographics**

| Description | | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 97 | 64.7 |
| | Female | 53 | 35.3 |
| Age | 20-25 | 131 | 87.3 |
| | 26-30 | 14 | 9.3 |
| | 31-35 | 4 | 2.7 |
| | 36-40 | 1 | 0.7 |
| Marital status | Single | 133 | 88.7 |
| | Married | 17 | 11.3 |
| Education level | Intermediate | 13 | 8.7 |
| | Bachelors | 110 | 73.3 |
| | Masters | 26 | 17.3 |
| | MS/M.Phil. | 1 | .7 |
| Employment status | Employed | 30 | 20.0 |
| | Unemployed | 4 | 2.7 |
| | Student | 114 | 76.0 |
| | Other | 2 | 1.3 |

*N= 150*

**Table 2. Reliability of scales**

| Variable | No. of Items | Cronbach's Alpha | Items removed |
|---|---|---|---|
| SQ | 22 | 0.728 | 0 |
| CD | 25 | 0.917 | 0 |
| CS | 4 | 0.797 | 0 |
| IQ | 4 | 0.774 | 0 |

**Table 3. Correlation**

| Variable | SQ | CS | IQ | CD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SQ | 1 | | | |
| CS | .562** | 1 | | |
| IQ | .476** | .722** | 1 | |
| CD | .586** | .734** | .668** | 1 |

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

**Table 4. Regression**

**Table 4.1. Impact of SERVQUAL on customer delight**

| Variable | β | $R^2$ | $\Delta R^2$ | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SQ | .856 | .344 | .339 | .000 |

*Dependent Variable: CD*
*Source: Field Data N=150*
*Model: R= .586, F= 77.443, t= 8.800*

**Table 4.2. Impact of SERVQUAL on customer satisfaction**

| Variable | β | $R^2$ | $\Delta R^2$ | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SQ | 1.132 | .316 | .311 | .000 |

*Dependent Variable: CS*
*Source: Field Data N=150*
*Model: R= .562, F= 68.329, t= 8.266*

**Table 4.3. Impact of customer satisfaction on customer delight**

| Variable | β | R² | Δ R² | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CS | .532 | .539 | .535 | .000 |

*Dependent Variable: CD*
*Source: Field Data N=150*
*Model: R= .734, F= 172.739, t= 13.143*

**Table 5. Moderated regression**

| Variable | β | R² | Δ R² | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SQIQ | .188 | .576 | .570 | .000 |

*Dependent Variable: CS*
*Source: Field Data N=150*
*Model: R= .759, F= 99.893, t= 9.500*

**Table 6. Mediation (Bootstrapping AMOS)**

| Casual Path | Standardized coefficient | p-value | Hypothesis | Accepted/Rejected |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *SQ =>CD | .856 | 0.003 | | |
| **SQ =>CD | .371 | 0.003 | H2 | Accepted - Partial Mediation |
| ***SQ=>CS=>CD | .485 | 0.002 | | |

*\*Total Effect*
*\*\*Direct Effect*
*\*\*\*Indirect Effect*

## 5. CONCLUSION

Results of the study indicate that there is positive impact of service quality on customer delight, as improved and enhanced quality of service dimensions accommodate in producing customer delight for the end users while facilitation of transportation services. Also interaction quality is another factor that has moderating effect and boosts service quality that is helpful in co-creating customer satisfaction. Hence, for generating customer delight the customer's needs to be satisfied by provision of superior quality service and enhanced interactive quality.

## 6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Study high-lightens the area where customer delight needs to be prior and requires enhancement in transportation industry. The level of services are below par and related small and large enterprises need to focus on quality service provision along with high interactive quality which leads to customer satisfaction and delight, which results into high profitability of an organization and can acquire high market share. Managers can transform these results into broader level for developing strategies to acquire competitive edge in the market.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Research study is focused on by road services provision and limited to city-to-city or within city locations. Due to shorter time, survey is bound to respondents from few cities and comprises comparatively less sized sample. For intensive studies sampling plan can be adopted through probability sampling or even through judgmental sampling techniques while inducing some other relative constraints to further expand the sphere of knowledge in relative field. Studies can be further explored towards the facilitation of travelling services through other means of transportation as these outcomes may vary sector to sector and are not just limited to this certain area of focus.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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