



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS**  
**DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT**

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**THE EFFECTS OF QUALITY SERVICE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: THE  
CASE STUDY OF ETHIOPIAN POSTAL SERVICE ENTERPRISE, EXPRESS MAIL  
SERVICE DEPARTMENT**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Science in International Business (Import export management)

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**JUNE, 2021**

## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis entitled “The effects of quality service on customer satisfaction: The case study of Ethiopian postal service enterprise express mail service department” is my own original work and that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not been submitted for a degree in anyother universities.

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Date

## Letter of Certificate

This is to certify that **Tewabe Befekadu** has completed his thesis entitled “The effects of quality service on customer satisfaction: The case study of Ethiopian postal service enterprise express mail service department” is his original work and is submitted for examination with my approval as thesis.

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**COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS**  
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**MSC IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS (IMPORT-EXPORT MANAGEMENT)**

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CASE STUDY OF ETHIOPIAN POSTAL SERVICE ENTERPRISE, EXPRESS MAIL  
SERVICE DEPARTMENT

BY: TEWABE BEFEKADU

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

**EPSE=Ethiopian postal service enterprise**

**EMS=Express mail service**

**SERVQUAL=Service quality model**

**SERVPERF=service performance**

**SPSS= Statistical Package for the Social Sciences**

**GPO= General post office**



## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to find out the effects of service quality on customer satisfaction of Ethiopian postal service enterprise, express mail service /EMS department. The target populations for this study were 1060 employees working in the Ethiopian postal service enterprise main office, Addis Ababa, from which a sample size of 290 respondents selected for analysis. Questionnaires were used to obtain information for the study. Accordingly, five service quality dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) were hypothesized to evaluate service quality and customer satisfaction. Descriptive statistics like frequency, mean and correlation analysis techniques were applied to analyze background information of respondents, to analyze respondents' perception on service quality and satisfaction as well as relationship between service quality dimensions, overall service quality and customer satisfaction Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were applied. This study helps the EMS department to improve its service quality for better customer satisfaction.

**Keywords: Service quality, customer satisfaction, service quality dimensions**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background of the study**

Customer satisfaction is a measure of how services provided by the enterprise meet customer expectation. Quality service and customer satisfaction are related. That means customer satisfaction is influenced by the quality service provided. Quality is an important source of competitive advantage in service sector. Service quality is used to differentiate and add value to service offerings and as a way to win strategic competitive advantage.

Customers do not buy goods or services, they buy the benefits goods and services provided them with. They buy offerings consisting of goods, services, information personal attention and other components. Customers are life blood of any organization, and without them, a firm has no revenues, no profits, and therefore no market value (Grönroos 2000, 3).

To satisfy its customers, the EMS department should listen and accept customer feedback and improve service and goods accordingly.

Customer service is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a service. Everyone in the organization is providing one or all of these perhaps they recognize which ones perhaps not. Kurtenbach (2000) explains that “those who are successful in customer service rank their customers experience as the top priority”.

Ettore (2001) explains that, “concentrating on current customer’s information can and should be obtained to better understand their view of the service provided”.

The quality of service provided determines the level of satisfaction of the customer even though what is seen as quality by one customer may not necessarily be quality to another.

Customer satisfaction is a measure of how products and services supplied by a company meet or surpass customer expectation. In a competitive marketplace where a business competes for customers, customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy. Customer satisfaction is an asset that should be monitored and managed just like any physical asset. The relationship between quality service and customer satisfaction is a vital one.

Customer satisfaction is influenced by the type of quality service provided. Satisfaction is a challenge as customers can easily switch from one to another for a better service.

High levels of customer satisfaction bring several positive aspects to the organization; it is believed that customer satisfaction has a positive relationship with economic profit (Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann, 1994). Moreover, it will lower customer's price sensitivity (Fornell, 1992), and contribute to the creation of loyal customers, which in turn implies a stable future cash-flow (Matzler et al., 1996).

New managerial methods explain quality as the customer satisfaction, For that reason all the organizations have to recognize the high quality and quick service offering obstacles and solve them (Ghasemi, kazemi and Esfahani, 2012).

Many industries are paying greater attention to customer satisfaction and service quality, for reasons such as increased deregulation and competition (Ghasemi, kazemi and Esfahani, 2012).

“Satisfaction from service quality is frequently evaluated in terms of functional quality and technical quality” (Gronroos, 1984). Service quality may be described as customer

perception of how well a service assembles or go over's their expectations. Service quality can be determined in terms of customer expectation, customer perception, and customer attitude and customer satisfaction.

“Providing excellent customer satisfaction and high service quality is the significant matter and challenge meeting the current service industry” (Hung, 2003).

“The competitive advantages are to deliver high-quality services, services that in switch will cause the customer satisfaction” (Sureshchandar, 2002). “The quick competition and development of quality of service, in both developing and developed countries has made this very significant for organizations to determine and estimate the service quality meets” (Brown and Bitner, 2007).

This research is conducted to find out the quality of service provided by EMS. It encompasses to measure how customers identify the service provided by the organization, to understand the service gap and service quality provided by the department using service quality models to determine the service quality and customer satisfaction, and find ways or means to improve the service it renders to satisfy the customers.

Any organization that has satisfied customers is bound to increase customer base and hence profitability. It is therefore important that service giving businesses should provide quality service to customers so as to satisfy them, make them loyal and retain them at the end.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Customer satisfaction is the most important issue affecting organizational survival. It has the most important effect on customer retention. This company shall focus on identifying and meeting their customer needs.

Despite this fact, most companies have no clue what their customers really think. They operate in a state of unaware choice, believing that if their customers were anything less than 100 percent satisfied they would hear about it. Then they are shocked when their customer base erodes and their existence is endangered.

The key to competitive advantage is proactively measuring customer perceptions and aggressively acting on the findings. The techniques for doing this do not have to be difficult; they just have to be timely and effective.

Knowing that quality service is a pillar of the EMS department, the researcher therefore decided to find out whether the kind of service being provided has any effect on customer satisfaction and whether there are barriers that prevent quality customer service delivery.

As communication technology is increasing rapidly and competition has become intense, improving service quality and customer's satisfaction has no option. Customer service department shall use to provide various services which include customer support services, customer relationship management, indemnity payment services, etc.

According to Shemwell et al., (1998)" in today's world of intense competition, the key to sustainable competitive advantage lies in delivering high quality service that will in turn result in satisfied customers". The customer's overall satisfaction with the services of the organization is a function of all the practices of the customers with that organization.

Similar to service quality, customer satisfaction can occur at multiple levels in an organization, for example, satisfaction with the contact person, satisfaction with the core service and satisfaction with the organization as a whole.

"Customer satisfaction is a critical issue in the success of any business system" (Ho &WU, 1999). It has recognized as the key to survival and the source of competitive advantage for organizations (Anderson, Fornell & Lehmann, 1994). Empirically,

researches support the concept that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and financial performance (Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Anderson et al., (1994). Also due to intense competition and the hostility of environmental factors, service quality has become a cornerstone of marketing strategy for companies. (Chingang & Lukong, 2010).

At present the existence of almost all international business organizations depend to a large extent on the degree to which these industries are able to satisfy their customers demand through the provision of more dependable, safe, secured and comfortable services better than their ultimate competitors.

Thus, the service quality rendered is a vital for the success and growth of the EMS department. There are a lot of complaints on the service quality of EMS. That is customer handling, lack of on time delivery of customer's document, and package. Delivering a superior quality service is critical in order to satisfy customers which imply a sustainable competitive advantage over competitors.

The purpose of this study is to identify and address the variables which determine and drive customer satisfaction in the EMS department.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

Based on the identified research problems, this study tried to answer the following research questions.

- How does quality service influence customer satisfaction at EMS department?
- How does quality service impact on customer loyalty at the EMS department?
- Are the customers satisfied with the service quality they receive from the EMS department?
- Is there any relationship among service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction?
- Which dimensions of service quality contribute significantly to determine satisfaction in the EMS department?

## **1.4. Research objectives**

### **1.4.1. Objectives of the study**

#### **1.4.1.1. General objective**

- The main objective of this study is to examine the effects of service quality on customer satisfaction in the case of Ethiopian postal service enterprise, express mail service department.

#### **1.4.1.2. Specific Research Objectives**

- To establish how quality service impacts customer loyalty at EMS department.
- To investigate the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the EMS department.
- To analyze the relationship between service quality dimensions and service quality in the EMS department.
- To discover which service quality dimensions have greater influence on customer satisfaction in the EMS department.

## **1.5. Significance of the study**

This research will provide information regarding quality service and its effects on customer satisfaction in the EMS department.

Educational institutions, corporate entities, business policy makers and other researchers will also be benefited from the research clone.

This study contributes to the body knowledge on service quality and customer satisfaction levels emphasis on the relationship between service quality dimensions, service quality and customer satisfaction.

The finding of the study also is an important input to the management of EPSE and other companies which have express service in identifying their strength and weaknesses on

service quality delivery and the level of customer satisfaction experienced by customers. In addition, this study will help the organization and the EMS department to focus on highly influential service dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction. To clone research, it used as a secondary source document.

### **1.6. Scope of the study**

The study covers employees of the EPSE who are always directly or indirectly in contact with the customers and the difficulties they face in delivering service as well as the customers experiences with the employees of the EMS department.

This study is conducted to evaluate the quality of services provided and the level of customer satisfaction. EPSE is providing different services and has different customers, among those services and customers the scope is limited to express mail service (EMS) major customers in the GPO, Addis Ababa.

There are about 705 Domestic service station and 171 international service station that EMS service reaches to its customers. Conducting the study to all and individual service station customers is difficult due to financial and time constraints. Thus, the study was focused only on EMS service customers in the GPO, Addis Ababa.

### **1.7. Limitation of the study**

There are some limitations associated with this study that need to be explained. Because of time constraints and large number of customers, the research was limited only to GPO. Moreover, the respondents' different level of education, experience etc.



## 1.8. Definition of Terms

- **Service:** - service is an act or performance offered by one party to another. Although the process may be tied to a physical product, the performance is essentially intangible and does not normally result in ownership of any of the factors of production (Lovelock and wright, 1999).
- **Quality:** Quality is the extent to which the customers or users believe the product or service surpasses their needs and expectations (Gitlowet *al*, 1989).
- **Service quality** - is the global evaluation or attitude of overall excellence of service. Therefore service quality is how well a delivered service level matches customer's expectation. (Parasuraman et al. 1988, 1991) as sited on Sang-Lin Han, (Bitneret al 1990) define service quality as "the consumers" overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its services." As sited on Sang-Lin Han.
- **Customer perception:** - is the actual level of service the customers received. Perceived service quality is a component of customer satisfaction.
- **Customer satisfaction-** the consumer's response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectation and the actual performance of the product or service as perceived after its consumption. (Tse & Wilton, 1988). And also it is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's performance (outcome) in relation to his or her expectation (Kotler& Keller, 2006).
- **Reliability:** - it's the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately (Parasuraman et al. 1988, 1991).

