

## Service Quality and User Satisfaction at Machakos University, Kitui Campus Library, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

*The article examines the affiliation between service worth and client gratification in at Machakos University, Kitui Campus library. The SERVQUAL instrument for measuring service eminence, which is based on 22 questions and assesses a user's evaluation of service quality, was utilized. The researcher utilized a cross-sectional design as an expressive research design in order to offer an overall picture of how service quality affects customer satisfaction in academic libraries. The study's target population was third and fourth-year academic undergraduates who use and made use of the academic library during the time of research data collection. A systematic random sampling method was used to select a sample size of 161 respondents. The primary data was collected using questionnaires that was distributed to the two libraries. The information analysis was done by use of both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found out that that some library users frequented the library once every week, while others frequented the library daily. They users added that they visited the library because it had individualized attention by the librarians. It was noted that Personnel at the library are well dressed and neat at all times. Another discovery made by the respondents is that the library keeps accurate records e.g., circulation, accounts records and academic reports etc. it was noted that Personnel of library are not too busy to respond promptly to students' requests. On regression analysis, the study discovered that an f-value of 22.164, which is significant at ( $p < 0.05$ ), was used to establish a significance value of p less than 0.05. Based on the regression equation, service quality will increase by 0.782 ( $p < 0.05$ ) if the other parameters in the equation remain constant. Finally, the correlation coefficient, R, was 0.341, indicating that service quality and user pleasure are highly intertwined. The study concluded that academic libraries ensuring tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy will lead to favorable impact on service quality in Kenyan libraries and specifically the Kitui campus library at Machakos university, Kenya. Study recommended that all five SERVQUAL aspects namely assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles be upgraded by all libraries within Kenyan universities in order to improve user perception levels.*

**Key Words:** Service Quality, User Satisfaction, Machakos University Library

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#### 1.0 Introduction

Fast changes in client preferences and tastes as a result of information exposure through information communication technology, globalization, and shifts in innovation characterize up-to-date time. This change has had an impact on consumer expectations, which are becoming increasingly isolated and specialized. Academic libraries, as per Simmonds (2001), are the "heart" of the learning public community, providing a gathering space for students and professors to do study and expand their expertise. Libraries and information centers play an

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important role in providing users with the information and access to information they need for their research and academic growth. Illustrations (ILL), current awareness services (CAS), selective dissemination of information (SDI), bibliographic listing, reading room, and other services were traditionally offered by libraries and which were based on collection. Changes in application of information technology and shift in modernization is the new trend in the library. Furthermore, historical practices have altered, and value-added services have arisen to match the new library environment. For example, internet services have permitted the creation of virtual libraries with a rich collection of electronic databases, E-mail services, and other services. This shift effected a great compression on libraries to evaluate the degree that their services chance 'quality' criteria. (Thompson, Bruce; Cook, Colleen, 2000). In this era, 'every unity... is appreciated in proportion to its contribution to the university's qualitative success, as per Nitecki 1996b, p. 181.' This victory may be solidified by prioritizing the library user as the most important factor in meeting their information requirements.

Consumer satisfaction plays a critical influence in customer loyalty and retention (Mohsan *et al.*, 2011). Customer satisfaction has always been a significant component in determining a company's performance (Hossan, 2012). One approach to shape customer satisfaction is to grasp the benefits and costs connection of consumers' expectations based on previous experiences, and another way is to look at the customer relationship's life cycle (Ojo, 2010). The worthiness of service is one of the most vital aspects that impact customer satisfaction (Timothy, 2012). The extent to which a client's perception of provision encounters or surpasses their expectations is referred to as service eminence (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry 1990). To satisfy consumers, service givers must first learn about them, their requirements, and their expectations in order to improve the present functionality and implement new service delivery methods Service quality measurement allows businesses and service givers to compare before and after modifications, categorize quality-related issues, and create explicit service distribution criteria (Hossan, 2012).

