



## The Impact of Service Quality on Ethio-Telecom Customer Satisfaction

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### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the impact of service quality on total customer satisfaction of Ethio-Telecom. This research begins by first describing the idea of service quality and progresses to differentiate between service quality and customer satisfaction based on previous studies. Instruments are established and exploratory work is being performed among Ethio-Telecom subscribers to evaluate the implications of service quality on satisfaction. The analysis followed the SERVQUAL method as the core structure for the evaluation of service quality. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the interaction between service quality parameters and customer satisfaction. The findings revealed that all of the service quality elements were good determinants of customer satisfaction. For administrators, this conclusion has significant consequences for brand building approaches. Indications of an effective brand building campaign are established when organizations provide quality services compared to other firms in the same sector. It is also important for Ethio-Telecom and other telecommunications providers to boost consumer satisfaction by offering consumers with the right services adequately. Recognizing and serving the needs of consumers will then boost network efficiency, as what is delivered will be used to differentiate the products and services from their competitors.

**Keywords:** service quality, customer satisfaction, servqual model, Ethio-telecom

### 1. Introduction

The attitude of reliability, performance, competitiveness, development, and sustainability provides a major challenge to the existence and prosperity of all corporate entities. Such demands for growth and sustainability are further exacerbated by the need to gain and retain clients, as clients are the key target of any productive company. Company growth depends on knowing the business and satisfying the expectations and desires of its clients. Utility delivery has also suffered a setback in Ethiopia, as telecommunications companies have also been blamed for low service quality. Telecommunications is an important asset in the economy. The role of the telecommunications industry in the economy cannot be understated. Since it is the process by which all day-to-day operations and events are carried out. It helps to make decisions, organize, control, activate, educate, get feedback, and facilitate interpersonal and business relationships as well as sharing of ideas and intelligence. All financial, environmental, political, educational, industrial and business operations are performed via telecommunications. The nature of the telecommunications sector of a nation influences the rate of commercial and domestic operation. Owing to the weak performance of many of these telecommunications firms, especially in developing countries, policymakers have had to interfere with divestiture and privatization initiatives (Dankwah, 2013; Khan, Hossain, & Sarker, 2015) <sup>[13, 28, 28]</sup>. Nonetheless, this has contributed to the modernization of many of the telecommunications sectors in many countries, to which Ethiopia is no exception (Khan *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[28]</sup>. This is because it is suspected that the state-controlled telecommunications industry could hinder creativity, productivity and suppress competition, as has been the case in Ethiopia and other regions of the continent. As per the modernization of the telecommunications industry, there

were few companies in the country offering telephone (mobile and fixed-line) and Internet services. Meanwhile, they charged inflated rates but offered inadequate and questionable services. Unlike other countries, currently, companies in the telecommunication subsector as far as Ethiopia is concerned includes (Ethio-Telecom formerly Ethiopia Telecommunication Cooperation), EthioNet, Ethio Mobile, Orange Group, Techno Telecom, Smadl, Tana Communication, Thuraya). The Government of Ethiopia is committed to upgrading telecommunications networks and facilities to world-class levels and has used them as the main engine for the growth and development in Ethiopia over the years to come. Therefore, Ethio-Telecom was born out of this desire to bring about structural changes in the advancement of the telecommunications sector to sustain the nation's steady growth. The purpose of this research is, therefore, to contribute to the many current studies on quality of service and consumer satisfaction. The intent of the analysis is, therefore, to analyze the effect of service quality on the overall satisfaction of Ethio-Telecom customers since its establishment in 2010 and hence the economic effects to assist policymakers in developing sound innovative approaches to improve and sustain their customer base. Also, the study uses the concept of SERVQUAL as a sole measure of service quality, and the questionnaire was randomly distributed to all classes of the individual regarding a database from Ethio-Telecom websites. The rest of the paper is as follows; section 2 discusses relevant literature on service quality, customer satisfaction, and their linkage; sections 3 elaborate on the chosen methodology and data collection process; section 4 discusses the outcome from the empirical and exploratory analysis and finally, section 5 concludes the study with suggested policy recommendations.