- **Responsiveness:** - it's the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service (Parasuraman et al. 1988, 1991).
- **Assurance:** - it's employee's knowledge and courtesy and their ability to inspire trust and confidence (Parasuraman et al. 1988, 1991).
- **Empathy:** - it's being caring, individualized attention given to customers (Parasuraman et al. 1988, 1991).
- **Tangibility:** - Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and written materials (Parasuraman et al. 1988, 1991).

### **1.9. Organization of the study**

The study was organized in to five chapters; chapter one comprise of the introduction part of the study and deals with the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study, definition of terms and organization of the study.

Chapter two reveals both the theoretical and empirical literature about the topic. Chapter three looks at the methodology to be used for the study area and includes research approach, research design, population and sample, data sources and types, data collection procedures, ethical consideration, and data analysis. Chapter four presents the data analysis and discussion and the fifth chapter deals with the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews the related literature on service quality and quality standards, methods to monitor service quality and service quality measurements.

### **2.2. Service quality**

The term quality focuses on standard or specification that a service generating organisation promises. We can't have a clear-cut boundary for quality. Sky is the limit for quality generation. Scientific inventions and innovations make the ways for the generation of quality. More frequency in innovations, less gap in the process of quality up-gradation.

Like the goods manufacturing organisations even the service generating organisations are found instrumental in promoting research and devising something new that makes the services, schemes distinct to the competitors and creates profitable market opportunities to capitalise on.

The created quality shapes the boundary of expectations since the users tasting the sweetness, of world-class services expect the same from other organisations. The expectations pave the avenues for satisfaction or dissatisfaction. If we succeed in fulfilling the expectations of users, they are found satisfied and the satisfaction makes the ways for increasing the market share. Services are products that are rendered but it is not correspondent to something which is physical. The main difference between the product and services are in service customers get value with no undying ownership of any tangible components. Moreover, service quality which is not like product quality which is determined by its unique characteristics which are intangible, perishable, inseparable, and heterogeneous (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2006)

Service quality can mostly be compared to the customer and how he or she expects about the service they acquire. It should be indicated however that, it is not exactly the same as customer satisfaction, but shows similarity. We can therefore say that service quality is concerned with satisfying the needs and requirements of the customer as well as measure in which it succeeds to do so (Janghyeon, Kyungnam & Georgina, 2011). If customer perception is higher than the actual performance level of the service provider, then perceived service quality is below the satisfactory level and that leads to customer dissatisfaction and finally customer might switch other provider. Therefore, Service quality is a multidimensional structure that is very difficult to appraise due to the exceptional features of each of the service provider (Zeithaml et al., 2006). In an attempt to give a clearer picture of service quality, (Grönroos C, 1984)

The service generating organisations are required to identify the reasons entailed behind mounting dissatisfaction amongst the users and to activate appropriate measures (technical or functional) to minimise it.

The technical measures draw our attention on the inventions and innovations in the field of technologies that help to improve the quality of services. It focuses on the use of technology or prefer to have a technology-driven service. The functional measures gravitate our attention on improving the quality of services offered by the employees, which pave ways for style of functioning, work culture, formulation of a profitable package, and behavioural profile of employees or so.

The functional quality of employees can be improved by strong emphasis on behavioural areas such as attitudes, service-mindedness, accessibility, interpersonal relations, appearance, and commitment. It is right to say that poor quality of services or service failures are not designed into the system by the choice of the senior management.

The top management and the senior executives bear the responsibility of shaping the perception of service quality by promoting the use of sophisticated technologies and increasing the number of personally- committed employees. This makes it essential that the service generating organisations prefer to practise the principle of making things happen which focuses on quality generation.

### **2.3. Service quality standards**

The aim of Quality systems is to reinforce performance with major focus on procedures and processes. Thus some quantifiable standards called benchmarks are formed to be able to maintain a set service quality standards.

Many an international quality performance standards like National – BS (British Standard) 5750, European – EN 29000, International – ISO 9000 have been used to maintain service quality. BS 5750 can be said to be the first standard of its kind. The British Standards Institute (BSI) gave us standards to measure the service. The main parameter is that quality is really what is perceived by the customer.

Quality systems of any company should match international standards like that of BSI recommendations. Quality has to be functional, not restrictive and relate to all activities of the organisation. Also the good service quality calls for commitment of everyone in the organisation, and not just a specified quality manager.

Better the quality, more is the value which the customer gets. This leads to a better corporate performance.

#### **i. Benchmarking:**

An organisation, which has fully researched quality issues in both its internal and external markets, should now be in a position to set quality standards which can be regulated and monitored and which meet customer requirements. In order to do this, standard measures need to be determined.

The establishment of a baseline figure and a common index is an essential part of measuring performance, both externally and internally. The baseline is the target operating norm of the organisation. This can be termed a benchmark – a standard against which performance can be measured.

Nowadays when we talk of standards, the same has to be measured in comparison to competitors. For example, that airlines can judge their benchmark standards by looking at other airlines' quality standards. At the same time the airlines will also have to study the standards of related fields of business like railways and other alternative forms of travel.

## **ii. Quality Process:**

**The quality process for service organisations can be listed as follows:**

- a Define quality in the organisation.
- b Get a market research, done internally and externally.
- c Take in a competitive analysis.
- d Develop a quality standard which is a process of Benchmarking.
- e Judge actual performance with the benchmark quality standards.
- f Develop a Quality Strategy for getting rid of quality gaps.
- g Design programmes for proper quality standards implementation.
- h Control and monitor the service quality performance of the company regularly.

The procedure above would need a thorough study of the procedures/frameworks, training and communications.

### **2.4. Strategies of enhancing quality service**

It is not too difficult for companies to improve service quality. What is required is the right strategy to do it and the commitment by all members of the organisation.

**The following are some of the strategies that should be followed by service organisations to enhance the quality of service offered to customers:**

1. A service provider should aim at achieving zero-defects or error-free service. This can be achieved by having a management that believes in 100% perfection, providing the necessary infrastructure that facilitates error-free service, and by testing and retesting service processes at various stages to eliminate any loopholes. This will also help them improve continuously to set and achieve new standards.

For example, DHL set up a separate express terminal spread over 26,500 sq. feet, using state-of-the-art technology, at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi. As the customs' staff work round-the-clock at this site, the process of clearance of customers' consignments have been speeded up, enabling DHL to deliver consignments faster to customers.

2. Internal communication promotes better understanding among employees of each other's tasks and responsibilities, and the difficulties involved, and enhances cooperation and coordination which eventually results in better service to customers. Also,

organisations should be equipped with modern training equipment and techniques to simulate real work environment and train employees to deliver quality service.

UTI (Unit Trust of India), which saw its scale of operations and number of employees increase significantly, implemented an advanced communication system with the help of Wipro, to facilitate effective communication among its scattered branches and employees.

3. Service providers should always test a service prior to launching it in the marketplace. If possible, a new service should be introduced in a few select places for test marketing. This will allow sometime for the management to obtain customer feedback. In case customers report problems, the management can take corrective action.

Another approach to prevent problems is to develop a service blueprint to identify all the activities that lead to final service delivery, identify problem areas and train employees to handle the problems. Service providers should also test the service after launching it. Setting higher service quality goals and striving to achieve them should be an on-going process as any complacency will render the service out-dated in a competitive market.

4. Sometimes, service providers fail to deliver the service despite all the precautions they take to prevent a failure. At such times, customers' perception of service quality depends on the service provider's ability to resolve the problem immediately. To enable effective service recovery and regain customers' confidence, service providers should train employees in recovery techniques and empower them to resolve the problem immediately. Also, they should reward employees who take the initiative and resolve the problem quickly.

5. The management should extend support to employees by setting up the necessary information system and other infrastructure that enables employees to identify and rectify errors with ease. Further, organisations should encourage teamwork among employees. By having an effective service recovery system in place, service providers can assure customers that they care for them.

6. Trained employees will be prepared to face problems and, therefore, can resolve them as soon as they occur and sometimes even before the customer can perceive the error.

## **2.5. Methods to monitor service quality**

Apart from using quality management techniques and adopting service quality improvement strategies, organisations should continually monitor their service quality. This will help the management ensure that customers receive the quality of service that their organisation intends to deliver.

**The management can use the following methods to monitor service quality:**

### **1. Conduct Customer Surveys:**

Service organisations should regularly conduct customer-services to know whether the customers have any issues with the service offered or with service personnel. Questionnaires should be given to customers to elicit their opinions and rate the quality of service offered by the organisation. Also, efforts should be made to explore the factors leading to any dissatisfaction. The management can then take necessary action to eliminate the deficiencies.

### **2. Monitor Customer Feedback:**

Managers should give special attention to the feedback given by customers in the form of complaints or suggestions or even compliments. The management should try to find out the root causes of problems in case of complaints, and prevent them from recurring. If the customer makes some suggestions, the management should consider them, discuss them with employees for their feasibility and applicability, and implement the ones that are valuable and practicable.

If customers give compliments to service personnel, then management should encourage the concerned employees to continue to offer quality service by rewarding them.

### **3. Review Service Blueprints, Problem-Tracking System:**

The management should constantly review the service blueprints and identify any problems that exist. If necessary, the management should change the monitoring procedures and problem tracking procedures. Service blueprinting is the process of representing the entire service process in the form of a picture/diagram so as to ensure that all the steps in a service process are covered.

As the service blueprint provides information on each single event and activity involved in the service, a service manager can test its effectiveness on paper. He can modify the service process before applying the usual testing procedures (like test marketing, etc.)

Improving service quality is certainly not a simple, straightforward exercise.



**Service quality can be improved if the following areas are given due attention:**

- i. Identifying primary quality determinants,
- ii. Managing customer expectations,
- iii. Managing evidence,
- iv. Educating customers about the service,
- v. Developing a quality culture,
- vi. Automating quality,
- vii. Following-up the service quality information system,
- viii. Employing benchmarking wherever possible, and
- ix. Keeping track of internal costs, external costs and quality maintenance costs.

**Basics and Planning:**

- i. Basic Methods to Get Customer Feedback
- ii. Measuring and Tracking Customer Satisfaction
- iii. Customer-service Assessment Tool
- iv. Customer Loyalty Value Calculator
- v. Customer Feedback Helps You Improve the Customer Experience

## **2.6. SERVICE QUALITY MEASUREMENT**

In order to rate or determine the extent to which a service or the company in general is meeting customer expectations and conclude about the service quality, the first step is to define a standard against which service performance can be compared. This process of defining standards can begin with goal setting.

These are examples of quantitative standards put in place to measure what may be ‘difficult to measure’.

### **1. Company-Defined Standards of Service Delivery:**

In many instances, the companies themselves choose to set standards for the services delivery. These are usually set within the parameters of the ability of the company to execute them. According to the service provider, this is the standard of delivery generally prevalent or acceptable in the market place.

The problem of setting standards is more acute in cases where the service provider is dealing with a large volume of retail customers. In some ways, even the setting of

internally generated standards enables the service provider in self-evaluation and employee motivation.

However, in these two examples, standards have been set after taking into account the ability of the organization and its employees to deliver the service and generous allowance has been made for possibilities of delay.