In the context of a library, the formation of library services is based on interactions between library users and curators, inclusive of the services offered in the library. Investigations into the usage and delivery of services offered in a library can help us better understand how the library and its users interact. There are many types of libraries which include public, academic, special, school and other types of data and documentation centers depending on the services that they offer. In this study, the main emphasis is the academic libraries which serve the students and researchers. Academic library as argued by Simmonds, (2001) is the "Heart" of the education community that provides a place for students and faculty to do their research and advance their knowledge. Academic libraries have the primary objective of acquiring and organizing, which includes preserving, retrieval, dissemination and support to research work among users in higher institutions of learning. The success of academic libraries depends on its' interaction ability of resources and its' users.

Libraries throughout the world are experiencing problems in providing high-quality services as a consequence of the advent of data skills and an increase in the number of publications, where customer needs are highly specific. Because their target market (lecturers, researchers, undergraduate students, and postgraduate students) is extremely demanding, pinpointed and changing, academic libraries face significant challenges in meeting their clients' demands. As a result of this, academic libraries are adapting to changes in the learning and research environment, resulting in changes in library user behavior. 'Amount of collection eminence based only on groups has developed to be antiquated,' as Nitecki (1996) stated (p. 181), and only a few metrics have been devised to assess customer insights of library service excellence (Stein, 1997). In an ARL white paper, Frankline and Nitecki in (1999) observed that some particular libraries have achieved sovereign measurements of client pleasure and satisfaction. There aren't any systematic reportage systems for results amongst academic libraries, despite

their importance. In the worldwide information era, new approaches to consider about and assess quality in contemporary libraries have developed, shifting the major focus of libraries from material collection to service-oriented (Miller,2010).

Libraries give a great role in true growth of advanced education quality by disseminating information and knowledge to the appropriate person, in the appropriate manner, and at the appropriate time during this period of acquaintance and data (Kandie, 2016). As a result, a number of academics have looked to the marketing literature for a measuring procedure that may be utilized in the molding of products. The SERVQUAL protocol, which consists of 22 elements that are apparently used to shape concrete insights, dependability, responsiveness alongside assurance and empathy, has been widely utilized to shape service quality (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1995, 1994). “All other evaluations are fundamentally irrelevant; only consumers judge quality” (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, Berry, 1990, p. 16). Quality, as per Parasuraman et al. (1994), is defined as the difference between what buyers perceive to be given and what is really delivered. According to Parasuraman et al. in (1994), the SERVQUAL scale using the prospects/performance gaps methodology is an appropriate and richer method of shaping service quality. According to Timothy (2012), the idea is commonly utilized in organizations that are more service focused in their everyday activities to shape customer service and recognize their pleasure.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Academic librarians seek to demonstrate that their organization provides high-quality service to its clients so as to assist the mother institution. The relevance of service worthiness in achieving the goal of libraries in supporting teaching, learning, and research at the institutions where they work is critical. With the increase in student admissions to Kenyan campuses, the Curators may have been under pressure to distribute services. Furthermore, library resources may not be able to cope with the demands of users, resulting in user discontent. As per Amollo (2011), libraries in Kenya have budgetary constraints, limited facilities, a lack of skilled people, high staff revenue, and a lack of senior management support, all of which can disrupt service delivery and lead to dissatisfied users.

In the United States, Nitecki & Hernon (2002) performed research at Yale University's libraries to identify the metrics of service quality and customer satisfaction. They came to conclusion that tangibles, reliability, service efficiency, and effect of service were the three aspects that shaped service quality and customer satisfaction in a library. They stated that more study was needed to fully understand the dimensions. In his study, Kithome (2013) employed SERVQUAL to assess service excellence and customer satisfaction in Kenyan university libraries. He came to conclusion that consumer pleasure in libraries was related to the five characteristics of tangibles, dependability, receptiveness, empathy, and certainty. Many studies on library service eminence and client gratification heights have been conducted all around the world.

