AN EMPIRICAL STUDY FOR EXPLORING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TOWARDS DTH SERVICES USING SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS – A DETAILED STUDY OF DELHI NCR

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ABSTRACT

Measuring the quality of a service can be a very difficult exercise. Unlike product where there are specific specifications such as length, depth, width, weight, and color etc. a service can have numerous intangible or qualitative specifications. In addition there are the expectations of the customer with regards the service, which can vary considerably based on a range of factors such as prior experience, personal needs and what other people may have told them. In the age of information technology and highly competitive business where world has become a truly global retaining current customers and attracting potential customers has no alternative. This can only be achieved by customer centric strategies and missions and filling the gap between expectations and perception of service provided by DTH operators. Thus it is important to analyze the gap in the service on regular basis and following the improvement, if any, is very important in this paper such analysis of the gap is investigated on services provided by DTH operatorsto its customers in Delhi. SERVQUAL has been used as a tool with 5 dimensions and statements for this analysis. The Gap score is a reliable indication of each of the five dimensions of service quality. Using SERVQUAL, service providers can obtain an indication of the level of quality of their service provision, and highlight areas requiring improvement. Questionnaire survey is used to work out the gap score using SERVQUAL scale and shove area have been identified on the basis of the gap score where the DTH operator should pay focused attention. The perceptions, of the DTH customers are more inclined towards the consistency in the services provided by the DTH providers.

Key words: Perceived service quality, SERVQUAL, customer satisfaction, 5 dimensions: TANGIBLES, RELIABILITY, RESPONSIVENESS, ASSURANCE and EMPATHY.

SERVICE QUALITY

The single most researched area in services marketing to date is service quality. According to **Fisk** *et al.* (1993) early research in service quality disclosed its subjective nature, but it was not until several years later that the concept of service quality as the result of differences between actual and expected levels of service began to emerge. This implies that organizations must establish requirements and specifications; once established, the quality goal of the various function of an organization is to comply strictly with these specifications. In today's increasingly competitive environment, quality service is critical to corporate success. In the past the focus was mainly on meeting internal quality or technical standards. The focus today has shifted to qualifying customer assessments of services, and translating these measures into specific internal standards (**Brown, Hitchcock and Willard, 1994**) ^[2]. Delivering high quality service is closely linked to profits, cost saving and market share.

Service quality is defined as 'a global judgment or attitude relating to the overall superiority of the service' (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988)^[3]. It has been argued previously that the quality of a service has two important components: "*Technical Quality*" and *Functional Quality*"(Gronroos, 1990a)^[4]."The technical quality refers to the outcome dimension of the service operation process whereas functional quality refers to the process dimension in terms of the interactions between the customer and the service provider" (Payne, 1993)^[5].Service quality is a highly abstract construct, in contrast to goods where technical aspects of quality predominate. Many conceptualizations of service quality therefore begin by addressing the abstract expectations that consumers hold in respect of quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION TO DOOR TO HOME SERVICES

Indian Direct-To-Home (DTH) TV industry has been growing at rapid pace since the inception of commercial services in 2003 on the back of huge investments by the existing and new players. The DTH industry has defied the global trend of economic crisis and posted significant growth in 2008.

The DTH market has been able to acquire around 18 Million subscribers over the past six years. With the entry of new players, the number of DTH subscribers has witnessed a steady growth as the competition in the market increased and people have a wide range of options to choose from according to their requirements.

Thanks to the superior audio and video quality, the DTH services are now in a position to attract a large number of subscribers. On analysis of "Indian DTH Market Forecast to 2012", the number of DTH subscribers is projected to grow at a CAGR of around 28% during 2010-2012. Presently, the DTH subscribers constitute only a small proportion of the total TV household in the country, representing a vast future growth potential.