The gap between customer expectation and delivery perception occurs when the service provider does not know what customers want. Therefore, it is important to ask the customer about the time period they consider acceptable at the current level of prices or compensations. This expectation level existing in the minds of the customers changes from time to time. Thus when the customers compare the company standards with that of a competitor, the service expectation undergoes a change.

## **2. Customer-Defined Standards:**

It is necessary to set standards that meet the customers' expectations. The process of setting standards would involve conducting a survey of existing and potential customers about their expectations. In the case of a retail bank that is trying to evaluate its operating standards, it may conduct a survey of the existing customers with the help of a questionnaire.

When the customers are given a choice of the method of service delivery using either automation technology or personal delivery, their opinion becomes clear. In addition, it is always useful to know if the customers are willing to pay for the improvement in the service quality as, usually, the service provider needs to upgrade the facilities or increase the employee strength, etc. to provide the service of the demanded standard.

The measurement of customer expectations is the single largest factor that would enable the service provider with the requisite platform on which to base quality standards. Quality standards can be of two types – hard type and soft type. For example, a courier company which has consistently advertised and promised overnight delivery within India would find that customers have a 'hard' standard in their mind.

**For example**, they expect the delivery to be made by 12 noon and no later than 3 pm of the following day. The day and the time of the delivery is a hard standard with no room for flexibility or negotiations. If the delivery is not made within this period, customers would consider the service substandard and may even demand refund or compensation.

As opposed to this, the Post and Telegraph Department does not set any standard for the delivery of the ordinary mail (at least publicly). Thus, if there is any standard of service delivery, it could be as unspecific as ‘as early as possible’ or ‘at most within a week’, etc. The customer’s expectation is quite flexible here and perhaps unspecific. This is the ‘soft’ standard for service quality.

The dissatisfaction level is naturally higher in the case of failure if the standards are ‘hard’. Conversely, the satisfaction levels are also perceptibly higher if the service delivery meets ‘hard’ standards rather than when it meets ‘soft’ standards.

### **3. Complaints Solicitation and Analysis:**

The customer perception of service failure and the company perception of service failure may be quite different. Therefore, complaints solicitation and analysis on an ongoing basis will enable the company to understand frequent and persistent service failures better.

### **4. Lost Customer Analysis:**

A customer who has used the service before but decided to shift or actually shifted to another service provider in preference to the original, provider is said to be a ‘lost customer’. Thus, the customer could be lost temporarily or permanently.

#### **The reasons for customer loss may be:**

- i. Geographic movement away from the service provision location
- ii. Persistent inferior service quality falling below the adequate level of service
- iii. Poor value proposition
- iv. Inadequate features of the service.

### **5. Critical Incident Study:**

The critical incident study technique is used to improve customer care. It is relatively simple and cost-effective for implementation. A critical incident is a defining, special, problematic, unpleasant, or even delicate incident which affects the customer perception of the quality of a service.

The advantage of this technique is that it enables both the customer and the service providers to put their fingers on something concrete, for it indicates the service perception to the customers. In an otherwise unremarkable service delivery scenario, both the high and low points of service delivery are straddled by critical incidents. A

critical incident may be the final trigger that crystallizes the customer perception of service.

Service providers may actively seek details of critical incidents from the customers. For example, a number of hotels would provide extra space in a routine feedback or guest satisfaction form and urge the customers to report noteworthy incidents.

It has been noted by a number of service providers that in 80 to 90% of the cases mere recognition by the service provider of the customer's predicament and an overdue apology are quite sufficient to make the customer dissatisfaction evaporate.

However, the critical incidents need to be taken seriously because amongst those who have been dissatisfied with the service, merely four to five per cent actually decide to report it. Thus, incidents that are reported are merely the 'tips of the iceberg', with over 95% of the mass hidden underneath. Therefore, each of these needs to be taken seriously. The front-end staff of the service provider may also be asked to report critical incidents.

The reasons for the failure need to be looked into to prevent recurrence of such incidents that generate tremendous amount of dissatisfaction. Similarly, the pleasant incidents can serve as a guide to other employees and form the backbone of future service.

**The critical incident study can also point the way towards the following:**

- i. Recovery – It is the process by which the delivery that was missed or not appropriate the first time can be corrected the second time round, thereby regaining the confidence of the customers.
- ii. Reconciliation with the customers – A number of times customers continue to remain annoyed despite being offered the recovery services. In such instances, it may be essential to provide some conciliatory offering as a compensation for the hardship suffered by the customer as a result of the critical incident.

This may include a discount offer, offer for a free repeat service, membership of a loyalty programme, or even financial compensation.

The very fact that the management makes an effort to compensate them indicates a level of recognition and commitment to the customer. It gives him or her immense psychological satisfaction, and the customer may report it in a much more positive light to friends or acquaintances.

Many conceptual quality models have been postulated to bridge the understanding gap of the main concepts incorporated under the umbrella of service quality better. Despite the accumulated information in various service quality models, still there is lack of substantial knowledge as to how consumer evaluations of a particular service are really formed (Philip and Hazlett, 1997).

From the models of service quality presented in the literature, it is important to see five of them as follows:

### **i) Technical and Functional Quality Model**

This model of quality promulgated by C. Gronroos in 1984. The author identified three components of service quality; technical quality, functional quality and image:

1. **Technical quality** is the quality of what consumer actually receives as a result of his/her interaction with the service firm. It is important to the customer and uses it to evaluate the quality of service.
2. **Functional quality** is how the customer gets the technical outcome which is important to the customer and shapes views of service he/she has received.
3. **Image** is very important to service firms. It is mainly the result of technical and functional quality of service the firm delivers including the other factors such as tradition, ideology, word of mouth, pricing and public relations.

### **ii) GAP Model**

Parasuraman et al. in 1985 proposed that service quality is a function of the differences between expectation and performance along the quality dimensions. They developed a service quality model based on gap analysis.

The various gaps visualized in the model are:

Gap 1: Difference between consumers' expectations and management's perceptions of those expectations, i.e. not knowing what consumers expect.

Gap 2: Difference between management's perceptions of consumer's expectations and service quality specifications, i.e. improper service-quality standards.

Gap 3: Difference between service quality specifications and service actually delivered i.e. the service performance gap.

Gap 4: Difference between service delivery and the communications to consumers about service delivery, i.e. whether promises match delivery?

Gap 5: Difference between consumer's expectation and perceived service. This gap depends on size and direction of the four gaps associated with the delivery of service quality on the marketer's side.

Parasuraman et al. refine this exploratory research with their subsequent scale named SERVQUAL for measuring customers' perceptions of service quality (Seth, N. and Deshmukh, S.G. 2005).

### **iii) SERVQUAL**

In 1985, Parasuraman et al. developed the SERVQUAL instrument for the measurement of service quality. They have made a serious improvement to the model in 1988, 1991 and again in 1994. SERVQUAL has become one of the most renowned in the service quality domain.

This model conceptualizes the gap between what the customer expects by way of service quality from the service providers and their evaluations of the performance of a

particular service provider. Service quality is presented as a multidimensional construct. In their original formulation Parasuraman et al. (1985) identified ten dimension of service quality which are reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding/knowing the customer and tangibles. In their 1988 work these components were condensed into five dimensions (Buttle, 1996).

According to Parasuraman et al. the five SERVQUAL dimensions are a concise representation of the core criteria that customers employ in evaluating service quality. They argue that consumers would consider all five criteria to be quite important.

It was developed to measure perceived service quality as the key output variable and in its finalized form it has 22 pairs of Likert type scales. Service quality is then measured by calculating the difference in scores between the corresponding perception items and expectations items (Philip and Hazlett, 1997).

The five dimensions of service quality are reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance (communication, competence, credibility, courtesy, and security) and empathy which capture access and understanding/knowing the customers. These five dimensions explained in brief as of the following: (Zeithaml as cited in Seth and Deshmukh, 2005).

- i **Tangibility:** is the appearance of physical facilities, the personal, the tools or equipment used to provide the service and communication material. In other words every material that is used to give tangibility to service.
- . ii. **Reliability:** is the consistency of the service performance, which breeds dependability, from the first time the service is correctly performed to the ability of the firm to keep its promises. According to Zeithaml et al (2006), it is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

- iii **Empathy:** is a quality of the employee to care for the customer and give them individualized attention. The ability to put him/herself in the customer's shoes by seeing things through the customer's eyes. According to Zeithaml et al (2006), "it means treating customers as individuals, giving them customized service".
- iv **Responsiveness:** Is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. This dimension emphasizes attentiveness and promptness in dealing with customer request, questions, complaints and problems. It is all about length of time they have to wait for assistance, answers to questions or attention to problems. To truly distinguish themselves on responsiveness companies need well staffed customer service department as well as responsive frontline people in all contact positions.
- v **Assurance:** knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. This dimension is likely to be particularly important for services that customers perceive as high risk or uncertain about their ability to evaluate outcomes. Trust and confidence are embodied in the contact employee and the company itself.

#### **iv) Performance Only Model**

The inherent differences in service quality and customer satisfaction and the causal relationship between the two marred the question of measuring expectations. According to this model, expectations as portrayed in SERVQUAL model serve as reference points in a customers' assessment of service performance, but does not have determining role on perceptions. And hence the logic behind the measurement of service quality as an arithmetic difference between expectations and perceptions is questionable.

Because of this weakness of SERVQUAL, Cronin and Taylor as cited in (Philip and Hazlett, 1997) put forward the SERVPERF model in 1992 which they believe better



reflects long-term service quality attitudes than SERVQUAL. They believe that there is considerable support for the superiority of simple performance based measures of service quality without the need to incorporate expectations into the measurement scale. It is claimed by both researcher that service quality is directly influenced only by perceptions of performance (Philip and Hazlett, 1997).

#### **iv) PCP Attribute Model**

PCP (Pivotal, Core, Peripheral) attribute model contributed by Philip and Hazlett in 1997. The authors examined the weakness of service quality models which utilize expectation as one construct in the measurement of service quality and they argue these models are not applicable to individual services which naturally have their peculiarities.

In attempt to rectify these problems, the authors propose a model that takes the form of a hierarchical structure – based on three main classes of attributes – pivotal (output), core and peripheral (the last two jointly representing inputs and processes). According to the model, every service consists of three, overlapping, areas where the vast majority of the dimensions and concepts which have thus far been used to define service quality.

The pivotal attributes defined as the “end product” or “output” from the service encounter. They are core and considered collectively to be the single most determining influence on why the consumer is coming to a particular organization and put the highest influence on the satisfaction levels.

Core attributes, centered in the pivotal attributes, represent the collection of the people, processes and the service organizational structure through which consumers must interact and/or negotiate and receive the pivotal attribute.

The third level of the model focuses on the peripheral attributes which can be defined as the incidental extras or frills designed to add roundness to the service encounter and

make the whole experience for the consumer a complete delight. When a consumer makes an evaluation of any service encounter, he is satisfied if the pivotal attributes are achieved, but as the service is used more frequently the core and peripheral attributes may begin to gain importance (Seth and Deshmukh, 2005).

