

Service Quality Factors Influencing Omantel Customer Satisfaction in Oman

Mohd Dan Jantan

Associate Professor

Faculty of Business, Information, & Human Sciences
Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Hamed Jameel Al Malki

Graduate Student

Faculty of Business, Information, & Human Sciences
Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

Omantel has struggled recently to satisfy more customers with service quality. The study aimed at examining the effects of service quality dimensions - Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, Reliability, Job Requirements, Rapport, and Job Satisfaction - on Omantel Customer Satisfaction. The sample size comprised 384 customers visiting or contacting Omantel outlets in the capital of Oman Muscat, of whom 328 respondents did the online questionnaire modified from SERVQUAL measurement. Non-probability convenience sampling was used for respondents' selection. SPSS SEM and AMOS were implemented to analyze the structured questionnaire data. This research findings: (1) Tangibles, Responsiveness, Empathy, and Job Requirements did not positively influence Omantel Customer Satisfaction; (2) there was a weak negative influence of Assurance on Omantel Customer Satisfaction; (3) there was a strong positive influence of Reliability on Omantel Customer Satisfaction; (4) there was a medium positive influence of Rapport as same for Job satisfaction on Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, Omantel, SERVQUAL, service quality dimensions

1. Introduction

The essential reason behind the success of services provided at a mobile industry was to strengthen relationships with target customers by providing higher quality of service than other competing companies, which resulted in satisfying customers at higher levels (Kolter & Armstrong, 2016). Such a relationship helped to create value for both providers of services by increasing their sales and customers by their consumption of high-quality service (Al-Jazzazi & Sultan, 2017). Since customers who were satisfied at high levels usually remained loyal, had low sensitivity to costs, and complained less about service delivery, customer satisfaction indicated performance strongly for both service providers and regulators (Ojo, Busayo, & Ifeoma, 2017). However, customer satisfaction in Omantel has dropped due to the quality of service provided to the customers. It happened that, as per Muscat daily, 2016, Omantel dissatisfied customers boycotted it in 2016. Therefore, in order to achieve growth and sustainability, Omantel needed to deliver superior service (Khattab, 2018). Service quality has become a critical component enabling Omantel to achieve and maintain its competitive level, achieve excellence, and sustain competitive benefit (Muscat Security Market, 2017). Hence, this research has intended to examine the effects of service quality dimensions - Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, Reliability, Job Requirements, Rapport, and Job Satisfaction - on Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Service Quality

In Nordic Model of Service Quality, Grönroos (1984) classified quality aspects into technical quality which was: what was delivered or what the customers got from their contact with the employees who delivered services, and functional quality which was: the perception of how service was delivered. According to Grönroos (2015), service quality was the results of comparison that customers made regarding their expectations about the service and their perception of the way or behavior used in performing the service.

In their SERVQUAL Model, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) defined service quality, as perceived by customers: the extent of discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions of the service. As indicated by Belwal and Amireh (2018), Parasuraman et al. (1988) SERVQUAL Scale consisted of twenty-two questions aiming at assessing the service quality dimensions. Belwal and Amireh (2018) mentioned that according to Parasuraman et al. (1988), SERVQUAL could be broadly implemented in order to: (a) evaluate customers' perceptions towards services, (b) make categories of them into segments, (c) make a comparison between performance and other competitors, and (d) make improvements in the services.

The SERVQUAL quantifying scale, as per Rita, Oliveira, and Farisa (2019), has been supported by famous scholars who generated this pioneering work in the field namely Parasuraman et al. (1985); Parasuraman et al. (1988). However, Khattab (2018) mentioned that other scholars such as Cronin and Taylor (1992) criticized SERVQUAL by stating that the discrepancies between expectations and perceptions did not provide any additional value to the performance-only-instrument. Nevertheless, in their analysis of the implementation of the SERVQUAL scale in academic studies by drawing 367 articles from 167 indexed journals published from 1998 to 2013, Wang, Luor, Luarn, and Lu (2015) found that there had been a broad implementation of SERVQUAL in 46 fields (42.5% in Management and 16.9% in Business). Khattab (2018) affirmed that as per the intensive literature review carried out, the SERVQUAL scale was the most widely used model in latest investigations to measure service quality.

Jain and Wali (2018) stated that SERVQUAL was adapted and modified into several variations. Therefore, in the current research a modified SERVQUAL scale was used consisting of the original five dimensions of the scale with three more dimensions. These dimensions are: (Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, Reliability, Job Requirements, Rapport, and Job Satisfaction). In Omani telecom, there has been scarcity in using SERVQUAL to find out the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Some researchers, according to Belwal and Amireh (2018), used it to discover SERVQUAL dimensions which could affect customer loyalty.

2.2 Customer Satisfaction

As per Ismail and Yunan (2016), customer satisfaction could be defined as the discrepancy between customers' expectations and experience performance after using a service and/or product at a certain period. Rouf, Kamal, and Iqbal (2018) defined customer satisfaction as the response given by a customer after consuming a product to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations and the actual performance of the service or product. As per Murugiah and Akgam (2015), it was essential to keep customers satisfied and to consider them in strategic business planning. Some researchers were with the concept that a positive customer satisfaction occurred when the perceived performance met or exceeded expectations (Selvabaskar, Shanmuga, & Priya, 2015). Other researchers considered customer satisfaction as a combination of both cognitive and affective dimensions (Bracíníková & Matušínská, 2017). Others aimed their research studies at finding out if customer satisfaction was caused by quality of encounter only (Shah, Jan, & Baloch, 2018).