## 2. Brief Literature Review

### 2.1 Service Quality

The understanding of quality may differ from individual to individual and from circumstance to circumstance. Definitions of service quality differ only in terminology that usually includes assessing how perceived service performance satisfies, exceeds or fails to fulfill consumer standards (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Cronin Jr & Taylor, 1992; Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006) <sup>[5, 11, 39]</sup>. Service quality was also described by (Czepiel, 1990) <sup>[12]</sup> as the view of the consumer as to how well the company satisfies or exceeds their standards of service quality, and is widely seen as a vital requirement and a determinant of competition for the establishment and maintaining of satisfactory consumer ties. Past research shows that service quality is a significant measure of customer satisfaction (Awan, Bukhari, & Iqbal, 2011; Diaz & Ruiz, 2002; Lam, Shankar, Erramilli, & Murthy, 2004; Spreng & Mackoy, 1996) <sup>[4, 16, 30, 44]</sup>. Focus on service quality will make a company distinct from other companies and provide a long-term comparative edge. Customers appreciate service quality when costs and other cost factors are kept stable (Turban *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[46]</sup>. This has become a distinct and significant feature of the product and service delivery (Caruana, 2002; Deng, Lu, Wei, & Zhang, 2010) <sup>[10, 15]</sup>. Customer satisfaction with the level of service delivered is generally measured in terms of technical quality and practical quality (Buttle & Maklan, 2019; Gronroos, 1984) <sup>[9, 21]</sup>. Customers do not typically have much knowledge of the technical aspects of service; thus, operating consistency is a crucial element in generating expectations of service quality (Donabedian, 1982; Hermann, 2002) <sup>[17, 25]</sup>. Service quality can be defined in terms of consumer perception, consumer expectations, customer satisfaction and customer attitude (Nandan, 2010) <sup>[36]</sup>. (Agyapong, 2011) <sup>[1]</sup> suggests that the measurement of service quality contributes to customer satisfaction. Rust and Oliver (1994) <sup>[34]</sup> describe satisfaction as the "customer satisfaction response," which is both an assessment and an emotional reaction to a service. (Ladhari, 2009; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) <sup>[29, 40]</sup> have developed a service quality model that defines perceived service quality in five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, tangibility, assurance, and empathy. Many consumers will choose excellent quality over cheaper costs. Talk of all the conditions where you're able to spend a bit more to provide a different or more reliable service. Corporations that provide these extra business opportunities are likely to be leaders. They have a strategic edge over their competitors. Customers expect and want quality services, and the goal of all Telecoms must be to make customers feel different. This would contribute to consumer experiences that surpass their needs and to better customer satisfaction. Real, constructive strategy, such as knowledge of guest experience, problems, and desires, is essential to impressing consumers and growing customer loyalty.

### 2.2 Customer Satisfaction

There is a lack of agreement among scholars on the topic of customer satisfaction. This is because many scholars have looked at the topic from various viewpoints. (Rust & Oliver, 1994) <sup>[34]</sup> say that customer satisfaction or discontent—a "cognitive or affective reaction"—emerges as a reaction to a continuous or sustained series of service experiences. In the words of (Giese & Cote, 2000) <sup>[20]</sup>, customer satisfaction

consists of three key components, such as the form of response (cognitive, affective or conative); the emphasis of the object or topic to which the response is directed; and the timing of the appraisal. But (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994) <sup>[2]</sup> take the opinion that the distinction between consistency and satisfaction is not so evident in the literature. Satisfaction is a "post-consumption" condition that contrasts perceived quality to anticipated quality, while service quality relates to a worldwide evaluation of a company's service delivery network (Anderson *et al.*, 1994) <sup>[2]</sup>. As shown by (Barsky, 1995; Besterfield, Besterfield-Michna, Besterfield-Sacre, Besterfield, & Urdhwarshesha, 2011; Kanji & Wallace, 2000) <sup>[6, 7, 27]</sup>, customer service is a dynamic architecture that has been treated differently. According to (Levesque & McDougall, 1996; Siddiqi, 2011) <sup>[32, 42]</sup>, satisfaction is defined as an overall consumer mindset towards a service provider. Customer satisfaction was also defined as a successful response based on product performance relative to any pre-purchase norm after or during usage (Szymanski & Henard, 2001) <sup>[45]</sup>. Thus (Mano & Oliver, 1993; Oliver, 1993) <sup>[34]</sup> determine that satisfaction is a disposition or appraisal that ranges along the hedonic spectrum of the commodity, which is measured after usage. This was reassessed by (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996) <sup>[2]</sup> when it described satisfaction as a cumulative measure based on the actual purchasing and usage experience dependent on the subjective success of the service relative to pre-purchase standards over time.