## **2.7. CHOICE OF SERVICE QUALITY MODEL OF THE STUDY**

SERVPERF is the brain child of Cronin & Taylor (1992) who after extensive research and investigation proved that the model of SERVPERF is a better measurement of service quality for service providing industry.

Primary, SERVPERF is found to be superior to the SERVQUAL scale for being able to explain greater variance in the overall service quality measured through the use of single item scale and it has been empirically proofed. It is also evident that SERVPERF is more efficient in reducing the number of items to be measured by 50% than SERVQUAL (Babakus & Boller, 1992 cited in Shanka, 2012).

Moreover, according to Cronin and Taylor (1992), their performance based SERVPERF scale is a better method of measuring service quality. They claim that this scale's reliability ranges between 0.884 and 0.964 depending on the industry type and exhibits both convergent and discriminate validity (Mesay, 2012). In addition, it is more concentrated on functional quality of dimensions which is good to assess the impact of the quality of outsourcing service delivery.

## **2.8. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE**

There are five main service characteristics: intangibility, inseparability, variability, perishability and lack of ownership (Kotler, et al., 2005).

### **i) Intangibility**

**Service intangibility** means that services cannot be readily displayed, so they cannot be seen, tasted, felt, heard or smelt before they are bought. A buyer can examine in detail before purchase the color, features and performance of an audio hi-fi system that he or she wishes to buy. In contrast, a person getting a haircut cannot see the result before purchase. Ems customers have nothing but a promise that their documents and packages will arrive safely at the intended destination, hopefully at the desired time. Because service offerings lack tangible characteristics that the buyer can evaluate before purchase, uncertainty is increased. To reduce uncertainty, buyers look for ‘signals’ of service quality. They draw conclusions about quality from the place, people, equipment, communication material and price that they can see. Therefore, the service provider’s task is to ‘manage the evidence’ – they try to ‘tangibles the service’ or to provide concrete evidence of the benefits offered (Kotler, et al., 2005).

### **ii) Inseparability**

Physical goods are produced, put into inventory, distributed through multiple intermediaries, later sold to users and, still later, consumed. In contrast, services are first sold, then produced and consumed at the same time and in the same place. Service inseparability means that services cannot be separated from their providers, whether the providers are people or machines. If a service employee provides the service, then the employee is a part of the service. Because the customer is also present as the service is produced, provider– customer interaction is a special feature of services marketing. Thus, it is important for service staff to be trained to interact well with clients.

A second feature of the inseparability of services is that other customers are also present or involved. The concert audience, students in the class, other passengers in a train, and customers in a restaurant, all are present while an individual consumer is consuming the service. Their behavior can determine the satisfaction that the service delivers to the individual customers. Because of the simultaneity of service production and

consumption, service providers face particular difficulty when demand rises (Kotler, et al., 2005).

### **iii) Variability (heterogeneity)**

As services involve people in production and consumption, there is considerable potential for variability. **Service variability** means that the quality of services depends on who provides them, as well as when, where and how they are provided. As such, service quality is difficult to control. The ability to satisfy customers depends ultimately on the behavior of frontline service employees. A brilliant marketing strategy will achieve little if they do their job badly and deliver poor-quality service (Kotler, et al., 2005).

### **iv) Perishability**

**Service perishability** means that services cannot be stored for later sale or use. Some dentists and general practitioners charge patients for missed appointments because the service value existed only at that point and disappeared when the patient did not show up (Kotler, et al., 2005).

### **v) Lack of ownership**

When customers buy physical goods, such as cars and computers, they have personal access to the product for an unlimited time. They actually own the product. They can even sell it when they no longer wish to own it. In contrast, service products lack that quality of ownership. The service consumer often has access to the service for a limited time. Because of the lack of ownership, service providers must make a special effort to reinforce their brand identity and affinity with the consumer using one or more of the following methods:

They could reinforce the service brand identity and affinity with the customer.

They could offer incentives to consumers to use their service again, as in the case of Frequent-flyer schemes

They could create membership clubs or associations to give a sense of belonging and ownership (Kotler, et al., 2005)

## 2.9. CUSTOMER EXPECTATION, PERCEPTION AND SATISFACTION

### Customer expectations

Customer expectations are beliefs about a service that serve as standards against which service performance is judged (Zeithaml *et al.*,1993); what customers think a service provider should offer rather than what might be on offer (Parasuraman *et al.*1988). Expectations are formed from a variety of sources such as the customer's personal needs and wishes (Edvardsson *et al.*1994),the customer's personal philosophy about a particular service, by promises (staff, advertising and other communications), by implicit service promises (such as price and the tangibles associated with the service), by word-of-mouth communication (with other customers, friends, family and experts), as well as by past experience of that service (Zeithaml & Bitner,1996).

Customer expectations vary internal standards that customers use to judge the quality of a service experience. Customers' expectations about what constitutes good service vary from one business to another. Customer expectations embrace several different elements, including desired service, adequate service, predicted service, and a zone of tolerance that falls between the desired and adequate service levels (Lovelock & Wright, 2001).

**Desired service:** the "wished for" level of service quality that a customer believes can and should be delivered

**Adequate service:** the minimum level of service that a customer will accept without being dissatisfied

**Predicted service:** the level of service quality a customer believes a firm will actually deliver

**Zone of tolerance:** the range within which customers are willing to accept variations in service delivery. The inherent nature of services makes consistent service delivery difficult across employees in the same company and even by the same service employee from one day to another. The extent to which customers are willing to accept this variation is called the **zone of tolerance** a performance that falls below the adequate service level will cause frustration and dissatisfaction, whereas one that exceeds the desired service level will both please and surprise customers, creating the "customer delight". Another way of looking at the zone of tolerance is to think of it as the range of service within which customers don't pay explicit attention to service performance. When service falls outside this range, customers will react either positively or negatively

### **Customer Perception of Service Quality**

Customer perceived service quality can be defined as a global judgment or attitude relating to the superiority of a service relative to competing offerings (Parasuraman et al 1988) as cited on (Zhilin, Minjoon & Robin, 2004). Perceived service quality results from comparisons by consumers of expectations with their perceptions of service delivered by the suppliers (Zeithaml, 1988). It is argued that the key to ensuring good service quality perception is in meeting or exceeding what customers expect from the service. Thus, if perception of the actual service delivered by the supplier falls short of expectation, a gap is created which should be addressed through strategies that affect the direction either of expectations or perceptions, or both (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988).

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction can be defined as a person's felt state, either pleasure or discontent, ensuing from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to the person's expectations as cited on (Zhilin, Minjoon, Robin ,2004 ).

Customer satisfaction has long been recognized as one of the critical success factor in today's competitive business environment as it affects companies' market share and customer retention.

“Satisfied customers tend to be less influenced by competitors, less price sensitive, and stay loyal longer” as cited by (Zhilin, Minjoon, Robin, 2004).

Several studies seem to conclude that satisfaction is an affective construct rather than a cognitive construct (Oliver, 1997; Olsen, 2002). Rust and Oliver (1994) further defined satisfaction as the “customer's fulfillment response,” which is an evaluation as well as an emotion-based response to a service. It is an indication of the customer's belief on the probability of a service leading to a positive feeling as cited on (Festus, Maxwell, & Godwin J, 2006). Satisfaction is “an overall customer attitude towards a service provider, or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive, regarding the fulfillment of some needs, goals or desire (Hansemark & Albinson, 2004).

**According to Berry et al (1985), customer satisfaction has ten dimensions as enumerated below:**

1. **Access**- it refers to the how easily a service can be obtained. That is flexibility of working hours of the service provider, method of contact, and waiting time.
2. **Communication**- addresses how information is conveyed and received from customers among others; it entails empathetic listening, the use of common language, and explanation of the service, its advantages and disadvantages.
3. **Competence** – it deals with the level of skills and knowledge of the service provider
4. **Courtesy**- it is indicated by friendliness and politeness of service provider(s).
5. **Credibility**- it is the trust that customers respect in the organization and the staff providing the service.

6. **Reliability**- it indicates the consistent performance or rendering of the right service at the right time, done right the first time.

7. **Responsiveness**- willingness and readiness of employees to provide immediate service.

8. **Security**- absence of danger, doubt and risk. It implies physical safety and confidentiality.

9. **Tangibles**- are the evidence that the service and the organization are credible and trustworthy.

10. **Understanding**- refers to how well the organization understands the expectations of its customers in their feeling about services being provided.

It should however be noted that, not every one of the ten points listed above needed to be present for a customer to be satisfied.

A model that discusses characteristics of a product or service and how they relate to customer satisfaction is attributed to (Dr. Noriaki Kano 1984). He has categorized these characteristics into three groups: dissatisfiers, satisfiers and delighters.

**Dissatisfiers** are characteristics customers expect to see in a good or service. Customers assume or expect the presence of such characteristics even though they may not mention them when asked about what they are looking for in a product or service.

**Satisfiers** are characteristics that customers expressly say they want in a product or service and their presence leads to satisfaction.

**Delighters** are new and innovative characteristics of a product or a service not expected by the customer. Its presence delights the customer.

### **Positive Aspects of customer satisfaction**

Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994) say that companies that strive for high customer satisfaction are more likely to receive larger economic returns. They also recognize that



these economic returns are not immediately realized. Matzler et al., (1996) argue that customer satisfaction act as an indicator of future business opportunities, where a satisfied customer is loyal to the company, which implies a stable future cash-flow. This is strengthened by Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994) who acknowledge the fact that there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and profitability.

### **Negative Aspects of customer satisfaction**

Rust and Oliver (2000) say that a customer that is satisfied with a product or service will raise their repurchase frequency and future expectations. Due to the customers higher expectations it will become more difficult for the firm to satisfy the customers in the next purchase cycle. According to Rust and Oliver (2000), this might damage the company in the long run.

A company that raises customer's expectation too high will get problem with retaining the same customer satisfaction in the future. The company would be better of reducing the expectations and then deliver more than expected (Ciavolino and Dahlgaard, 2007). Furthermore, Rust and Oliver (2000) wonder if satisfactions are a suitable goal and argues that companies do not gain advantage by seeking a high level of customer satisfaction when it just raises expectations that are hard to reach and, in turn, increases cost for trying to reach these higher expectations.

Anderson, Fornell, and Rust (1997) further argued that, productivity within the company will be damaged because of the cost and the search after customer satisfaction. Furthermore, in addition to higher cost, the company must add more effort in improving product attributes or overall product design to keep satisfaction at desired level (Anderson, Fornell, and Rust, 1997).

## **Meeting Customer Service Standards**

Most of the customer services can be done by the computer or system based service or phone. However, some still have to be done in person.

Unfortunately, some customers will have to rely on dealing with an employee he or she knows. Otherwise, one will have to be in the queue until the turn of that person only to realize that there was not the need for joining the queue in the first place. So consistently provide excellent service, and exceed customer expectations.