Some researchers studied the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction pointing out that there was a significant correlation between them. Ismail and Yunan (2016) found that service quality dimensions namely: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy were significantly correlated with customer satisfaction. Fida, et al. (2020) concluded that customer satisfaction was significantly positively affected by service quality dimensions of empathy and responsiveness.

2.3 Dimensions of Service Quality

2.3.1 Tangibles

Parasuraman, et al. (1988) defined tangibility as how physical facilities, equipment, staff, and communication materials appeared. Selvabaskar, et al. (2015) revealed that in banking services tangibles had a positive effect on customer satisfaction. As per Ismail and Yunan (2016), there was a significant correlation between service quality dimension of tangibility and customer satisfaction. Sharma Naveen (2016) indicated that the influence of tangibility on customer satisfaction in the banking sector was reflected by attractive ambiance and sophisticated equipment. As per Rajeswari, Srinivasulu, and Thiyagarajan (2017), there was a positive influence on the relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction. However, Belwal and Amireh (2018) concluded that tangibles did not affect satisfied customer's attitudinal loyalty. Also, Fida, Ahmed, Al-Balushi, & Singh (2020) stated that customer satisfaction was not positively influenced by tangibles. Thus, the above arguments have resulted in developing the present study subsequent hypothesis:

H_{1a}: Tangibles positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

2.3.2 Responsiveness

Responsiveness was mainly related to the service company response to customers through its employees. Paying personal attention would make an increase in the level of customer satisfaction and so would increase employees' attention to the issues that faced their customers. A radical shift would occur in customer satisfaction once this occurred. Debatably, there was a direct correlation between responsiveness and customer satisfaction (Becerril-Arreola, Zhou, Srinivasan, & Seldin, 2017).

Some researchers (e.g., Ismail & Yunan, 2016; Fida et al., 2020) discovered that there was a significant correlation between service quality dimension of responsiveness and customer satisfaction. Conversely, Belwal and Amireh (2018) did not find any correlation between responsiveness and satisfied customer's attitudinal loyalty. Based on the literature above, therefore, this research following hypothesis has been proposed:

H_{1b}: Responsiveness positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

2.3.3 Assurance

The assurance dimension of service quality could be considered as an indicator of the courtesy, knowledge, and competence of the employees, as well as their ability to form bonds of trust with customers (Asare & Xu Ming, 2016). Assurance was defined as the employees' capability, with the assistance of possessing their knowledge, to stimulate the confidence and trust which would have a strong effect on customer satisfaction (Alauddin, Ahsan, Mowla, Islam, & Hossain, 2019).

Notably, assurance and customer satisfaction correlated positively (Ismail & Yunan, 2016; Ali & Raza, 2017). Customer satisfaction was influenced positively by the components of assurance such as offering help to customers courteously, being accurate in finishing orders, having easy access to account details, being convenient within the company, maintaining accurate quotations and records, employing experienced professional team members, and achieving promised services (Olander, Vanhala, Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, & Blomqvist, 2016; Belwal & Amireh, 2018). Conversely, Fida et al. (2020) found out that customer satisfaction was not positively influenced by assurance. On the basis of the above discussion, this hypothesis has been proposed:

H_{1c}: Assurance positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

2.3.4 Empathy

Parasuraman et al. (1988) debated that comprehending the expectations of customers better than competing parties and providing personalized attention and care to customers had a strong influence on customer satisfaction. Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh (2016) discovered that suitable working hours, customized attention, understanding customers' particular needs in a better way, and the service quality dimension of empathy influenced customer satisfaction positively. Empathy was defined by Oh and Kim (2017) as the employees' abilities to give care to their customers and pay more attention to them as individuals, particularly during service delivery.

Based on the works of (Daniels, Glover, & Mellor, 2014; Itani & Inyang, 2015), service with empathy could be regarded as an important element for internal and external customer communication that could commonly lead to customer satisfaction. In service marketing, empathy has been considered as a significant determinant for customer satisfaction. Serving customers with empathy could lead to customer satisfaction (Jones & Shandiz, 2015; Markovic & Obradovic, 2015; Ismail & Yunan, 2016; Fida et al., 2020). Some previous researches stressed that service with empathy involved cognitive as well as emotional aspects (e.g. Jones & Shandiz, 2015). However, Belwal and Amireh (2018) noted that there was no effect of empathy on satisfied customer's attitudinal loyalty. In line with the above reviews, this study has proposed the following hypothesis:

H_{1d}: Empathy positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

2.3.5 Reliability

Parasuraman et al. (1985) defined reliability as the organization's dependent and independent ability to provide the service. In the context of service quality, keeping error-free records was considered as a reliability paradigm that influenced customer satisfaction significantly (Itani & Inyang, 2015). It was demonstrated by researchers that reliability affected customer satisfaction positively (Markovic & Obradovic, 2015; Ismail & Yunan, 2016). The existing literature in the banking sector has showed that there was a positive relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction (Hwang & Kim, 2016). Kim, Chang, Park, and Lee (2015) emphasized that reliability could be referred to the extent to which customers could depend on the service as promised by the organization.

Reliability influenced customer satisfaction significantly because it was considered as a standard of service quality (Kim & Kim, 2016). Iqbal, Ahmad, and Nasim (2016) contended that the essential components of reliability (e.g., completing orders accurately, keeping accurate quotations and records, issuing bills accurately, and accomplishing promised services) were considered the most significant reasons behind retaining customers. In contrast with other researchers, Fida et al. (2020) discovered that reliability did not have any positive effect on customer satisfaction. Based on the above arguments, therefore, the following hypothesis of the present study has been reached:

H_{1e}: Reliability positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

2.3.6 Job Requirements

Tsaur and Lin (2004) stressed that management practices had partially direct influence on customer perceptions of service quality and indirect influence through FSEs' service behaviors. Netemeyer and Maxham III (2007) reached to the conclusions that employee ratings, as job requirements, were related to customer satisfaction, and increasing returns at the higher levels of performance were shown by employee behaviors.