### 2.3 The linkage between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

The SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) <sup>[40]</sup> indicates that the disparities between the expectations of consumers about the output of the general category of service providers and their appraisal of the actual results of a single business in that class result in perceptions of quality. Such that the first step in serving consumers is to evaluate the standard of customer satisfaction through a quality assurance program. There is, however, an agreement between scholars as to whether a high level of service quality often contributes to satisfaction. The study of (Lovell & Patterson, 2015) <sup>[33]</sup> suggested a different approach and identified service quality as the overall opinion of the customer on the relative inferiority/superiority of the company and its product lines. (Arokiasamy & Abdullah, 2013) <sup>[3]</sup> found that expectations of customer loyalty by service providers are a result of the perceived level of service. This study follows the concept recommended by (Dehghan, 2006) <sup>[14]</sup> illustrated in Figure 1. The figure depicts the relationship between quality of service and consumer satisfaction and the attributes of variables that measure each of them. The structure suggests that perceived quality is denoted customer satisfaction (Wambugu, 2015; Woodside, Frey, & Daly, 1989) <sup>[47, 48]</sup>. It suggests that the level of service determined by the SERVQUAL variables may contribute to customer satisfaction. A broad number of different concepts have been used in empirical studies and analytical customer satisfaction assessments, but they appear to have at least one aspect in common (at a very high degree of aggregation): they refer to the relationship of the user over time to a single entity (vendor, brand, service provider, etc.) (Söderlund, 1998). In particular, (Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003; Mittal & Lassar, 1998) <sup>[43, 35]</sup> showed that there was a

link between the quality of service and customer satisfaction. (Elnan & Andersen, 1999) [18] also demonstrated a strong association between service quality and customer satisfaction in the transport sector in Norway. Current research by (Ojo, 2010) [37] in the telecommunications sector found that there is a good association between quality of service and consumer satisfaction. (Hafeez & Muhammad, 2012) [22] Demonstrated the same connection. (Fornell *et al.*, 1996) [2] concluded that perceived quality, described in the light of the market's appraisal of recent usage, should have a clear and beneficial effect on overall consumer satisfaction. In creating the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), they found that overall consumer satisfaction, particularly for ASCI, had three origins: perceived service quality, perceived value, and consumer expectations. Therefore, the hypothesis for this analysis is that the high degree of service efficiency exerts a significant impact on the overall degree of consumer satisfaction for Ethio-Telecom.

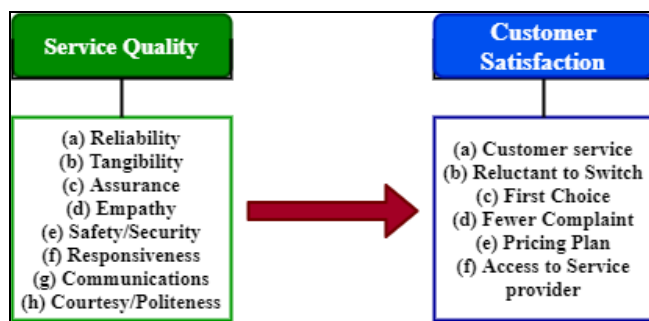


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework (Dehghan, 2006)