### **2.10. THE GAPS IN SERVICE QUALITY**

In order to improve and manage the process of delivering value services, firm's needs to identify those areas where these gaps exist and then should try to eliminate or close these gaps. The gaps are:-

#### **2.10.1. Service Quality Management Gap**

According to Parasuraman et al, (1985) this gap develops due to the difference between managers perceptions about what customers are expecting. There are different factors that produce management gap in service quality. Findings depicts that such gap also occurs when the customer is not perceived correctly and feedback process is delayed. It might be caused when the company does not concentrate on marketing research and customer analysis is not done before introducing any product/ service.

#### **2.10.2. Service Delivery and External Communications Gap**

According to Parasuraman et al. (1985) that this gap occur because of the difference between external communication channels (Marketing, advertising) and actual service

delivered by the firm. It happens when firm give false statement through exaggerating promises.

### **2.10.3. Service Performance Gap**

According to Parasuraman et al. (1985) this gap occurs when service personals failed to perform services up to the level as management expect them to perform. Facts from the findings say that the employees involved in service providing job act like a bridge between management vision and customer satisfaction. These persons are representing the image of company.

## **2.11. EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

### **2.11.1. The Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction**

The relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality has received a good deal of attention in the literature Bolton and Drew; (1994). Defined service quality and customer satisfaction as “service quality is a global judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service, whereas satisfaction is related to a specific transaction” Satisfaction is a “post consumption experience which compares perceived quality with expected quality, whereas service quality refers to a global evaluation of a firm's service delivery system” (Parasuraman et al, 1988).

The key difference between service quality and customer satisfaction is that quality relates to managerial delivery of the service while satisfaction reflects customers' experiences with that service. They argue that quality improvements that are not based on customer needs will not lead to improved customer satisfaction (Iacobucci et al, 1995).

Bolton and Drew (1994) pointed out “customer satisfaction depends on pre-existing or contemporaneous attitudes about service quality”.

There is also a lot of argument regarding whether customer satisfaction is the antecedent of service quality or the outcome of service quality. “Initially scholars take the position that satisfaction is an antecedent of service quality since to reach an overall attitude (service quality) implies an accumulation of satisfactory encounters” (Bolton & Drew, 1991). However, other scholars take the opposite view that service quality is the antecedent of customer satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992); (Ekinici, 2004); (Rust & Oliver, 1994); as cited on (Harr, 2008).

Empirical research by Cronin & Taylor, (1992) “showed that service quality has a significant effect on customer satisfaction.” Similarly, recent studies by González & Brea, (2005); &Ekinici(2004) as cited on (Harr, 2008) using recursive structural models provided empirical support that service quality results in customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction “is a broader concept than service quality which focuses specifically on dimensions of service (Zeithamlet al.2006).

### **2.11.2. Measurement of Service Quality**

Measurements need to take account of the service process, they need to measure both tangible and intangible aspects of services and they should take account of the specific context in which a service occurs .Given that services are processes, measurements need to take account of the complete service process. Such measurements need to address all stages in the service experience, the pre-, during and post-service experience of the customer and, where the design of a service is linked to technology, if appropriate(Gilmore, 2003).

There have been several attempts made by a group of researchers who have systematically identified the variables that quantify service quality, among which the

two most popular metrics are SERVQUAL and SERVPERF (Varambally and Motlagh, 2010). SERVQUAL is based on the conceptualization of service quality as the difference between consumer's Perceived performance and Expectation (Parasuraman et al., 1988). On the other hand, SERVPERF is purely a Performance based approach to the measurement of service quality (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Even though SERVQUAL and SERVPERF are the most commonly used scales of service quality measurement Among these two the most commonly used measure is SERVQUAL (Duff and Hair, 2008), (Ladhari, 2009) as cited on (Varambally, Motlagh,2010). There is no universal and encompassing approach to service quality dimensions which can be appropriate and applicable to all service industries and across all socio-cultural and economic environments. But as discussed by many researchers SERVQUAL has a wide range of applications in service quality measurement which includes: health care applications (Woodside et al., 1989); Reidenbach and Sandifer-Smallwood, (1990); Babakus and Boller,(1992); Lytle and Mokwa, (1992); (Bebko and Garg, 1995); (Licata et al.,1995) as cited on (Varambally, Motlagh, 2010). even though there is not one universally accepted measurement model of service quality that is applicable for all types of services as already mentioned there are two most popular models namely SERVQUAL and SERVPERF because SERVQUAL provides rich information and also as a measurement tool it also help as identify which parts of the service provided are contributing positively and which aspects of the service needs implement as a result the study used SERVQUALA model.

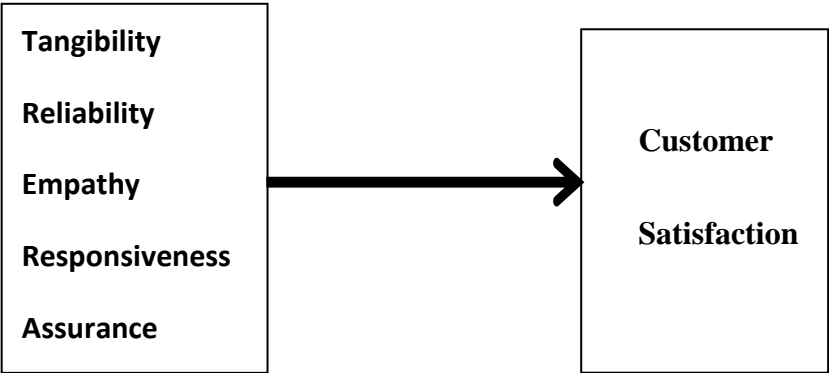
## **2.12. CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK OF THE STUDY**

The conceptual framework is the blue print of the research work that guides the researcher to conceptually understand the research and outline and operationalize the dependent and the independent variables so that the measurement, processing, analysis of the data and interpretation of the result been easy and meaningful.

Customer satisfaction is believed to affect post-purchase perception and future decisions of customers. According to Cronin and Taylor (1992) service to customers and quality service are a vital antecedent of customer's satisfaction. From the above discussion of literature review, it is clear that there is a relationship between service quality and customer's satisfaction where the former eventually leads to customer's satisfaction. Literature availed a number of models to measuring service quality. SERVQUAL and SERVPERF are among the models which researcher are using most often. Both models use five service quality dimensions. The empirical studies also shows that service quality dimensions have relations with service quality. It is evident that service quality dimensions have impact on customer satisfaction as various articles and journals show though with varying degree.

SERVPERF model is an improvised model of Parasurman's SERVQUAL. While SERVPERF mainstay is perceived service quality, SERVQUAL approach integrates the service quality and satisfaction.

Based on the above literature review the following conceptual framework is developed



**Conceptual Framework**

### **2.13. Research hypotheses**

Based on the above conceptual framework the following research hypotheses are formulated to be tested.

H1: Service Quality Dimensions have a positive relationship with service quality.

H2: Service Quality Dimensions have a positive & significant effect on customer satisfaction.

H3: Service Quality Dimensions have a positive relationship among themselves.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Description of the study area**

This chapter describes how the study was conducted. It outlines the approach and strategy that was used in undertaking the study. Therefore, this chapter includes the study approach, research design, sampling techniques, population, sample size, types of data, instruments of data collection, ethical consideration, data analysis and interpretation methods.

Various techniques were used to get good results. Interview, observation, self-administered open and close ended questionnaire were used as a tool. From a total population of about 1060 employees of the main post office, 290 was the sample size in which employees from different department that have direct or indirect contact with customers were included in the sample. Observation method was used as a technique to back or confirm data collected through the questionnaire.

### **3.2. Research Approach**

This chapter tries to cover the research design and methodology part of the study. The research type, the approach used, the source of data and the method of collection, the sample design and other topic which has to be included in the methodology part are discussed here.

According to John, (2014) Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The selection of a research approach is also based on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed, the researcher's personal experiences, and the audiences for the study. There are three basic approaches to research (a) **qualitative** (b) **quantitative** (c) **mixed methods**. According to Christensen, (1985) noted that quantitative survey is the most appropriate one to use if the purpose of an investigation is to describe the degree of relationship which exists between the variables. Accordingly, this research was conducted using quantitative research approach hence, it examined and measured the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in relation to Ethiopian postal service enterprise, EMS department. Therefore, the quantitative method is used by drawing samples from the organization staffs.

### **3.3. Research Design**

There are different types of scientific research. Namely exploratory research, Descriptive research and Explanatory research/causal research (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Exploratory research is typically in the early stages of examining topics. Descriptive research is to describe or define a particular phenomenon. Explanatory research aim to explain why a particular phenomenon works in the way that they do. It also answers "why" questions. In this case, the researcher is trying to identify the causes and effects relationships between quality service and customer satisfaction.



A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. A combination of descriptive and causal research designs is used in this study. The study describe the level of customer satisfaction and service quality in Ethiopian postal service EMS department thus, giving an in-depth understanding of the reality of customer satisfaction with service quality in EMS operational department, and also the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction as well as the impact of service quality dimensions on over all service quality and customer satisfaction.

According to Singh, (2006), research design is essentially a statement of the object of the inquiry and the strategies for collecting the evidence, analyzing the evidences and reporting the findings.

### **3.4. Population and sample**

#### **3.4.1. Target Population**

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a population can be a set of people, elements, services or groups of things or households from which information is obtained which allows for the generalization of the results. Therefore, the population of this study comprised of 286 employees of EMS department, customer service department, Postal quality and security department, parcel department, letter post department and home to home mail delivery department, from a total of 1060 employees who are located at Addis Ababa General post office.

#### **3.4.2. Sampling technique**

Sampling is the process or technique of selecting a suitable sample for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Adams, et al., 2007).

There are two basic sampling techniques which are probability and non-probability sampling. This research is conducted using probability sampling which is proportional stratified sampling technique. The study used purposive sampling technique to identify in which category of the operation that the customers are facing problem in service delivery.

### 3.4.3. Sample size

In principle, accurate information about given population could be obtained only from census study. However, due to time and cost constraint, in many cases, a complete coverage of population is not possible; thus sampling is one of the methods that allow the researcher to study relatively small number of units representing the whole population (Sartnakos, 1998).

Out of 1060 total employees, 290 of them were selected. In determining the sample size the researcher used sample size determination formula as shown below

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N e^2}$$

Where: n=sample size

N=total population that is 1060

e= is the error term, which is 5% (i.e. at 95% confidence interval)

Using the above formula the sample size of the study is determined as

$$n = \frac{1060}{1 + 1060 * 0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1060}{3.65}$$

$$n = 290$$

Therefore the sample size is 290.

### **3.5. Data sources and types**

#### **3.5.1. Sources of Data**

The two kinds of sources of data for collecting information are the primary and secondary data. In this study, both Primary and secondary data sources were used in asking information for the study. Primary data were obtained from a structured self-administered open and close ended questionnaire and Secondary information were collected from the journals and articles conducted on quality service and customer satisfaction.

These questionnaires are analyzed and conclusions are drawn from the level of service quality provided by EMS.