In their study, Mensah- Kufuor and Doku (2017) found out that the job requirements of the performance of trained FSEs resulted in customer satisfaction. According to Ojo et al. (2017), the job requirements of employee's empowerment led to customer satisfaction. A great similarity between the customer satisfaction and job fulfillment of employees was observed (Ahmad, Ahmad, & Papastathopoulos, 2019).

The literature related to job requirements and customer satisfaction has emphasized that customers compared the performance of employees and services on some standards. Also, the quality of service as perceived by the customers was considered as job requirements effect fulfilled by the employees (Alauddin et al., 2019). In relevance with Job Requirements literature, the subsequent hypothesis in this study has been proposed:

H_{1f}: Job requirements positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

2.3.7 Rapport

Establishing interpersonal trust and obtaining commitment from customers have been considered as important objectives in sales. The relationships that sales representatives established with customers operated on a continuum of interpersonal trust and commitment (Asare & Xu Ming, 2016).

Some studies focused on the relationship between employee rapport and customer satisfaction. In their study, Gremler and Gwinner (2000) discovered that there was a significant relationship between rapport components and customer satisfaction. As per Stock and Hoyer (2005), salespeople's customer-oriented attitudes led to a direct influence on customer satisfaction. Other researchers, for instance, Delcourt, Gremler, van Riel, and van Birgelen (2013) stressed that employee rapport led to customer satisfaction because rapport could be featured by mutual understanding and enjoyable communication. Keh, Ren, Hill, and Li (2013) discovered that there was a relation between rapport and customer satisfaction. Raie, Khadivi, and Khdaie (2014) pointed out that customer satisfaction was positively influenced by employee rapport. Kattara, Weheba, and Ahmed (2015) found out that employees' behaviors, either negative or positive, were highly correlated to the customers' overall satisfaction. Besides, employees' behaviors had a great effect on overall customer satisfaction. Fatima, Razzaque, and Di Mascio (2015) emphasized that rapport was considered as an essential role in building and retaining employee customer relationships. They added that rapport and customer satisfaction were significantly correlated.

Other more studies focused on the relation between employee rapport and customer satisfaction. For example, Potluri, Angati, and Narayana (2016) found out that sales people customer-oriented attitudes had a direct effect on customer satisfaction. Felix (2017) discovered that rapport components were significantly related to customer satisfaction. Bahadur, Aziz, and Zulfiqar (2018) stressed that employee rapport affected customer satisfaction and loyalty positively. Yeo, Hur, and Ji (2019) affirmed that salesperson's own behaviors led to customer satisfaction. In the present study, rapport has been considered as a beyond role behavior. It seems there is no indication in the literature about previous studies which revealed that rapport influenced customer satisfaction negatively. Therefore, according to the literature related to rapport, the following hypothesis has been proposed for the study:

H_{1g}: Rapport positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

2.3.8 Job Satisfaction

Research has focused on the nature and strength of links between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. There was growing evidence that supported a positive relationship between the two. Ackfeldt and Wong (2006) emphasized that during service encounter, customers' perceptions of service were affected by satisfied employee positive behaviors.

Acheampong and Asamoah (2013) found out that employee satisfaction led to customer satisfaction and loyalty. As per Tortosa-Edo, López-Navarro, and Llorens-Monzonis (2014), there were direct and indirect influences of the job satisfaction personal environmental values on the constructs that made up the customer satisfaction and trust in firms—information processing—risk perception sequence. In personal service, according to Mendoza and Maldonado (2014), the relationship between employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction was stronger than in non-personal service. According to Leinkumar (2017), employee satisfaction was the main cause for customer satisfaction.

A number of studies were conducted to find out the relationship between employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. For instance, Jung and Yoon reached to the conclusion that employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction were positively correlated. Kermani (2013) found out that employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction were significantly positively related. Pantouvakis and Bouranta (2013) noted that the objectives set by the company in order to satisfy its customers were achieved by its satisfied employees who were committed and engaged with the company. In another study, Mendoza and Maldonado (2014) found correlations between the employee job satisfaction level and customer satisfaction. Morsy (2015) study finding was that there was a significant positive relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Emir, Şahin, and Arslantürk (2018) emphasized that employees' satisfaction about their social rights, working conditions, and communication in the hotel industry affected customer satisfaction positively. Perić, Gašić, Stojiljković, and Nešić (2018) reached to the conclusion that employee satisfaction influenced tourist satisfaction directly and positively. Based on the Job Satisfaction literature discussed above, the following hypothesis has been proposed in this study:

H_{1h}: Job satisfaction positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

3. Conceptual Framework

The research hypotheses have been depicted in the following conceptual framework (see Figure 1) where hypotheses H_{1a} - H_{1h} indicate the effects of service quality dimensions - Tangibles, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, Reliability, Job Requirements, Rapport, and Job Satisfaction - on Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

