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E-Service Quality: A Comprehensive Conceptual Review

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Abstract: Advancements in digital technologies have transformed the way services are delivered, making e-service quality a critical determinant of customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty in online environments. Traditional service quality models such as SERVQUAL are insufficient in capturing the unique features of electronic services, which are largely characterized by automation, self-service interfaces, and limited human interaction. To address this limitation, Parasuraman et al. (2005) introduced the E-S-QUAL model, defining e-service quality as the degree to which online platforms enable effective and efficient service transactions. This study conceptually examines the core dimensions of e-service quality and their role in shaping consumer perceptions in online service settings. The E-S-QUAL framework comprises four key dimensions: efficiency, system availability, fulfilment, and privacy. Efficiency relates to the ease of use, speed, and navigational convenience of websites, which significantly enhances perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. System availability emphasizes the reliability and technical stability of online platforms, as uninterrupted service delivery is essential for reducing perceived risk and building consumer trust. Fulfilment refers to the accuracy of service promises, including correct order processing and timely delivery, which strengthens customers' confidence in service providers. Privacy and security address concerns related to data protection and transaction safety, which remain critical factors influencing customers' willingness to engage in online transactions. Prior empirical evidence confirms that these dimensions collectively contribute to e-satisfaction and long-term customer loyalty. The study underscores the importance of continuous technological enhancement and customer-oriented system design in sustaining superior e-service quality.

Keywords: E-service quality, E-S-QUAL, Customer satisfaction, Online services, Digital platforms.

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Introduction

The notion of e-service quality derives from conventional service quality theory, namely the SERVQUAL model introduced by Parasuraman et al. (1988). Nonetheless, the unique attributes of electronic services characterized by limited human connection, reliance on technology, and self-service interfaces rendered conventional service quality metrics inadequate for elucidating online service experiences. Parasuraman et al. (2005) mitigated this issue by formulating the E-S-QUAL model, which distinctly encapsulates the characteristics of electronic service delivery. Their model defines e-service quality as "the degree to which a website enables efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery of products and services." This definition emphasizes that e-service quality includes both the technical functionality of a website and the overall experience received by the client during online transactions. In contrast to conventional services, where quality may be affected by personnel conduct and environmental factors, e-service quality is predominantly dictated by system architecture, automation, responsiveness, and security measures. Consequently, sustaining elevated e-service quality necessitates ongoing technology advancement and a customer-focused system design. Comprehensive studies have revealed several aspects of e-service quality. Of the numerous models presented, the E-S-QUAL model is the most recognized and scientifically substantiated framework. It encompasses four fundamental dimensions: efficiency, system

availability, fulfilment, and privacy. Efficiency denotes the ease and swiftness with which clients may access and utilize an online platform. It encompasses elements such as website navigation, information clarity, page loading speed, and transaction procedure simplicity. An effectively designed website enables customers to do activities with least effort and time, hence improving perceived service quality. Zeithaml et al. (2002) assert that efficiency is a critical determinant of consumer satisfaction in online contexts. When clients can effortlessly find products, execute transactions seamlessly, and get pertinent information without ambiguity, their overall assessment of service quality enhances. Research conducted by Kemény et al. (2016) and Elsharnouby and Mahrous (2015) substantiates that efficiency is significantly positively correlated with customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. System availability pertains to the operational efficacy of an online platform, encompassing its reliability, uptime, and error-free performance. Customers anticipate that online services would be always accessible and function reliably without system malfunctions, crashes, or delays. In e-service contexts, even trivial technical disruptions can result in discontent and erosion of trust. Wang et al. (2017) assert that system failures heighten perceived risk and deter future use, especially in online banking and e-commerce environments. Consistent system performance is crucial to provide seamless transactions and continuous service provision. System availability is particularly crucial in underdeveloped economies, where consumers may already harbor apprehensions about digital infrastructure. A reliable and adaptive system instills assurance in users and bolsters their trust in online services.

Fulfilment denotes the degree to which service providers meet their commitments, encompassing precise product information, prompt delivery, and accurate order processing. It demonstrates the organization's capacity to continuously fulfil client expectations. Parasuraman et al. (2005) assert that fulfilment is a primary determinant of consumer happiness in online services. When customers have the accurate goods within the stipulated timeframe, their confidence in the service provider grows. Conversely, delays in delivery, erroneous orders, or deceptive information adversely impact perceived service quality and result in discontent. Fulfilment is essential in establishing consumer trust and loyalty. Research conducted by Yousafzai et al. (2005) and Meesala and Paul (2018) demonstrates that fulfilment bolsters customers' confidence in a company's reliability, hence fostering enduring connections. Privacy and security constitute essential aspects of e-service quality, especially in online financial and commercial operations. Privacy pertains to the safeguarding of personal and transactional information, whereas security concerns the deterrence of fraud, hacking, and unauthorized access. Customers frequently exhibit reluctance to utilize internet services when they sense a threat to their personal information. Zeithaml et al. (2002) assert that privacy concerns substantially affect customers' propensity to engage in online transactions. When clients are certain that their information is secure, they are more inclined to trust the service provider and persist in utilizing the platform. Studies by Hashemi and Abbasi (2017) and Blut (2016) demonstrate that privacy and security significantly enhance e-satisfaction and consumer loyalty. Without sufficient security measures, even technologically sophisticated systems may struggle to retain users.

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