By 2015, DTH will enjoy a market share of 40%, digital cable 40% and analog cable will follow with only 20% market share. The DTH service market in India has emerged as one of the most lucrative markets that have successfully

With the growth of Indian economy booming at a GDP growth rate of 9.4% there is a sense of growth prevailing everywhere. The average Indian's disposable income and purchasing power has risen to never before levels. The Indian entertainment and media industry is also not far behind. It is estimated that a worth of Rs.450 billion with a CAGR of 18% over the next five years. Report predicts that India would overtake Japan as Asia's largest DTH by next year and be the Asia's leading cable market by 2010 and the most profitable pay by 2015.We have been hearing about the vast potential of the Indian DTH market since it was established in the early 2000s. There has been huge growth in the number of DTH households but, for the entirefurore, the market has not accelerated as it was expected to. India's penchant for DTH has been fuelled by economic growth. India is getting wealthier and, as a result, the population is now earning more, meaning that they have more disposable income to spend on items such as TV sets. In fact, the Indian TV market is massive. There are 130 million TV households in the country. At present, only a fraction of the population has access to DTH services. The potential is phenomenal. The regional content that is offered is also

very attractive especially in a country like India with a diverse population and mix of cultures.

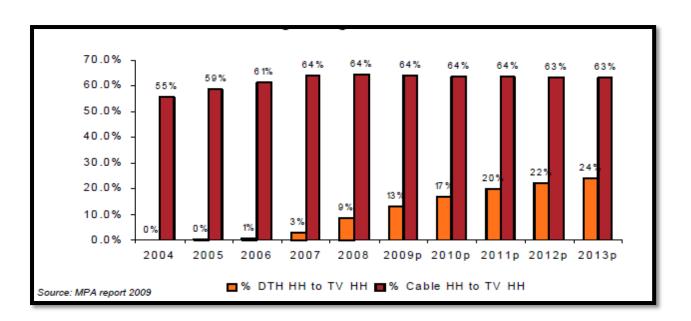
Research Company RN COS has recently released a report entitled 'Indian DTH Market Forecast to 2012'. The Report has found that the Indian DTH industry's growth has been supported by huge investments by existing and new players in the market. Defying the global trend of economic crisis, the DTH industry posted significant growth in 2008 and 2009.

RN COS also found that the DTH market acquired around 16 million subscribers by the end of 2009, an increase of approximately 44 percent over the 2008 levels. With the entry of new players in the Indian DTH industry, competition is getting intense. Due to this intensifying competition, installation prices are declining and subscriber have a wide range of options to make choices.

India has about 130 million TV homes of which, Cable & Satellite (C&S) services are present in 97 million (74%) of the home. The DTH market in India comprises 11% of the total market with almost 15 million homes. The DTH industry growth lagged to 10.3% in 2008 from 16.7% a year earlier. But industry players agree that the digitization drive is expanding by 35-40% annually. However, industry estimates DTH to touch 35-40 million subscribers by 2012, and that is the number that every DTH brand has set its sights on.

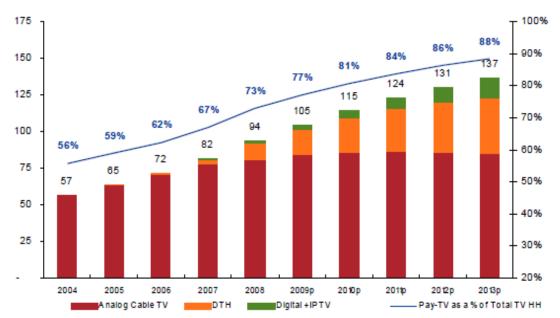
The anticipated growth to the efforts of DTH industry players who are all trying to lure viewers by cutting down prices as well as offering perquisites even though it translates into loss of Rs 1,600-2,000 on each new subscriber acquired by them. They have started to offer a number of value-added services such as 'movie on demand', live recording of TV content, matrimonial matchmaking, etc.

Currently, the Indian DTH market is being served by six privateplayers - Dish TV, Tata Sky, Sun Direct, Big TV, Airtel Digital TV andVideocon D2H. Doordarshan is also available but this is a free DTHservice provider. All providers are investing huge amounts of moneyin the promotion and marketing of DTH services in the country.