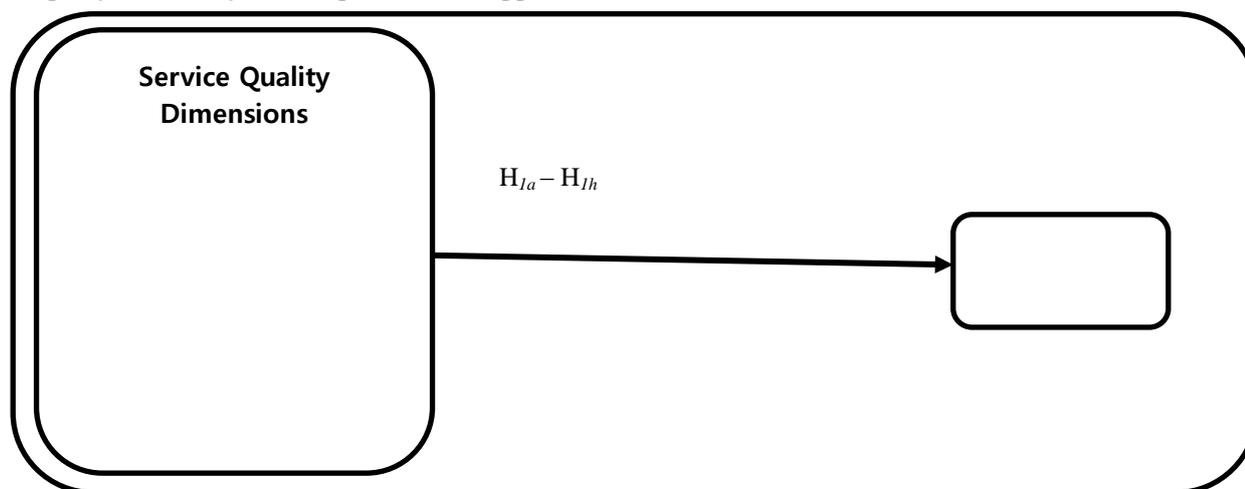


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

4. Methodology

The target population of this study is 3.429 million Omantel subscribers in Muscat. Based on the recommendation of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, the sample size of this study is 384 subscribers visiting or contacting Omantel outlets in Muscat. However, 328 Omantel subscribers took parts in doing the SERVQUAL modified online questionnaire and receiving it by WhatsApp. Close-ended questions have been used in this study because, as per Bryman and Bell (2019), they yield responses which can be numerically coded and can be interpreted into quantifiable figures. Non-probability convenience sampling was implemented for respondents' selection because it is speedy, cost-effective, not as time consuming like other sampling techniques, and the sample is easily available (Stratton, 2021).

The Five-Point Likert Scale, originated by Rensis Likert in 1932 (Likert, 1932) is used in this study because it comprises five symmetrical and balanced points where respondents select (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). SPSS data analysis technique namely Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is implemented in analyzing the data obtained from the online questionnaire. On the basis of this study conceptual model, SEM has been chosen as the main statistical method to test the Hypothetical Model. The statistical technique of SEM Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) is specifically used in this study.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Demographic Data of the Respondents

Table 1 shows the respondents' demographic data. It depicts variables related to the respondents' individual characteristics: respondent gender, age and educational level. There was 52.7% of male respondents and 47.3% were females. The youngest respondent in the survey was below 18 years old and the eldest was 40 and above. The educational level of the respondents ranged from "elementary school" to "master's degree and above". Nearly 65.8% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree and master's degree and above.

Table 1. Demographic Data of the Respondents

Age	Education	Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Below 18	Elementary school	1	3	4
	High school	1	1	2
	Total	2	4	6
18 -28	High school	7	2	9
	Diploma	13	11	24
	Bachelor's degree	16	27	43
	Total	36	40	76
29 -39	Elementary school	0	2	2
	High school	6	8	14
	Diploma	10	15	25
	Bachelor's degree	17	48	65
	Master's degree and above	9	7	16
	Total	42	80	122
40 and above	Elementary school	1	1	2
	High school	7	6	13
	Diploma	10	7	17
	Bachelor's degree	37	8	45
	Master's degree and above	38	9	47
	Total	93	31	124
Total	Elementary school	2	6	8
	High school	21	17	38
	Diploma	33	33	66
	Bachelor's degree	70	83	153
	Master's degree and above	47	16	63
	Total	173	155	328

5.2 Descriptive Statistics of Influential Factors

The respondents were asked to respond to items on a five-point Likert Scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree* as per Table 2. The weighted average (1-1.79) of respondents strongly disagreed, (1.80-2.59) disagreed, (2.60-3.39) somewhat agreed, (3.40-4.19) agreed, and (4.20-5) strongly agreed.

Table 2. Weighted Averages for 5-Point Likert Scale

Weighted Average	Result
1-1.79	Strongly Disagree
1.80-2.59	Disagree
2.60-3.39	Somewhat Agree
3.40-4.19	Agree
4.20-5	Strongly Agree

Table 3 shows the direct effects and the significance of exogenous latent constructs toward endogenous latent construct. The statistical significance level is usually expressed as a *p*-value between 0 and 1. As long as *p*-value is less than 0.05, it is statistically significant. All exogenous latent constructs are identified to have a significant influence toward the endogenous latent construct. This finding indicates that Reliability, Rapport, and Job Satisfaction contribute in affecting Omantel Customer Satisfaction. It has also been found that the three exogenous latent constructs: Reliability, Rapport and Job Satisfaction have positive estimates values.