**3. Data and Methodology**

Ethio-Telecom has a total number of 45.6 million customers (44.03 M as mobile customers, 22.74M internet and data customers, and 1.01M fixed-line customers). This research seeks the opinion of all of these groups of consumers by distributing a questionnaire randomly to subscribers. The intended populace of the study consisted of 900 subscribers of Ethio-Telecom. Through an online questionnaire or a national interview. As stated earlier, the firm (Ethio-Telecom) was selected because the government was determined to make it a world-class service provider. Also, consumers complained about their operations. To ensure that a sufficient number of responses are obtained, the sample size was calculated using the (Hair, Bush, & Ortinau, 2000) [23] sample size calculation method. This sampling method was adopted relative to the others because it is readily known, the effects of the survey can be applied to the target population and there is no (human) intervention in the collection of the survey. However, using this sampling method, it is always difficult to create a sampling frame that would require a clear random sample to be taken. The main instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was built based on the above-mentioned hypothesis and also based on the SERVQUAL model. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions have been included. The questions were on a scale of 7-point Likert. The scores were coded 7 for strongly agree or extremely pleased, 6 for moderately agreed or moderately happy, 5 for slightly agreed or satisfied, 4 for neutral or indifferent, 3 for somewhat dissatisfied or slightly dissatisfied, 2 for dissatisfied or moderately dissatisfied and

1 for strongly dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied.

**3.1 Measurement of Variables**

Service quality was assessed using parameters in the SERVQUAL model (Boohene & Agyapong, 2011; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) [1]. Using the SERVQUAL method, 21 statements measured the quality of service through all components using the Likert scale of seven scales:

1. Reliability; refers to the ability to deliver the provided service in a timely and precise manner.
2. Tangibles; refers to the presence of physical structures, equipment, and staff.
3. Competence; refers to the possession of the abilities and expertise necessary to perform the specified service.
4. Courtesy; refers to the good manners, respect, consideration, and friendliness of servicemen.
5. Responsiveness; refers to the desire to serve consumers and to offer timely service.
6. Communication; refers to how workers listen to their clients and consider their views. Keeps consumers aware of new products or services in the language they understand.
7. Feel safe; refers to freedom from threat, fear or doubt.
8. Understanding the customer includes making significant attempts to learn the needs of the consumer.

The quality ratings of cell phones disclosed in consumer reports (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988) [2] were used by (Lee, Lee, & Feick, 2001) [31] as a basis for evaluating consumer satisfaction where consumer perceptions on pricing structures, core services (telephone coverage and sound clarity) and value- services (precision of billing services and easy access to providers) were used. This has been updated and customer satisfaction is assessed by consumer dissatisfaction levels, negative impact/emotions, hesitation to change, customer service, first option and incentive to search. Overall, 520 participants engaged in an online questionnaire across the country across different social media channels (Facebook and WhatsApp) to be exact. Of the 520 applicants, roughly 450 submitted completed questionnaires; the remaining questionnaires returned unfinished. This resulted in a recovery of 86.54%. Multiple regression analysis was carried out to achieve the purpose of this research, which is to investigate the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in Ethio-Telecom. The regression model built is:

$$Y_i = \gamma + \sum_i^m \delta_i X_i + \epsilon_t$$

Where  $Y_i$  represents the dependent variable (customer satisfaction),  $X_i$  indicates a vector of the independent variables (vector of service quality variables- Tangibility, Reliability, Competence, Security, Courtesy, and communication),  $\gamma$  and  $\delta_i$  are the constant or intercept and respective coefficients of the independent variables (service quality) on the dependent variable (customer satisfaction). According to (Jeon, 2015) a major advantage of multiple regression is that the problems posed in the bivariate regression model are addressed by integrating more additional independent or control variables.



**4. Results and Discussions**

The regression model shows that 75% (R-square = 0.752) of the observed variation in the dependent variable (total customer satisfaction) is explained by independent variables (total service quality). Also, the regression analysis reveals how the quality of individual services influences consumer satisfaction. The findings show that all service quality items; personnel courtesy, safety, competence, service tangibility, communication, and reliability are strong determinants of customer satisfaction.