### **3.6. Data collection procedures**

A survey was a major method of collecting data in which employees are asked to answer a number of questions in the form of a questionnaire. With regard to effects of quality service on customer satisfaction in the EMS department, the study used a survey questionnaire administered to each member of the sample. Both close ended and open ended questions were used in the questionnaire. So as to obtain more varied response, the close ended questions were used to test different attributes. After the questioners are returned back, the student researcher sees what is properly filled and not, then enter the data into a computer for electronic processing using the SPSS version 25.

### **3.7. Data Analysis**

After the relevant data is collected, it was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 25). Each research questions are answered accordingly and output of the analysis is presented in tables and finally their implications are explained. The Data analysis include descriptive statistics to count the frequency of response,

Reliability analysis to test the internal consistency of the instrument, correlation analysis to assess the relationship between variables of the study and multiple regression analysis to assess the extent of influence of independent variables (service quality dimensions) or dependent variables (customer satisfaction). After the required data were collected the researcher entered data into a computer for electronic processing using the SPSS version 25.

### **3.8. Ethical consideration**

All the information treated and kept secretly with high confidentiality without disclosure of the respondents' identity. No information is changed or modified, hence the information is presented as collected and the same with the literatures collected for the purpose of this study. There is no any intention to use unfair means to influence the respondents to obtain information. The information gathered through questionnaire is used only for the fulfillment of the requirement for MSc degree. The respondents were assured that the information provided by them is confidential and used totally for academic purpose and the respondents were included based on their willingness. Furthermore, the student researcher tried to avoid misleading or confusing statements in the questionnaire. Lastly, the questionnaires were distributed only to those willing to participate voluntarily.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The aim of this chapter is to analyze and discuss the findings of the study in relation to the effects of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction. The findings of the study are analyzed based on the specific objectives and hypotheses of the study. In this analysis and interpretations, background of the respondents and analysis and interpretations of the different findings from the survey are discussed. Raw data was analyzed using SPSS version 25, and excel to arrive at frequency tables and percentages.

#### **4.1. General profile of the respondents**

290 questionnaires were prepared and distributed to the respondents and out of these questionnaires 286 were collected and 4 questionnaires were not considered since they were not returned. Therefore the study takes 286 questionnaire results for the analysis. The demographic characters include sex, age, educational background, job position and work experience.

**Table 4.1** Background information of respondents

		<b>Sex</b>			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	143	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	143	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	286	100.0	100.0	

Source: survey result (June, 2021)

		<b>Age</b>			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25 years	11	3.8	3.8	3.8
	26-35 years	121	42.3	42.3	46.2
	36-45 years	110	38.5	38.5	84.6
	above 46 years	44	15.4	15.4	100.0
	Total	286	100.0	100.0	

Source: survey result (June, 2021)

### Educational background

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	less than 10+2	11	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Diploma	44	15.4	15.4	19.2
	Degree	220	76.9	76.9	96.2
	MA/MSc and above	11	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	286	100.0	100.0	

Source: survey result (June, 2021)

### Job position

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Clerk	77	26.9	26.9	26.9
	Expert	110	38.5	38.5	65.4
	Manager/Chief officer	55	19.2	19.2	84.6
	Others (Secretary, motorist postman)	44	15.4	15.4	100.0
	Total	286	100.0	100.0	

Source: survey result (June, 2021)

**Work experience**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5 years	33	11.5	11.5	11.5
	6-10 years	55	19.2	19.2	30.8
	11-15 years	77	26.9	26.9	57.7
	16-20 years	88	30.8	30.8	88.5
	above 21 years	33	11.5	11.5	100.0
	Total	286	100.0	100.0	

Source: survey result (June, 2021)

As presented in Table 4.1 background information of the respondents for this research have the following demographic makeup. When we consider sex, it shows 143 or 50% of the respondents were male and also the remaining 143 or 50 % of the respondents were female, which indicate equal number of respondents. As far as the age of respondents is concerned 3.8 % of the respondents were in the age range of 18-25 years, 42.3 % of the respondents were in the range of 26-35 years, 38.5 % of the respondents were in the age range of 36-45 years, , and 15.4 % of the respondents were 46 and above years. With regard to educational background, 3.8 % of the respondents were less than 10+2 educational level, 15.4 % of respondents were diploma holders, 76.9 % of the respondents were degree holders and 3.8 % of the respondents were having MA/MSC and above that means majority of the respondents are diploma and degree holders and this indicates that the respondents



have the educational readiness to back them when they answer the questions they are asked by customers while receiving service.

**4.2. Reliability Test**

Reliability is the quality of a measurement procedure to provide repeatability and accuracy. A construct is said to be reliable if it brings the same result when we use it multiple times.

**Table 4.2** Reliability test

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.995	.996	26

Cronbach’s alpha is a coefficient of reliability used to measure the internal consistency of a test or scale. It can range from 0.00 (if no variance is consistent) to 1.00 (if all variance is consistent) with all values between 0.00 and 1.00 also being possible. In the social sciences, acceptable range of alpha value estimates from 0.7 to 0.8 [Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994].

For internal reliability (consistency of the research instrument), reliability test for each service quality dimensions was done. Therefore, the reliability of the scale was found to be 0.995 (Table 4.2) which indicates the acceptability of the items. The Cronbach

alpha for a set of scores turns out to be 0.99, meaning that the test is 99% reliable, and that it is 1% unreliable (100% - 99% = 1%).

### 4.3. Service Quality Dimensions, Overall Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Respondent's perception towards Ethiopian postal service enterprise express mail service department service quality is measured through five service quality dimensions. Respondents' perception towards over all service quality and their satisfaction level also measured using their mean score. The table below shows respondent's perception towards service quality dimensions, over all service quality and customer satisfaction.

**Table 4.3** Mean and Std. deviation of service quality dimensions, overall service quality and customer satisfaction

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tangibility(overall)	286	1	5	2.94	1.375
Tangibility question1	286	1	5	2.77	1.252
Tangibility question2	286	1	5	3.31	1.410
Tangibility question3	286	1	5	2.73	1.377
Reliability(overall)	286	1	5	2.93	1.229
Reliability question1	286	1	4	2.69	1.031
Reliability question2	286	1	5	3.04	1.288
Reliability question3	286	1	5	3.15	1.169
Reliability question4	286	1	5	2.69	1.171
Reliability question5	286	1	5	3.04	1.375
Responsiveness(overall)	286	1	5	2.97	1.270
Responsiveness Ques1	286	1	5	3.12	1.189
Responsiveness Ques2	286	1	5	2.69	1.296

Responsiveness Ques3	286	2	5	3.42	1.117
Responsiveness Ques4	286	1	5	2.62	1.305
Assurance(overall)	286	1	5	3.51	1.095
Assurance question1	286	2	5	3.81	.922
Assurance question2	286	1	5	3.23	1.156
Assurance question3	286	1	5	3.46	1.119
Empathy(overall)	286	1	5	3.52	1.224
Empathy question1	286	1	5	3.50	1.154
Empathy question2	286	1	5	3.42	1.082
Empathy question3	286	1	5	2.92	1.271
Empathy question4	286	2	5	4.23	1.014
Overall service quality	286	1	5	3.17	1.014
Customer satisfaction	286	1	5	3.23	1.035

Source: survey result (June, 2021)

As the above table shows, perception of respondents on assurance and empathy is good compared to other service quality dimensions which have mean score of 3.51 and 3.52 respectively. Responsiveness has moderate perception with mean score of 2.97. Tangibility and reliability have least perception with mean value of 2.94 and 2.93 respectively.

From this finding, Ethiopian postal service enterprise express mail service department service is good in assurance and empathy that means service quality of assurance and empathy like employee skill and trustworthy and politeness and also commitment to ethics are good compared to other service quality dimensions. Responsiveness that means service quality of responsiveness like informing the exact time of service delivery, having good willingness to support customers and their quick respond of customer request is moderate compared to other dimensions.

However Respondents' perception towards service quality of Tangibility and reliability like providing service at schedule time and interest to solve customer problems, physical facilities and employees neat in appearance are not good compared to other dimensions.

From the above table the mean of perception of respondents with over all service quality and customer satisfaction are 3.17 and 3.23 respectively. In general this table shows over all service quality and customer satisfaction is low.

According to Anton (1997) there are three zones of perception of service performance which are preference zone, acceptance zone and rejection zone, by customer satisfaction index (CSI). It is calculated by dividing all the positive responses by the total number of responses and multiplying by 100. According to him CSI with  $> 85$  is considered to be in preference zone, CSI in between 50-84 is considered as acceptance zone and CSI with  $< 50$  is in rejection zone which is below average.

#### **4.3.1. Service quality dimensions**

##### **4.3.1.1. *Description of Tangibility***

The mean value represents the average of all customer response on certain dimensions while, standard deviation shows how diverse the responses of the respondents are that means if the standard deviation shows smaller number, it indicates that the response of the respondents shows close opinions and when the standard deviation is high, it indicates the response of the respondents shows high variation According to Zaidatol & Bagheri (2009).

Mean Score	Description
<3.39	Low
3.40 -3.79	Moderate
>3.80	High

As shown in the **Table 4.3.1.1** below the average mean for tangibility dimension question that says “The EPSE ems department has modern equipment and visually attractive physical facilities” is 2.77 with the standard deviation of 1.252 which is below 3.39 that shows most respondents do not believe that there is modern equipment. Tangibility questions number two that says “employees are well dressed and neat in appearance” has the highest mean compared from the tangibles that is 3.31 with standard deviation 1.410 is also in low class that most respondents agree that they are not well dressed and neat in appearance. Tangibility question number three that says “materials associated with the service (pamphlets, manuals etc.) are visually attractive” is 2.73 with the standard deviation of 1.377 is in low class that most respondents agree that there is no attractive materials.

**Table 4.3.1.1** Tangibility Statistics

	Modern Equipment	Neat and well-dressed employees	Attractive materials
Mean	2.77	3.31	2.73
Std. Deviation	1.252	1.410	1.377

Source: own survey (June, 2021)

### 4.3.1.2. *Description of Reliability*

As we can see from **Table 4.3.1.2** below the mean value for reliability dimension questions are all classified in low level category since the results lie under 3.39 mean value that shows there is a higher gap between the question and their response. For the second, the third and fifth reliability questions that says “The Ems department has sincere interest to solve the problem of the customer”, “the Ems department gives accurate information to the customer” and “sufficient man power and material is kept to avoid the interruption of service provision” respectively has a mean value of 3.04, 3.15 and 3.04 with a standard deviation of 1.288, 1.169 and 1.375 respectively is also low but better compared with the other reliability dimension questions.. The lowest mean lies on the Reliability question number one and four that are “when Ems department promises to supply service within a specific time to you, it does so” and “the Ems department is able to provide service on time as promised” have a mean value of 2.69 and the standard deviation of 1.031 and 1.171 respectively.