Table 3. Analysis of Estimated Regression Weights

H	Path	Regression Weights	Standardized Regression Weights	Standard Errors	Critical Ratios	P	Effect Type
H_{1a}	Tangibles \Rightarrow Omantel Customer Satisfaction	0.116	0.090	0.076	1.517	.129	
H_{1b}	Responsiveness \Rightarrow Omantel Customer Satisfaction	-0.077	-0.068	0.102	-0.751	.453	
H_{1c}	Assurance \Rightarrow Omantel Customer Satisfaction	-0.159	-0.138	0.085	-1.866	.062*	Weak negative
H_{1d}	Empathy \Rightarrow Omantel Customer Satisfaction	-0.113	-0.107	0.085	-1.322	.186	
H_{1e}	Reliability \Rightarrow Omantel Customer Satisfaction	0.579	0.505	0.127	4.545	0.00***	Strong positive
H_{1f}	Job Requirements \Rightarrow Omantel Customer Satisfaction	0.082	0.076	0.090	.908	.364	
H_{1g}	Rapport \Rightarrow Omantel Customer Satisfaction	0.187	0.179	0.082	2.294	.022**	Medium positive
H_{1h}	Job Satisfaction \Rightarrow Omantel Customer Satisfaction	0.219	0.194	0.099	2.207	.027**	Medium positive

***Significant at the 0.01 level

** Significant at the 0.05 level

* Significant at the 0.10 level

6. Results

6.1 The Effects of Service Quality Dimensions on Omantel Customer Satisfaction

H_{1a} : *Tangibles positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.* This quantitative study finding was that Tangibles did not positively influence Omantel Customer Satisfaction ($p = 0.129$). This result is consistent with the result obtained by Belwal and Amireh (2018) that tangibles did not affect satisfied customer's attitudinal loyalty. It is also in line with the previous study conducted in Oman by Fida et al. (2020) who came with the finding that customer satisfaction was not positively influenced by tangibles. However, it contradicts the results obtained by other researchers. For instance, Selvabaskar et al. (2015) stressed that tangibility had a positive influence on customer satisfaction. Sharma Naveen (2016) mentioned that there was an impact of tangibility on customer satisfaction. Ismail and Yunan (2016) pointed out that there was a significant correlation between tangibility and customer satisfaction. Rajeswari et al. (2017) noted that there was a positive effect of tangibility on customer satisfaction.

H_{1b} : *Responsiveness positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.* This study has found that Responsiveness did not positively influence Omantel Customer Satisfaction ($p = 0.453$). This finding is in conformity with the previous study conducted by Belwal and Amireh (2018) who did not find any correlation between responsiveness and satisfied customer's attitudinal loyalty. Nevertheless, this finding is not in conformity with the findings of other studies such as Ismail and Yunan (2016), Becerril-Arreola et al. (2017), and Fida et al. (2020) which discovered that there was a significant correlation between responsiveness and customer satisfaction. In other words, there was a mixed relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction depending on the different data sets used.

H_{1c} : *Assurance positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction.* The finding of this quantitative study was that there was a weak negative influence of Assurance on Omantel Customer Satisfaction ($p = 0.062^*$). This finding is similar to the findings of Fida et al. (2020) study which revealed that customer satisfaction was not positively influenced by assurance.

Conversely, this finding is different from previous studies results which revealed that assurance had an influence on customer satisfaction. For instance, Ismail and Yunan (2016); Olander et al., (2016); Ali and Raza (2017) highlighted that there was a positive relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction. Similarly, Belwal and Amireh (2018) found out that assurance had a positive impact on satisfied customer's attitudinal loyalty.

Alauddin et al. (2019) concluded that assurance strongly influenced the level of customer satisfaction.

H_{1d}: Empathy positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction. The result of this study showed that Empathy did not positively influence Omantel Customer Satisfaction ($p=.186$). This complements with a study conducted by Belwal and Amireh (2018) who found that there was no effect of empathy on satisfied customer's attitudinal loyalty.

However, this finding does not complement with the results of other studies which asserted that empathy influenced customer satisfaction (Jones & Shandiz, 2015; Markovic & Obradovic, 2015; Ismail & Yunan, 2016). Another study carried out by Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh (2016) revealed that empathy had a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

Also, Fida et al. (2020) concluded that customer satisfaction was significantly positively affected by empathy.

H_{1e}: Reliability positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction. The result of this study was that there was a strong positive influence of Reliability on Omantel Customer Satisfaction ($p=0.00***$). This result concurs with the study conducted by Kim and Kim (2016) in which they pointed out that reliability had a significant impact on customer satisfaction. It is also in line with the result of Hwang and Kim (2016) study which discovered that reliability had a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Besides, it is similar to other researchers' findings who demonstrated that reliability had a positive impact on customer satisfaction (Markovic et al., 2015; Ismail & Yunan, 2016; Belwal & Amireh, 2018).

In contrast, this finding contradicts the result obtained by the study carried out by Fida et al. (2020) which revealed that reliability did not have any positive effect on customer satisfaction.

H_{1f}: Job requirements positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction. The finding of this study was that Job requirements did not positively influence Omantel Customer Satisfaction ($p=.364$). This confirms Barnes et al. (2016) view on considering further debate whether job requirements was a cause of customer satisfaction.

Conversely, this study finding is inconsistent with the results of other previous studies. For instance, Mensah-Kufuor and Doku (2017) concluded that the job requirements of the performance of trained FSEs resulted in customer satisfaction. Ojo et al. (2017) noted that the job requirements of employee's empowerment led to customer satisfaction. Ahmad et al. (2019) found out that there was a great similarity between the customer satisfaction and job fulfillment of employees.

H_{1g}: Rapport positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction. The result of this study was that there was a medium positive influence of Rapport on Omantel Customer Satisfaction ($p=0.22**$). This finding is consistent with previous studies findings. For instance, in their study, Gremler and Gwinner (2000) discovered that there was a significant relationship between rapport components and customer satisfaction.