Pay TV market on Growth Trajectory

Still, as DTH is still a relatively new category and most people are hesitant to experiment with it. It is therefore imperative for companies such as Tata Sky, Dish TV, and Reliance BIG TV to educate the consumers about the advantages of the service and in turn create an urge to invest in it.



Industry competitors: Segment rivalry

Presently as on 2010, these are the main DTH service providers in India:

DD Direct – state owned free service provider

Dish TV - owned by Essel Group, was the first commercial DTH service provider.

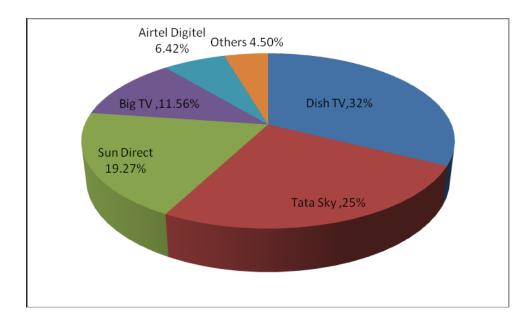
TATASky - owned by TATA group, largest DTH service provider presently in India

SunDirect – owned by Sun group, primary focus is on low income groups and regional viewers

Reliance Big TV - Owned by Reliance group, new entrant into the market

Airtel Digital TV – Owned by Bharti group, recent entry to the DTH market with aggressive market strategies

VideoconD2H – Owned by the Videocon Group of companies, latest entry to the DTH market



SERVQUAL

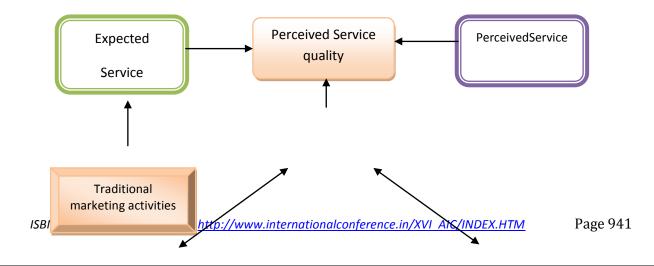
SERVQUAL is a multi-item scale developed to assess customer perceptions of service quality in service and retail businesses (**Parasuraman et. al., 1988**)^[3]. The scale decomposes the notion of service quality into five constructs as follows:

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- * **Tangibles** physical facilities, equipment, staff appearance, etc.
- * **Reliability** ability to perform service dependably and accurately
- * **Responsiveness** willingness to help and respond to customer need
- * Assurance ability of staff to inspire confidence and trust
- * **Empathy** the extent to which caring individualized service is given

SERVQUAL represents service quality as the discrepancy between a customer's expectations for a service offering and the customer's perceptions of the service received, requiring respondents to answer questions about both their expectations and their perceptions (**Parasuraman et. al., 1988**). The use of perceived as opposed to actual service received makes the **SERVQUAL** measure an attitude measure that is related to, but not the same as, satisfaction (**Parasuraman et. al., 1988**). Parasuramanet. al. (1991) presented some revisions to the original **SERVQUAL** measure to remedy problems with high means and standard deviations found on some questions and to obtain a direct measure of the importance of each construct to the customer.

Later research showed that it is possible to integrate the two approaches by integrating Service Quality Gap Analysis and Utility Theory (**Robert F Bordley, 2001**)^[6]. The dominant models of Positivistic approach have been created by **Christian Gronroos** (1984)^[7] and **A Parsuraman, Valarie A Zeithaml and Berry** (1985)^[8]. Both models look at service quality gaps between expected of the researcher. They consider service quality as a multidimensional attitude held by consumers where each dimension is made up of a number of attributes. The models assume a rational, rule based review of service quality as an accurate depiction of consumer perception.