**Table 4.3.1.2 Reliability Statistics**

	Promises to supply service	Sincere interest to solve the problem of customers	Giving accurate information to the customer	Able to provide service on time as promised	Sufficient man power and materials is kept to avoid interruption of service provision
Mean	2.69	3.04	3.15	2.69	3.04
Std. Deviation	1.031	1.288	1.169	1.171	1.375

Source: own survey (June, 2021)

#### 4.3.1.3. *Description of Responsiveness*

The mean value for the responsiveness dimension questions as we see on **Table 4.3.1.3** is 3.12, 2.69, 3.42 and 2.62 that's the three are below 3.39 that shows a highest gap but responsiveness question with mean value of 3.42 that says” The employees are happy and willing to serve the customer” has moderate result.

**Table 4.3.1.3 Responsiveness Statistics**

	Employees tell customers exactly when services will be performed	Ems managements are accessible ,listen and provide prompt and honest responses to customer inquiries	The employees are happy and willing to serve the customer	The employees are not too busy to respond to the customer requests
Mean	3.12	2.69	3.42	2.62
Std. Deviation	1.189	1.296	1.117	1.305

Source: own survey (June, 2021)

#### 4.3.1.4. *Description of Assurance*

The mean value for the assurance dimension questions shows highest value when compared with the previous service quality dimension questions which is 3.81, 3.23 and 3.46 respectively.

**Table 4.3.1.4 Assurance Statistics**

	The employees have the required skill in providing services	Customers feel safe on services provided by employees	The employees are trustworthy, polite to the customer
Mean	3.81	3.23	3.46
Std. Deviation	0.922	1.1556	1.119

Source: own survey (June, 2021)

#### **4.3.1.5. Description of Empathy**

Regarding the empathy dimensions of service quality, as shown in **Table 4.3.1.5** the third question which says “the Ems services are adjusted to suit individual customer needs” has mean values of 2.92 but the other empathy dimension questions are above 3.39 which show that there is no a big gap regarding these empathy dimensions.

**Table 4.3.1.5 Empathy Statistics**

	The employees give customers individual attention	The employees are committed to ethics and promote ethical behavior in work place	The Ems services are adjusted to suit individual customer needs	The operating hours are convenient to the customers
Mean	3.50	3.42	2.92	4.23
Std. Deviation	1.154	1.082	1.271	1.014

Source: own survey (June, 2021)



### 4.3.2. Relationship between Service Quality Dimensions, Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Correlation analysis is used to assess the relationship among service quality dimensions, over all service quality and customer satisfaction. Correlation analysis deal with relationships among variable and helps to gain insight in to the direction and significance of relation between the variables. Correlation coefficient take values between -1 and 1 ranging from being negatively correlated (-1) to uncorrelated (0) to positively correlated (1).

According to Dancey and Reidy(2004), a correlation result which is 0 indicates zero correlation , a result between 0.1 to 0.3 indicates weak correlation, a result which is between 0.4 to 0.6 indicates moderate correlation and a correlation coefficient between 0.7 to 0.9 indicates a strong correlation and a result which is equal to 1 indicates perfect correlation.

### Correlation (Relationship among Service quality dimension, over all service quality and customer satisfaction)

Table 4.3.2 correlation analysis

		Tangibilit y	Reliabilit y	Respons iveness	Assuran ce	Empathy	Overall Quality service	customer satisfacti on
Tangibility	Pearson Correlation	1	.956**	.965**	.884**	.884**	.884**	.884**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	286	286	286	286	286	286	286
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	.956**	1	.983**	.869**	.882**	.887**	.883**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	286	286	286	286	286	286	286
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.965**	.983**	1	.883**	.892**	.895**	.892**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	286	286	286	286	286	286	286
Assurance	Pearson Correlation	.884**	.869**	.883**	1	.958**	.953**	.951**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	286	286	286	286	286	286	286
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	.884**	.882**	.892**	.958**	1	.989**	.991**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	286	286	286	286	286	286	286
Overall Quality service	Pearson Correlation	.884**	.887**	.895**	.953**	.989**	1	.980**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	286	286	286	286	286	286	286
customer satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.884**	.883**	.892**	.951**	.991**	.980**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	286	286	286	286	286	286	286

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

Source: survey result (June, 2021)

Correlation analysis was undertaken to discuss the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. According to the above table 4.3.2 all service quality dimensions and customer satisfactions have positive and significant relationship.

Like the relationship between service quality dimensions and over all service quality, the strength of correlation is different between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. The above table shows the relationship among service quality dimensions, over all service quality and customer satisfaction. As the table shows, all service quality dimensions have positive and significant relationship with over all service quality strong and perfect correlation among service quality dimensions. Responsibility and Reliability have better relationship with over all service quality with strong coefficient value of .965 and .956 respectively followed by assurance and empathy which has coefficient value of .884. Tangibility has perfect relationship with over all service quality with correlation coefficient value of 1.

According to Dancey and Reidy (2004) stated above, there is a positive correlation between all service quality dimensions and over all service quality in Ethiopian postal service express mail service department.

#### **4.4. Assumptions for Regression Analysis**

Multicollinearity exists whenever an independent variable is highly correlated with one or more of the other independent variables in a multiple regression equation. Multicollinearity is a problem because it undermines the statistical significance of an independent variable.

**Table 4.4.1** Multicollinearity for overall service quality

		<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.212	.041		5.201	.000		
	Tangibility	.047	.032	.050	1.484	.139	.062	16.106
	Reliability	.064	.049	.061	1.304	.193	.032	31.087
	Responsiveness	.042	.054	.041	.778	.437	.025	39.671
	Assurance	.067	.036	.057	1.865	.063	.075	13.307
	Empathy	.933	.033	.888	28.357	.000	.072	13.895

a. Dependent Variable: over all service quality  
 Source: survey result (June, 2021)

Tolerance is an indicator of how much of the variability of the specified independent is not explained by the other independent variables in the model and is calculated using the formula  $1 - R^2$  for each variable. If this value is very small (less than .10) it indicates that the multiple correlation with other variables is high, suggesting the possibility of multicollinearity. The other value given is the VIF (Variance inflation factor), which is just the inverse of the Tolerance value ( $1$  divided by Tolerance).

VIF values above 10 would be a worry here, indicating multicollinearity. Multicollinearity can be detected with the tolerance values and variance inflation factor (VIF). As the above table shows the tolerance values of all independent variables are below 0.1 and the VIF values are above 10 which indicate there is Multicollinearity problem.

**Table 4.4.2** Multicollinearity for customer satisfaction

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.055	.037		1.508	.133		
	Tangibility	.010	.028	.011	.347	.728	.062	16.106
	Reliability	.010	.044	.010	.234	.815	.032	31.087
	Responsiveness	.041	.048	.041	.843	.400	.025	39.671
	Assurance	.002	.032	.002	.056	.956	.075	13.307
	Empathy	.971	.030	.953	32.758	.000	.072	13.895

a. Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction  
 Source: survey result (June, 2021)

The values of tolerance for all independent variables (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) are below 0.1 and the values of VIF for these variables are above 10 which indicate that there is multicollinearity problem.

#### 4.5. Impact of Service quality Dimensions on over all Service Quality

The main assessment in this part is impact of each independent variable on dependent variable.

**Table 4.5** Linear regression Analysis (impact of each service quality dimensions on service quality).

<b>Model Summary</b>									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.990 <sup>a</sup>	.980	.980	.182	.980	2776.088	5	280	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy, Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Responsiveness

Source: survey result (June, 2021)

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.212	.041		5.201	.000		
	Tangibility	.047	.032	.050	1.484	.139	.062	16.106
	Reliability	.064	.049	.061	1.304	.193	.032	31.087
	Responsiveness	.042	.054	.041	.778	.437	.025	39.671
	Assurance	.067	.036	.057	1.865	.063	.075	13.307
	Empathy	.933	.033	.888	28.357	.000	.072	13.895

a. Dependent Variable: overall service quality

Source: survey result (June, 2021)

The value of R square is used to evaluate the model. It tells us how much of the variance in the dependent variable (over all service quality) is explained by the model (which includes the independent variables of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy). In this case, the value is 0.980 which can be expressed by percentage (0.980\*100) this means that this model explains by 98 percent of the variance to overall service quality.

Moreover, the standardized coefficient  $\beta$  in the table shows the impact of independent variables have on over all service quality. Empathy has high impact on overall service quality of Ems department with  $\beta$  value of .888, Reliability, assurance, Responsiveness, and tangibility have the least impact with  $\beta$  value less than 0.1.

#### 4.6. Impact of Service quality Dimensions on Customer Satisfaction

Linear regressions analysis was applied again to assess the impact of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction. The table shows the SPSS result of the analysis

**Table 4.6** Linear regression analysis (Impact of service quality dimension of Customer satisfaction)

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.991 <sup>a</sup>	.983	.983	.164	.983	3224.858	5	280	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy, Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Responsiveness  
Source: survey result (June, 2021)

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.055	.037		1.508	.133		
	Tangibility	.010	.028	.011	.347	.728	.062	16.106
	Reliability	.010	.044	.010	.234	.815	.032	31.087
	Responsiveness	.041	.048	.041	.843	.400	.025	39.671
	Assurance	.002	.032	.002	.056	.956	.075	13.307
	Empathy	.971	.030	.953	32.758	.000	.072	13.895

a. Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction  
 Source: survey result (June, 2021)

As the value of R squared shows, the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) is explained (impacted) by all independent variables (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) by 98.3 percent which shows the evaluation of the model. This R square is not over estimated while evaluating the model’s appropriateness as its variation from adjusted R square which is also 98.3%.

In evaluating each independent variables impact on dependent variable (customer satisfaction), the table shows tangibility, reliability, assurance and responsiveness have the lowest impact with value of less than  $\beta = 0.1$ . Empathy has the biggest impact compared to the others with value of  $\beta = 0.953$  on customer satisfaction of Ems department.



#### 4.7. Impact of Overall Service quality on Customer Satisfaction

Linear regression analysis is used to investigate the impact of overall service quality on customer satisfaction.

**Table 4.7** Linear regression analysis table (Impact of overall service quality on customer satisfaction)

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.184	.043		4.294	.000		
	overall service quality	.950	.012	.980	82.411	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction  
Source: survey result (June, 2021)

Overall service quality has significant positive impact with p value = 0.000 on customer satisfaction of Ethiopian postal service Ems department. The directions of the impact also positive with coefficient  $\beta$  value of 0.980 which indicate that based on this model overall service quality has significant impact on customer satisfaction with  $\beta$  value 0.980. In general the regression analysis shows that from the independent variables listed in the model, empathy has higher impact on dependent variables.

#### 4.8. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

After the analysis of all survey result, the hypothesis tests are summarized

**Table 4.8 Summary of Hypothesis Testing**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>test</b>	<b>Result</b>
<b>H1</b> Service Quality Dimensions have a positive relationship with service quality.	correlation	Supported
<b>H2</b> Service Quality Dimensions have a positive & significant effect on customer satisfaction.	Regression	Supported
<b>H3</b> Service Quality Dimensions have a positive relationship among themselves.	correlation	Supported

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of the study obtained through the questionnaire distributed to 286 employees of Ethiopian postal service enterprise, the following summary of the findings, conclusion, recommendations, limitations and future implication of the study were made.