Other numerous research studies confirmed this quantitative study finding. In their study, Delcourt, et al. (2013) stressed that employee rapport resulted in customer satisfaction because rapport could be featured by mutual understanding and enjoyable communication. Keh et al. (2013) revealed that there was a relation between rapport and customer satisfaction. As per Raie et al. (2014), customer satisfaction was positively influenced by employee rapport. Kattara et al. (2015) discovered that employees' behaviors, either negative or positive, were highly correlated to the customers' overall satisfaction, and employees' behaviors had a great impact on overall customer satisfaction. Fatima et al. (2015) revealed that rapport and customer satisfaction were significantly correlated. Potluri et al. (2016) commented that sales people customer-oriented attitudes had a direct effect on customer satisfaction. Felix (2017) study revealed that rapport components were significantly related to customer satisfaction. As per Bahadur et al. (2018), employee rapport affected customer satisfaction and loyalty positively. Yeo et al. (2019) concluded that salesperson's own behaviors led to customer satisfaction.

H_{1h}: Job satisfaction positively influences Omantel Customer Satisfaction. The finding of this study revealed a medium positive influence of Job Satisfaction on Omantel Customer Satisfaction ($p=0.27**$). This finding correlates along with many previous research studies findings. Acheampong and Asamoah (2013) found out that employee satisfaction led to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Jung and Yoon (2013) found out that employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction were positively correlated. As per Kermani (2013), there was a positive relation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Pantouvakis and Bouranta (2013) noted that customer satisfaction was achieved by the company's satisfied employees. In their study, Mendoza and Maldonado (2014) found correlations between the employee job satisfaction level and customer satisfaction. Tortosa-Edo et al. (2014) stressed that there were direct and indirect influences of the job satisfaction on customer satisfaction. It was revealed in Morsy (2015) study that there was a significant positive relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Emir et al. (2018) discovered that employee satisfaction influenced customer satisfaction in a positive way. Perić et al. (2018) discovered that employee satisfaction influenced customer satisfaction directly and positively.

However, the current research study finding is inconsistent with Leinkumar's (2017) finding that the increase in the employees' satisfaction levels did not affect the overall level of satisfaction of the customers to a statistically significant extent.

7. Conclusion and Discussion

It is evident from the findings of this quantitative research that: (1) the service quality dimensions of Tangibles, Responsiveness, Empathy, and Job Requirements did not positively influence Omantel Customer Satisfaction; (2) there was a weak negative influence of Assurance on Omantel Customer Satisfaction; (3) there was a strong positive influence of Reliability on Omantel Customer Satisfaction; (4) there was a medium positive influence of Rapport on Omantel Customer Satisfaction; (5) there was a medium positive influence of Job satisfaction on Omantel Customer Satisfaction.

The model proposed in this research will be of practical usefulness to the decision makers because it will enable them to better understand the challenges they face while implementing telecom services and the implementation of these services will be more effective. This quantitative research has developed a validated model based on SERVQUAL Theory.

Some limitations were expected in this research. Firstly, obtaining an adequate number of Omantel subscribers for data collection. Secondly, respondents facing digital issues while opening and sending the on-line questionnaire form. Thirdly, having access to detailed information from Telecommunication Regulatory Authority and Omantel documents. Fourthly, this study could not cover other Omantel outlets all over Oman because of the time constraints. Fifthly, using non-probability convenience sampling in this study has not enabled the researcher to generalize the findings to other Omantel outlets. Finally, a qualitative study may reveal in depth results.

This study could contribute to the knowledge as its findings could be a relevant input to the management and stakeholders of Omantel, other policy makers involved in Oman. In addition, this study could help the company and researchers to focus on highly influential service dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction by using the modified version of the SERVQUAL Model proposed in this study in measuring the services provided by Omantel. This model will be of practical usefulness to the decision makers because it will enable them to better understand the challenges they face while implementing telecom services and the implementation of these services will be more effective. This quantitative research developed a validated model based on SERVQUAL Theory.

Based on the findings of this research study, it can be recommended that: other researchers can use and build on the proposed model of this study; Omantel decision makers should use the modified version of the SERVQUAL scale proposed in this study in measuring the services provided by the company; Omantel needs to deliver high-quality service for achieving sustainability, growth, and customer satisfaction; Omantel should retain its strength among other competing mobile operators by attracting more satisfied subscribers; the sample respondents were selected from amongst Omantel customers in Muscat. Accordingly, the results may not be generalizable in other settings. Future studies could be carried out in other Omantel outlets all over Oman; for other telecom companies' outlets in Oman (e.g., Ooredoo, Vodafone), future studies are necessary.

8. References

- Acheampong, I., & Asamoah, K. A. (2013). Service delivery and business growth among banks in Ghana using the service profit chain model. *International Journal of Global Business*, 6(2), 57-79. Retrieved from <http://www.gsmi.ijgb.com>
- Ackfeldt, A. L., & Wong, V. (2006). The antecedents of pro-social service behaviors: An empirical investigation. *Service Industries Journal*, 26(7): 727-745.
- Ahmad, S. Z., Ahmad, N., & Papastathopoulos, A. (2019). Measuring service quality and customer satisfaction of the small- and medium-sized hotels (SMSHs) industry: Lessons from United Arab Emirates (UAE). *Tourism Review*, 74(3), 349-370.
- Alauddin, M., Ahsan, S. M. H., Mowla, M. M., Islam, M. M., & Hossain, M. M. (2019). Investigating the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in hotel industry: Bangladesh perspective. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: Administration and Management*, 19(1), 29-35.
- Ali, M., & Raza, S. A. (2017). Service quality perception and customer satisfaction in Islamic banks of Pakistan: The modified SERVQUAL model. *Total Quality Management*, 28(5), 559–577.
- Al-Jazzazi, A., & Sultan, P. (2017). Demographic differences in Jordanian bank service quality perceptions. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 35, 275–297.
- Bahadur, W., Aziz, S., & Zulfiqar, S. (2018). Effect of employee empathy on customer satisfaction and loyalty during employee–customer interactions: The mediating role of customer affective commitment and perceived service quality. *Cogent Business & Management*, 5(1), 1-21. doi: 10.1080/23311975.2018.1491780.