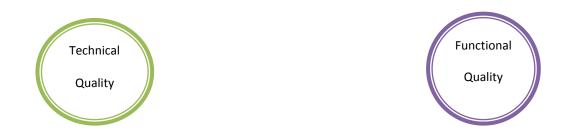
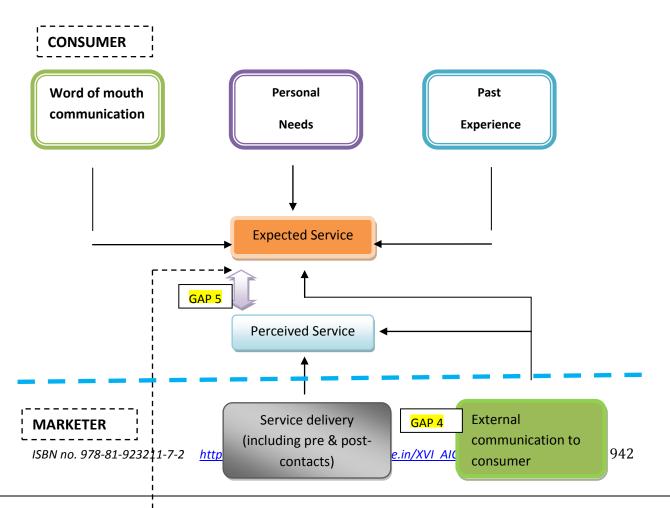


Fig. 1 Source: Christian Gronroos, "A Service Quality Model and its Marketing Implications", European Journal of Marketing, Vol 18, No. 4, 1984

However, the **Gap Analysis Model** of Service Quality created by **Parsuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, 1985)** is the most widely accepted instrument to measure service quality. They postulated that a-priori factors like Personal Needs, Word-of-Mouth influences and Past Experiences as well as Communication by the service organization create Expectation of service. A service quality gap results when service perceptions fall short of expectations. Whereas when the service is delivered, the customer forms a Perception. The extent of difference between the two contributes to the customer evaluating the service highly or otherwise. Other researchers have concluded similarly, in terms of prior expectation of the service if formed by the customer's mind using intrinsic and extrinsic cues, previous experience and other information sources (Gould and Williams, 1999)^[9].



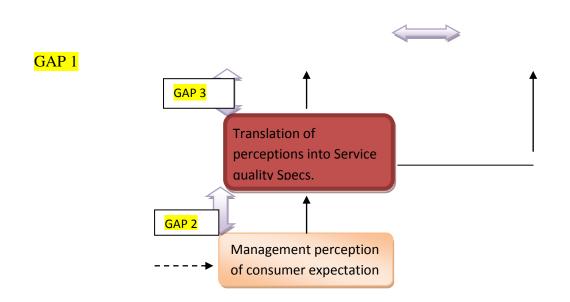


Fig. 2 Source: A. Parsuraman, Valarie A Zeithaml and Leonard L Berry, "A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and its Implications for Future Research", Journal of Marketing, fall 1985, p.44.

The first possible gap is the *knowledge gap*. The second possible gap is that *of standard*. It is the result of differences in managing knowledge of the client's expectations and the process of service provision (delivery). The fourth possible gap is *the communication gap* arising when there is a difference between the delivered service and the service that the company promised to the clients via external communications.

According to the model 'Service Quality (SQ) =Perception (P) – Expectation (E)'. For each respondent, the service quality for each dimension is calculated: where SQ is the service quality of the *j*th dimension, *Eij*is the expectations for the ith attribute in the *j*th dimension, *Pij*is perception for the *i*th attribute in the *j*th dimension and *nj*is the number of attributes in the *j*th dimension. An average score for each dimension is then calculated across all respondents. A global service quality score is also calculated by taking the arithmetic:

$$SQ_i = \sum_{j=1}^{k} (P_{ij} - E_{ij})$$

The instrument created by the authors of the Gap Analysis Model, called SERVQUAL includes 5 dimensions of service quality – Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibles,