#### **5.1. Summary of Findings**

The main objective of the study was to evaluate the overall service quality and customer satisfaction with Ethiopian postal service express mail service department and to investigate the effects of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction. In this study hypothesis were also developed to investigate how service quality dimensions can affect customer satisfaction.

Descriptive statistics like frequency, mean and correlation analysis techniques were applied to analyze background information of respondents, to analyze respondents' perception on service quality and satisfaction as well as relationship between service quality dimensions, overall service quality and customer satisfaction. In addition, inferential like regression analysis techniques were used.

Mean score comparison was also conducted to evaluate customers perception on service quality dimensions, overall service quality and customer satisfaction.

Correlation coefficient statistics shows that Assurance and Empathy service quality dimensions have strong and significant relationship with over all service quality; significant relationships were also detected between service quality dimensions and

customer satisfaction. The finding also indicated that there is significant relationship among independent variables (service quality dimensions). Tangibility has perfect relationship with over all service quality. Regression analysis was undertaken to investigate impacts of each independent variables on dependent variable.

Finally, the hypothesis developed in this study were tested and the result shows that all service quality dimensions have significant and positive impact on service quality.

Moreover, all service quality dimensions have significant and positive impact on customer satisfaction, overall service quality has also significant and positive impact on customer satisfaction.

## **5.2. Conclusion**

The purpose of the study was to evaluate service quality and customer satisfaction as well as to examine the impact of various service quality dimensions on service quality and customer satisfaction in Ethiopian postal service express mail service department and to find out important dimensions of services having greater influence on service quality and customer satisfaction. Accordingly, five service quality dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) were hypothesized to evaluate service quality and customer satisfaction.

Since the mean value of overall service quality and customer satisfaction is low, it is concluded that over all service quality of Ems department is not good and customers are not satisfied with the services of Ethiopian postal service enterprise express mail service department.

Ethiopian postal service express mail service department can improve its service by focusing on all service quality dimensions and at the same time it can increase customer satisfaction by focusing on overall service quality and important dimensions.

Ethiopian postal service enterprise can improve its express mail service quality and customer satisfaction by improving service quality of all dimensions and by giving special attention to some dimensions like responsiveness, reliability and assurance.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

As presented in the findings of the study all five dimensions of service quality have significant and positive impact on service quality and customer satisfaction. So working to improve these service quality dimensions will contribute to the overall service quality and customer satisfaction. Based on the survey results, the following recommendations are given.

- ☒ The enterprise should show good progress in implementing modern systems to provide prompt and error free service to customers.
- ☒ The enterprise should implement standardized work process and procedures related to its service.
- ☒ All Service quality dimensions listed in the model of the study have impact on overall service quality and customer satisfaction of Ethiopian postal service enterprise Ems department. Based on these dimensions, customers observed over all service quality and satisfaction is low. So that Ethiopian postal service enterprise should work hard on all these service quality dimensions to improve its service quality and customer satisfaction of Ems department.

In general delivering excellent quality service will make Ems department standout among its competitors. In the service business like most of service industry, delivering quality service is essential for the existence, survival and success. So Ems department needs to monitor and measure the level of service quality it delivers to its customers on a regular base by conducting different surveys.

#### **5.4. Limitation of the study**

There are some limitations associated with this study that need to be explained. It is geographically limited only to Ethiopian postal service Ems department customers' main office in Addis Ababa. However there are different service departments and regions that Ethiopian postal service reaches to its customers like parcel post department, letter post department and other departments. This study will consider only the customers of Ems department and focuses only the service quality effect of customer satisfaction.

Carrying out this study on customers with different level was another limitation because customers' expectation could be different based on their level. However, the above limitations are less significant compared to the importance of carrying out this type of study.

#### **5.5. Direction for Future Research**

The purpose of this study was to find how customers of Ethiopian postal service enterprise express mail service department perceive quality and to measure their satisfaction. Knowing how customers perceive service quality and being able to measure service quality can benefit management of Ems department by providing reliable data that can be used to monitor and maintain improved service quality. Since this study focus only on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, future

researchers may include other factors that can have a big impact on customer satisfaction and do a survey.

Future researchers, who want to investigate similar area, may include customers of Ethiopian postal service enterprise and conduct comparison analysis to whether there is a service quality and customer satisfaction difference in between different departments of the enterprise. Moreover they can further investigate the levels of service quality and customer satisfaction among itself and its competitors using other service quality measurement tools.

Findings show that customers' observed service quality and satisfaction is low and this therefore means Ems department should work hard on all dimensions of service quality in order to bring higher perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.

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## Appendix: Questionnaire

### QUESTIONNAIRE/ጥያቄ

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

Dear respondents, I am a post graduate student of Addis Ababa University, College of Business and Economics, conducting a research on “The effects of quality service on customer satisfaction: The case study of Ethiopian postal service enterprise (EPSE), express mail service department (EMS)”. The research is conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Masters of Science in International business (Import export Management). The purpose of this study is to measure service quality and the level of customer satisfaction in the EMS department. Your kind cooperation will help in getting reliable data and I want to assure that it will be used for academic purpose only. You are kindly requested to complete this questionnaire.

Thank you in advance for your kind cooperation.

For query please use

Email: - [tewabe2017@gmail.com](mailto:tewabe2017@gmail.com)

Phone: - +251911186990

Tewabe Befekadu

### **Part I - Background of respondents**

**Instructions:** please select an appropriate response among the choices available.

1. Sex

A) Male    B) Female

2. Age

A) 18-25 years    B) 26-35 years    C) 36-45 years    D) above 46 years

## Part II –Service Quality Questions

**Instructions:** Please put a thick mark (√) by indicating the level of agreement that you agree or disagree with the different indicators of service quality dimensions specified below, where the values of scales are; **1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree**

### 3. Educational background

A) less than 10+2      B) Diploma      C) Degree      D) MA/MSc and above

### 4. Your job position

A) Clerk      B) Supervisor      C) Expert      D) Manager/Chief officer  
E) Others, please specify.....

### 5. Work experience

A) 1-5 years      B) 6-10 years      C) 11-15 years      D) 16-20 years  
E) above 21 years

Service Quality Dimensions የአገልግሎት ጥራት ማከታተያ	የሚለካው ደረጃ				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1. Tangibility ተጨባጭ ሁኔታ</b>					
1.1 The EPSE Ems department has modern equipment and visually attractive physical facilities. የኢሌምኔስ ዲፓርትመንት ዘመናዊ መሳሪያዎች እና ለዓይን ማህብ የሆኑ አካላዊ ማልገያዎች አሉት					
1.2 The Ems employees are well dressed and neat in appearance የኢሌምኔስ ሰራተኞች አለባበስ ስርአት የጠቀና ፅዳና ማህብ ነው					
1.3 Materials associated with the service (pamphlets, manuals etc.) are visually attractive. ከአገልግሎት አሰጣጡ ጋር የተዛመዱ ቁሳቁሶች (በራራ ወረቀቶች ፣ ማክታወቂያዎች፣ ማቀላቀሻ ወተት) ግልፅና ለእይታ ማህብ ናቸው					
<b>2. Reliability አስተማማኝነት</b>					
2.1. When EMS promises to supply service within a specific time to you, it does so የኢሌምኔስ ዲፓርትመንት በተወሰነ ጊዜ ውስጥ አገልግሎቱን እንደሚሰጥና እንደሚቀርብ ቃል ሲገባ ፣ ቃሉን ይፈፅማል					
2.2. The EMS has sincere interest to solve the problem of the customer. የኢሌምኔስ ዲፓርትመንት የደንበኞችን ችግር ለመፍታት ልባዊ ፍላጎት አለው					
2.3. The EMS department gives accurate information to the customer የኢሌምኔስ ዲፓርትመንት ለደንበኛው ትክክለኛ መረጃ ይሰጣል					
2.4. EMS is able to provide service on time as promised. ኢሌምኔስ እንደገባው ቃል አገልግሎቱን በወቅቱ ማስገባት ይችላል					
2.5. Sufficient man power and material is kept to avoid the interruption of service provision. የአገልግሎት አቅርቦት መቋረጥን ለመከላከል በቂ የሰው ኃይል እና ቁሳቁስ በተጠበቀቁት ይቀመጣል					
<b>3. Responsiveness ምላሽ ሰጪት</b>					
3.1. The employees tell customers exactly when services will be performed የሚሉ ማዕከሎች መደረሻ ቀናት እንዲሁም ሌሎች አገልግሎቶች ማድረግ እንደሚገባው ለደንበኞች በትክክል ይነግራሉ					
3.2. The EMS managements are accessible, listen and provide prompt and honest responses to customers inquiries የኢሌምኔስ አስተዳደር ተደራሽ ነው፣ ያዳምናል እንዲሁም ለደንበኞች ቅሬታዎች ፈጥና ለቀኛ ምላሾችን ይሰጣል					
3.3. The employees are happy and willing to serve the customer የኢሌምኔስ ሰራተኞች ደስተኞች እና ደንበኛውን ለማልገልግል					

ረቃይኞች ናቸው					
3.4. The employees are not too busy to respond to the customers' requests. ሰራተኞች ለደንበኞች ጥያቄዎች ምላሽ ለመስጠት በስራ በጣም የተጠየቁ አይደሉም					
<b>4. Assurance ማረጋገጫ</b>					
4.1. EMS employees have the required skill in providing services. የኢኤምኤስ ሰራተኞች አገልግሎት ለመስጠት የሚስፈልጉት ብቻት አላቸው					
4.2. EMS customers feel safe on the service provided by the employees በኢኤምኤስ ሰራተኞች በሚሰጡ አገልግሎቶች ደንበኞች ደህንነት ይሰማቸዋል					
4.3. The employees are trust worthy, polite to the customer የኢኤምኤስ ሰራተኞች ለደንበኛው ትሁት፣ ጨዋታና እምነት የሚሰጡ ናቸው					
<b>5. Empathy ርኅራኄ</b>					
5.1. EMS employees give customers individual attention የኢኤምኤስ ሰራተኞች ለእያንዳንዱ ደንበኛ እንክብካቤና ትኩረት ይሰጣሉ					
5.2 EMS employees are committed to ethics and promote ethical behavior in the workplace የኢኤምኤስ ሰራተኞች ለሥራ ስነ ምግባር እና በሥራ በታላቅ ምግባርን ለመከታተል ቁርባኛ ናቸው					
5.3. The EMS Services are adjusted to suit individual customer needs የኢኤምኤስ አገልግሎቶች ከሁሉም የደንበኛ ፍላጎቶች ጋር የሚስተካከሉ ናቸው					
5.4 The operating hours are convenient to the customers. የኢኤምኤስ አገልግሎት መስጫ ሰዓት ለደንበኞች ምቹ ነው					

**Part III - Overall Customer Satisfaction question**

Your comments and wishes about EMS service quality, customer satisfaction and improvement? ስለ ኢኤምኤስ አገልግሎት ጥራት ፣ ስለ ደንበኛ እርካታ እና አጠቃላይ ማሻሻል ስለሚጠበቀው ነገሮች የሚጠበቁ አስተያየት

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