**Table 1:** Multiple regression results

Series	Co-efficient	t-statistic
Tangibility	0.649	8.546
Communication	0.350	6.488
Competence	-0.437	-0.791
Reliability	-0.341	-0.348
Security	0.224	0.514
Courtesy	0.125	0.311
Constant	-0.213	-0.496
F-Statistics	= (142.00)	
R-Square	= 0.752	
Adjusted R-square	= 0.740	

The significance of the F-statistics (F-value = 142.0) shows that there is an interaction between the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) and the independent variable (service quality indicators). Likewise, considering that the significance level measured is less than 0.005, it suggests that service quality factors are the key variables influencing customer satisfaction as far as Ethio-Telecom is concerned. Furthermore, the regression statistics demonstrate that if no effort is taken to improve the level of defined indicators (safety, communication competence, service tangibility, personnel courtesy, and reliability) the level of customer satisfaction will decline. Also, those in charge (at Ethio-Telecom) must make greater efforts to enhance the performance of the staff members and also make their operation more relevant to the needs of the customer, as the two are the most critical factors affecting the satisfaction of their customers.

Below is a summary of the findings:

1. Ethio-telecom offers cell phone services such as short message service (SMS), fax, internet, voice mail, and other services at a high cost. Comparatively, the amount charged for one text message is reasonable.
2. Many subscribers had the thought of transferring to other private telecommunications networks because of poor quality
3. The behavior of the Ethio-telecom employees towards their customers is more than natural. It ensures that the staff handles clients if they show up with grievances and concerns about the services.
4. The majority of Ethio-telecom subscribers are generally disappointed due to factors such as poor network quality, and high cost of services. However, some participants are delighted with customer care, quality Text messages services and the recently introduced 4th generation (4G) internet connectivity.

**5. Conclusions and policy recommendations**

The study examines empirically, the impact of service quality on Ethio-Telecom customer satisfaction using the SERVQUAL modus operandi among a sample of

subscribers of Ethio-Telecom. As per the findings, the management of Ethio-Telecom must enhance the quality of the operation by offering consumers what they want at very reasonable prices. Identifying and meeting the needs of consumers will then boost network infrastructure, as what is delivered will be used to distinguish the benefits received by the client from the rivals. Similarly, management of companies should pay attention to workers' skills acquisition, understanding, commitment to clients and their needs, provision of quick and effective services and enhanced attitude towards clients. Other concerns for enhancing customer satisfaction in telecommunications services include transaction confidentiality, reliability, and extension of working hours and provision of insurance to customers. The results indicate that the recruiting of qualified workers could be a key factor for consumers in determining the level of services rendered by Ethio-Telecom.

There is a positive relationship between quality of service and customer satisfaction. Attaining customer satisfaction depends on ensuring that the business meets high-quality service standards. The introduction of consistency systems has a major effect on the degree of customer satisfaction. Service quality factors that have greatly influenced customer satisfaction include reliability, competence, politeness, tangibility, responsiveness, and communication. To executives, these results have significant consequences to brand building approaches. The study recorded that quality of service is the primary approach to customer satisfaction. Clear evidence of a positive brand-building campaign is established when businesses offer superior offerings relative to other firms in the same sector. Generally, there is a need for the leadership of the numerous telecommunications companies to educate their staff occasionally on their marketing skills. This preparation will create a customer-oriented environment in which communication workers can provide services quickly and successfully, understanding that the development and maintenance of consumers is the very foundation of marketing. Customer support activity may also act as guidelines for appraisal and enhancement of the performance of telecommunications workers.

As per the discussion and interpretation, these suggestions are referred to allow Ethio-telecom to provide high-quality customer service and customer satisfaction. Such potential suggestions are as follows:

- a. To resolve inadequate network quality and coverage issues, Ethio-telecom may consider the following initiatives; expand network infrastructure capabilities so that the network is widely accessible and offers reliable services; import equipment and network technologies capable of producing improved services to the telecommunications industry; recruiting and training of technical men continuously such that network challenges can be addressed quickly.
- b. Ethio-telecom should offer regular guidance to its employees about how to properly cope with their customer's concerns. This helps them so that they can have an effective response and efficient handling of grievances.
- c. Because the cost of specific services offered by Ethio-telecom is high, a method should be developed to amend the cost rate by benchmarking certain countries worldwide where there is an optimal payment structure.
- d. The network providers must make use of the latest

technologies in mobile telephony systems to attract their clients by importing telecommunications technology from other countries to enhance the content delivery infrastructure of the internet network.

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