Assurance and Empathy. Parsuraman have published studies prior to their paper on the Gaps model wherein they started with 10 dimensions that were tested amongst consumers and judges across various service industries and thus was refined to 5 dimensions before being used in SERVQUAL.Several later models also use the 5 dimensions as bases for evaluating service quality.Research has been conducted across industries and cultural contexts using SERVQUAL (Fornell, C. 1992)^[10]Critics of SERVQUAL (Nyeck, S., Morales, M., Ladhari, R., & Pons, F. 2002)^[11]argue that depending on the context and the particular service industry, the dimensions of quality may be prioritized differently and may even be customized. Some service quality researchers even go to the extent of saying that the difference scores between perception and expectation, as computed using SERVQUAL should be avoided (Peter, Churchill and Brown, 1992)^[12]and state that there are serious problems in conceptualizing service quality as a difference score.

In their empirical studies, **Cronin, Brady and Hult** (2000)^[13] used a performance-only measure of Service Quality, called **SERVPERF**, and found that the new scale captured the variation in Service Quality better that **SERVQUAL**. Where the global service quality score is also calculated by taking the arithmetic:

$$SQ_i = \sum_{j=1}^k P_{ij}$$

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main objective of the research is to find the gap between the expectation and perception of the DTH services provided to the customers. It is being justified why this industry is being selected. Indian Direct-To-Home (DTH) TV industry has been growing at rapid pace since the inception of commercial services in 2003 on the back of huge investments by the existing and new players.**SERVQUAL** is a multi-item scale developed to assess customer perceptions of service quality in service and retail businesses. Here the **SERVQUAL** is used to calculate the gap in services of DTH industry.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Delhi is considered under the study as the purpose of the study is not a comparison of the status of service quality across various services providers total of 200 questionnaires were filled up, collected and analyzed during data entry 15 questionnaires have been rejected due to incomplete filling and for reducing biasness. Only customers using DTH services have been selected as respondents and the demographic profile of the respondents have been kept standardized. The sample consists of different customer's profile (different age groups, professions and gender) from Delhi.

MANAGEMENT OF QUESTIONNARE

The genetic questionnaire as used by**Parasuramanet. al., 1988** has been used here with 22 statements under 5 dimensions. The responses have been captured in 7 point Likert scale and gap score is calculated by deducting expectations from perceptions (E-P). At the time of collecting data proper care have been given to demographic profile of the users to ensure the result free from any sort of prejudice.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The use of SERVQUAL is analyzed here in detail with logical sequences. It starts with all of the 22 original statements categorized into five in the form of a questionnaire and a seven point scale is used to collect the customers' expectations and perceptions. The difference is the GAP score which is then averaged. The methodology is as follows:-

	PERCEPTIONS		GAP
			SCORE
Е	Tangibles	Р	E-P
5.9	P1 DTH companies will have	4.2	
	modern looking equipment		
			1.7
5.6	P2The DTH companies have	4.4	
	well built network		
			1.2
6.5	P3 HDFC bank's employees	2.8	
	are neat appearing		
			3.7
5.7	P4 Materials associated with	3.4	
	the service(such as pamphlets		
	or catalogues)will be visually		
	appealing for DTH company		
			2.3
23.7		14.8	8.9
			2.22
	5.9 5.6 6.5 5.7	ETangibles5.9P1 DTH companies will have modern looking equipment5.6P2The DTH companies have well built network6.5P3 HDFC bank's employees are neat appearing5.7P4Materials associated with the service(such as pamphlets or catalogues)will be visually appealing for DTH company	ETangiblesP5.9P1 DTH companies will have modern looking equipment4.25.9P2 The DTH companies have well built network4.45.6P2 The DTH companies have well built network4.46.5P3 HDFC bank's employees are neat appearing2.85.7P4 Materials associated with the service(such as pamphlets or catalogues)will be visually appealing for DTH company3.4