- Becerril-Arreola, R., Zhou, C., Srinivasan, R., & Seldin, D. (2017). Service satisfaction-market share relationships in partnered hybrid offerings. *Journal of Marketing*, 81(5), 86-103.
- Belwal, R., & Amireh, M. (2018). Service quality and attitudinal loyalty: Consumers' perception of two major telecommunication companies in Oman. *Arab Economic and Business Journal*, 13(2), 197-208.
- Braciniková, V., & Matušinská, K. (2017). Marketing mix of financial services from the customers' perspective. *Forum Scientiae Oeconomia*, 5, 35-48.
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. A. (2019). *Social research methods*. Don Mills, Ontario, Canada: Oxford University Press.
- Cronin, J.J. & Taylor, S.A. (1992). Measuring service quality: a reexamination and extension, *Journal of Marketing*, 6(7), 55-68.
- Daniels, K., Glover, J., & Mellor, N. (2014). An experience sampling study of expressing affect, daily affective well-being, relationship quality, and perceived performance. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 87(4), 781-805.
- Delcourt, C., Gremler, D. D., van Riel, A. C. R., & van Birgelen, M. (2013). Effects of perceived employee emotional competence on customer satisfaction and loyalty. *Journal of Service Management*, 24(1), 5-24.
- Emir, O., Şahin, S., & Arslantürk Y. (2018). An assessment of the impact of employee satisfaction on customer satisfaction in hotel enterprises, *Journal of Business Research-Turk*, 10(4), 794-806.
- Fatima, J. K., Razzaque, M. A., & Di Mascio, R. (2015). Modelling roles of commitment on rapport and satisfaction. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 33(3): 261-275.
- Felix, R. (2017). Service quality and customer satisfaction in selected banks in Rwanda. *Journal of Business & Financial Affairs*, 6, 246-256.
- Fida, B. A., Ahmed, U., Al-Balushi, Y., & Singh, D. (2020). Impact of service quality on customer loyalty and customer satisfaction in islamic banks in the Sultanate of Oman. *SAGE Open*, 10(2), 1-10. doi: 10.1177/2158244020919517
- Gremler, D. D., & Gwinner, K. P. (2000). Customer-employee rapport in service relationships. *Journal of Service Research*, 3(1), 82-104.
- Grönroos, C. (1984), "A service quality model and its marketing implications", *European Journal of Marketing*, (18)4, 36-44.
- Grönroos, C. (2015). *Service management and marketing: managing the service profit logic*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Hwang, K., & Kim, H. (2016). Are ethical consumers happy? Effects of ethical consumers' motivations based on empathy versus self-orientation on their happiness. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 151(2), 579-598.
- Iqbal, Q., Ahmad, B., & Nasim, A. (2016). A gender based approach: service quality and customer's loyalty. *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics*, 3(12), 822-836.
- Ismail A., & Yunan, Y. M. (2016). Service quality as a predictor of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. *LogForum*, 12 (4), 269-283, DOI: 10.17270/J.LOG.2016.4.7
- Itani, O. S., & Inyang, A. E. (2015). The effects of empathy and listening of salespeople on relationship quality in the retail banking industry. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 33(6), 692-716.
- Jain, V., & Wali, O. P. (2018). Information technology service quality measurement: A review. *Asian Journal of Managerial Science*, 7(1), 79-86.
- Jones, J. L., & Shandiz, M. (2015). Service quality expectations: Exploring the importance of SERVQUAL dimensions from different nonprofit constituent groups. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 27(1), 48-69. doi:10.1080/10495142.2014.925762
- Jung, H. S., & Yoon, H. H. (2013). Do employees' satisfied customers respond with an satisfactory relationship? The effects of employees' satisfaction on customers' satisfaction and loyalty in a family restaurant. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 34, 1-8.
- Keh, H. T., Ren, R., Hill, S. R., & Li, X. (2013). The beautiful, the cheerful, and the helpful: The effects of service employee attributes on customer satisfaction. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30(3), 211-226. doi: 10.1002/mar.20599
- Kattara, H. S., Weheba, D., & El-Said, O. A. (2015). The impact of employee behavior on customers' service quality perceptions and overall satisfaction. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 8(4), 309-323.
- Kermani, Z. Z. (2013). A Study of the linking between job satisfaction and customer satisfaction: A case study of Iran insurance; Kerman; Iran. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, 7(4), 104-109. Retrieved from <http://www.na.businesspress.com/Journals.html>.
- Khattab, F. (2018). Developing a service quality model for private higher education institutions in Lebanon. *Journal of Management and Marketing Review*, 3(1), 24 - 33.
- Kim, M., Chang, Y., Park, M. C., & Lee, J. (2015). The effect of quality on the satisfaction and the loyalty of smartphone users. *Telematics and Informatics*, 32(4), 949-960. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2015.05.003>
- Kim, S. B., & Kim, D. Y. (2016). The impacts of corporate social responsibility, service quality, and transparency on relationship quality and customer loyalty in the hotel industry. *Asian Journal of Sustainability and Social Responsibility*, 1(!), 39-55.
- Kotler, B., & Armstrong, G. (2016). *Principles of Marketing* (16th Edition). Pearson: UK.

- Krejcie, R.V., & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30, 607-610.
- Leinkumar, V. (2017). The relationship between customer satisfaction and customer trust on customer loyalty. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(4), 450-465.
- Likert, R. (1932). A technique for the measurement of attitudes. *Archives of Psychology*, 22, 140-155.
- Marinkovic, V., & Obradovic, V. (2015). Customers' emotional reactions in the banking industry. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 33(3), 243-260.
- Mendoza, M. L., & Maldonado, C. O. (2014). Meta-analytic of the relationship between employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction. *Suma de Negocios*, 5(11), 4 – 9.
- Morsy, M. M. E. (2015). Links among service climate, employee satisfaction, service quality and customer satisfaction. *Asian Journal of Management Research*, 6, 124-140. Retrieved from <http://www.ipublishing.co.in/ajmr.html>.
- Murugiah, L., & Akgam, H. A. (2015). Study of customer satisfaction in the banking sector in Libya. *Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 3, 674-677.
- Muscat daily (2016). The Boycott of telecoms in Oman. Retrieved from <http://www.muscatdaily.com/Archive/Stories-Files/The-boycott-of-telecoms-in-Oman-4u5x#ixzz54H6u55vn>
- Muscat Security Market (2017). Oman Telecommunication (OTEL). Company profile. Retrieved from <https://www.msm.gov.om/>
- Netemeyer, R. G., & Maxham III, J. G. (2007). Employee versus supervisor ratings of performance in the retail customer service sector: Differences in predictive validity for customer outcomes. *Journal of Retailing*, 83(1): 131-145.
- Nyadzayo, M. W., & Khajehzadeh, S. (2016). The antecedents of customer loyalty: A moderated mediation model of customer relationship management quality and brand image. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 30, 262-270.
- Oh, H., & Kim, K. (2017). Customer satisfaction, service quality, and customer value: Years 2000-2015. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(1), 2-29.
- Ojo, B. Y., Busayo, B. M., & Ifeoma, I. L. (2017). Mediating effect of service quality on the relationship between employees empowerment, and customer satisfaction in hotel industry. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 19(7), 45-59. <https://doi.org/10.9790/487x-1907027787>
- Olander, H., Vanhala, M., Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, P., & Blomqvist, K. (2016). Preserving prerequisites for innovation: Employee-related knowledge protection and organizational trust. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 11(4), 493-515.
- Pantouvakis, A., & Bouranta, N. (2013). The interrelationship between service features, job satisfaction and customer satisfaction: Evidence from the transport sector. *The TQM Journal*, 25, 186-201.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. & Berry, L.L. (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research", *Journal of Marketing*, 49(3), 41-50.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. & Berry, L.L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple item scale for measuring consumer perception of service quality, *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12-37.
- Perić, G., Gašić, M., Stojiljković, M., & Nešić, I. (2018). The impact of employee satisfaction on the tourist satisfaction with the services of spa tourism. *Ekonomika Poljoprivrede*, 65(2), 617-632. doi: 10.5937/ekopolj1802617p
- Potluri, R.M., Angati, S.R., & Narayana, M.S. (2016). A structural compendium on service quality and customer satisfaction: A survey of banks in India. *Journal of Transnational Management*, 21(1), 12-28.
- Raie, M., Khadivi, A., & Khdaie, R. (2014). The effect of employees customer orientation, Customers satisfaction and commitment on customers sustainability. *Oman Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 4(1), 109-121. doi: 10.12816/001657.
- Rajeswari, S., Srinivasulu, Y., & Thiyagarajan, S. (2017). Relationship among service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty: With special reference to wireless telecom sector (DSL service). *Global Business Review*, 18(4), 1041-1058.
- Rita, P., Oliveira, T., & Farisa, A. (2019). The impact of e-service quality and customer satisfaction on customer behavior in online shopping. *Heliyon*, 5(10), e02690. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e02690>
- Rouf, M. A., Kamal, M., & Iqbal, M. M. (2018). Customers' perception of service quality of banking sectors in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Law and Management*, 60(4), 922-933.
- Shah, S. N. U., Jan, S., & Baloch, Q. B. (2018). Role of service quality and customer satisfaction in firm's performance: Evidence from Pakistan hotel industry. *Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, 12(1), 167-182.
- Sharma Naveen, K. (2016). Restructuring the SERVQUAL dimensions in banking service: A factor analysis approach in Indian context. *Pacific Business Review International*, 1, 76-91.

- Selvabaskar, S., Shanmuga, & Priya, G. (2015). A study on customer satisfaction across SERVQUAL dimensions for a fashion apparel retailer in Chennai. *ERPA International Journal of Economic and Business Review*, 3(5), 112-115.
- Stratton, S. J. (2021). Population research: Convenience sampling strategies. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 36(4), 373–374. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049023x21000649>
- Stock, R. M., & Hoyer, W. D. (2005). An attitude-behavior model of salespeople's customer orientation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 33(4), 536-552.
- Tortosa-Edo, V., López-Navarro, M., & Llorens-Monzonis, J. (2014). Antecedent factors of the need for information regarding petrochemical complex hazards. *Journal of Risk Research*, 19(2), 135-152.
- Tsaur, S. H., & Lin, Y. C. (2004). Promoting service quality in tourist hotels: The role of HRM practices and service behavior. *Tourism Management*, 25(4), 471-481.
- Wang, Y., Luor, T., Luarn, P., & Lu, H. (2015). Contribution and trend to quality research—A literature review of SERVQUAL model from 1998 to 2013. *Informatica Economica*, 19(1), 34–45.
- Yeo, C., Hur, C., & Ji, S. (2019). The customer orientation of salesperson for performance in Korean market case: A relationship between customer orientation and adaptive selling. *Sustainability*, 11(21), 6115. doi: 10.3390/su11216115