Step 1:- Designing SERVQUAL Instrument

Reliability E		E RELIABILITY		E-P	
E5Excellent DTH companies	5.8	P5 DTH companies promise	3.6		
promise to do something by a		to do something by a certain			
certain time, they do		time, it does so			
				2.2	
E6 When a customer has	7.1	P6 When customer have a	2.8		
aproblem;DTH companies will		problem, DTH companies			
show a sincere interest in solving		show a sincere interest in			
it.		solving it			
				4.3	
E7 Excellent DTH companies	7.2	P7 DTH companies provide its	2.9		
will perform the services right		service right the first time			
the first time					
				4.3	
E8 Excellent DTH companies	6.5	P8 DTH companies provide its	4.4		
will provide the service at the		service at the time it promises			
time they promise to do so		to do so			
				2.1	
E9 Excellent DTH companies	6.8	P9 DTH companies have less	5.2		
have less signal and hardware		signal and hardware problem.			
problem.					
				1.6	
Total	33.4		18.9	14.5	
Average Gap Score				2.9	
RESPONSIVENESS	E	RESPONSIVNESS	Р	E-P	
E10 Employees of excellent	6.8	P10 Employees in DTH	4.7		

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DTH companies will tell customers exactly when services will be performed. E11 Employees of DTH companiesnt banks will give prompt service to customers	5.8	companies tell you exactly when services will be performedP11 Employees in DTH companiesgive prompt service	3.7	2.1
				2.1
E12. Employees of excellent DTH companieswill always be willing to help customers.	6.2	P12. Employees in DTH companies are always willing to help you	3.8	
				2.4
E13 Employees of excellent DTH companieswill never be too busy to respond to customers' requests.	6.1	P13. Employees in DTH companies are never too busy to respond to your request.	3.5	
				2.6
Total	24.9		15.7	9.2
Average Gap Score (Total Of E-P/4)				2.3
ASSURANCE	Е	ASSURANCE	Р	E-P
E14 The behavior of employees in excellent DTH companieswill instill confidence in customers	6.1	P14ThebehaviorofemployeesinDTHcompaniesconfidence	3.9	

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		in you		
				2.2
E15 Customers trust in excellent	6.2	P15Customers trust inDTH	4.2	
DTH companies.		companies.		
				2
E16After sales service of	5.8	P16After sales service of	3.9	
excellent DTH companies		DTH companies		
				1.9
E17 Employees of excellent	5.7	P17 Employees in DTH	3.5	
DTH companies will have the		companies have the		
knowledge to answer customers'		knowledge to answer your		
questions		questions		
				2.2
Total	23.8		15.5	8.3
Average Gap Score				2.07
(Total of E-P/4)				
ЕМРАТНУ	E	EMPATHY	Р	E-P
E18 Excellent DTH	5.3	P18 DTH companiesgive you	3.9	
companieswill give customers individual attention.		individual attention		
				1.4

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E19 Excellent DTH	6.4	P19 DTH companies has	3.2	
companieswill have operating		operating hours convenient to		
hours convenient to all their		all its customers		
customers				
				3.2
E20 Excellent DTH	5.6	P20 DTH companiesprovide	3.2	
companiesprovide 24 hours		24 hours customer care		
customer care service		service		
				2.4
E21 Excellent DTH companies	5.8	P21 DTH companies will have	3.2	
will have their customers' best		their customers' best interests		
interests at heart		at heart		
				2.6
E22 The employees of excellent	6.5	P22 The employees of DTH	3.5	
DTH companies understand the		companies will understand		
specific needs of their customers.		your specific needs		
				3.0
Total	29.6		17.0	12.6
Average Gap Score				2.52

Respondents are advised to put a value between 1 and 7 against each statement twice; one for expectations and another for perceptions. Then the gap between gap score is calculated and averaged as given below:

Step 2 :

Gap scores for different categories as calculated in step 1 is average to compute unweighted average score given below:

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Categories	Gap Scores
1. Average score for Tangibles	2.22
2. Average score for Reliability	2.90
3. Average score for Responsiveness	2.30
4. Average score for Assurance	2.07
5. Average score for Empathy	2.52
Total	12.01
Average (Total/5) Un-weighted score	2.402

Step 3:

This step is the extension of the **SERVQUAL** score and is only required if weighted score is calculated. Putting weights against each of the five dimensions is critical because the amount of weight represents the relative importance of the dimensions to the customer. The questionnaire has a separate page asking each respondent to put relative weight against each dimensions. The points against each of the dimensions are totaled and averaged to normalize it. Total 100 points has been allocated among these dimensions as stated below that have been calculated considering respondents' viewpoint on it:

Dimensions	Points
1. The network, set top box, promotiona (Tangibles)	al material, monthly plans etc. 29
2. The DTH company's ability to per- dependable and accurately(Reliability)	
3. The DTH company's willingness to prompt service(Responsiveness)	help customers and provide 23
4. The knowledge and courtesy of the D	TH company's employees and 15

their ability to convey trust and confidence(Assurance)	
5. The caring, individual attention the DTH company's provides its customers (Empathy)	12
TOTAL	100

Step 4:

DIMENSIONS	Un-weighted score(step2)	X	Weights(step3)	=	Weighted
Tangibles	2.22	X	0.29	=	0.644
Reliability	2.90	X	0.21	=	0.609
Responsiveness	2.30	X	0.23	=	0.529
Assurance	2.07	X	0.15	=	0.311
Empathy	2.52	X	0.12	=	0.302
Total Weight Score		X			2.202

Step 5:- Analyse and take necessary actions

Finally, the score should be analyzed to find out the weak area where more attention is required. The gap score indicates the extent of gap in service quality .The higher the gap score is, the more is the dissatisfaction .overall score under each category and total have been presented in a single table to get an oval picture as shown below.

Dimensions	Expectations	Perceptions	Total	Average	Weights	Weighted
			Gap Score	Gap Score	(w)	score
			(E-P)			
Tangible	23.7	14.8	8.9	2.22	0.29	0.644
Reliability	33.4	18.9	14.5	2.90	0.21	0.609
Responsiveness	24.9	15.7	9.2	2.30	0.23	0.529
Assurance	23.8	15.5	8.3	2.07	0.15	0.311
Empathy	29.6	17.0	12.6	2.52	0.12	0.302
Total						2.202

The dimension reliability has highest average gap score 2.90. But after the adjustment with weights, the score is 0.609 which is not the greatest score anymore this proves that the weight has a significant implication. Individually, the customers are somewhat dissatisfied in this Category, but they believe that it should have less weight at the time of calculating aggregated score. On the basis of weighted score, the dimensiontangible got the highest score(0.644). It means that the performance of the DTH companies in this category is not up to the mark. The DTH companies should pay sufficient attention to all of the sub categories under this dimension to better the service.

CONCLUSION

This type of analysis may be done across the companies within the same industry to have an idea regarding competitive position in terms of service quality via customer satisfaction. And, this analysis may also be done with in the service providing organization over the periods to analyze the improvements. If the gap score reduces gradually, the service quality improves leading to more customer satisfaction. If making a quick sale is all that matters ,providing an

ongoing service can be ignored but how many products and services are sold only once in a life time?Very few! The successful companies know that to produce ongoing sales and expand the business by attracting new customers through recommendations it is essential to look after the customers after the sale has been made.

In this analysis a **SERVQUAL** has been used to identify the gaps in DTH services provided to the customers and the expectation level of the customers. The centre of point of attraction of the customers is the Tangible dimension of the **SERVQUAL** having the maximum weightage. DTH customers are deciding on the basis of the equipments and products being supplied by the DTH companies'along with the economical plans. If we observe the perception of the DTH customer the more inclination is towards the consistency in the services provided by the DTH companies. In respond to it, the DTH companies are able to satisfy the needs of the customer in terms of the Tangible dimension of the **SERVQUAL** but unable to fulfill the Reliability dimension of **SERVQUAL.** It is being observed that the weakest part of the DTH companies is the Reliability dimension of the services. This analysis will be helpful in understanding the needs and expectations of the customers and the various factors that affect the customers to buy DTH product. Thus we can say that **SERVQUAL** is an efficient tool in bridging the gap between the expectations and the perceptions of the customers in the DTH companies.

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