Different assessment methodologies were used in these investigations, which were conducted in various technical and socio-cultural situations. Because academic libraries today face numerous challenges from online information providers, multimedia products, and other competing sources of information, their role and even survival is jeopardized, academic libraries must maintain their relevance by providing high-quality services to their customers on an ongoing basis. This study tries to bridge this breach by recognizing the quality of services given in Machakos and Kitui university libraries using the SERVQUAL assessment on five service quality indicators of tangibility, receptiveness, dependability, empathy, and assurance. In addition, the study aims to increase awareness of the link amongst service worth management and customer gratification in Kenyan university libraries.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory, a cognitive theory pioneered by Richard, L. Oliver (1977) in a periodical of Marketing study, says that the magnitude and direction of the continuum between consumers anticipation and what the business provides has a direct impact on customer fulfillment. The measurement of gratification/customers' displeasure answers are a product of their cognitive assessment as they retrieve results from memory. In the consumption of the product, there are inconsistencies amongst the actual outcome and existing cognitive criteria like anticipation. If the customer's expectations surpass the actual outcomes, the consequence is negative. If the customer's expectation of service is equal to the actual result, the result is zero; if the customer's expectation is larger than the maximum result, the result is positive. Comparison of prior expectation with observed performance is the usual method for studying satisfaction. Customers' insights of total pleasure are thus based on a comparison of anticipation and outcome performance, as per this idea. This idea has mostly been used to the study of consumer satisfaction. Only when a company has grasped the ever-changing demands, tastes, and preferences of its customers can it be successful. The study attempts to establish a link between library service quality and user pleasure using the SERVQUAL instrument, which includes five quality dimensions: tangibility, dependability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance. As per the expectancy disconfirmation hypothesis, a service provider, in this case a library, can boost satisfaction by improving perceived product performance while lowering expectations.

### **2.2 The concept of service quality**

Significant disagreements as to what it established have muddled the rising interest in service sectors. Payne (1993) summed it up after a wide range of evaluations when he said, "As stated by (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003) that, a service is perhaps any operation that involves intangible components and has some touch with both consumers and individuals who own things but does not result in a change of ownership. It's conceivable that the service's state may change, and that the service will or will not be effectively connected to a physical object. Service quality is defined by Nitecki et al. (2001) as fulfilling or exceeding customers' expectations, or as the difference between clients' insight and anticipation of service. Service quality, according to Othman & Owen, is the result of a client's thorough examination of the supplied difference between expected and actual service presentation (Othman & Owen, 2002). "Expectations is defined as the trust that an awaited thing can happen or is more likely to happen" Wehmeier (2000) while "Insight can be defined as the process where one chooses, categorizes and interprets facts and figures so as to provide a meaningful picture of the world." George (2004).

As per to Kotler (2006), there are four main aspects pertaining to services that have major influence on business design: Intangibility, Inseparability, Inseparability, Perishability and Intangibility. Services lack physical qualities that can be seen through the naked eye, touched by hand, smelled by nose, heard by the ear, or tested prior to buying since they are acts or activities rather than goods. Services are difficult to describe since they cannot be seen, tested, felt, or even smelled, making demand adjustments exceedingly tough to achieve. In order to decrease ambiguity, clients search for signs of service quality in the location, personnel, pricing, or anything else they may look at or observe. Intangibility is also the source of the biggest discrepancy between services and commodities, thus service givers must first make the service tangible in a single or many habits, as well as offer quality indications to respondents.

Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1988) established the SERVQUAL prototype as an instrument for setting consumer prospects and insights into service worthiness. SERVQUAL

is a standardized instrument that has been used in a wide range of service sectors. The concept is founded on the idea that a business or organization's service quality may be determined through customers' assessment of product by comparing their opinion of their service to the expectations of their clients. This paradigm has five (5) tangible dimensions: dependability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance: The term "tangibility" refers to the physical representation of a service. It refers to the physical look of facilities, equipment, and employees, as well as communication materials. Physical facilities such as tools, machinery, and representations are connected with tangibles. Customers evaluate quality by looking at the physical image (Zeithaml et al., 2006).

Reliability entails getting things right the first time (Messay, 2012). Being dependable in the library is a crucial characteristic to possess (Ghost & Gnanadhas, 2011). If an academic library is unreliable, it sends the message to users that they don't care about them. As a result, a consumer or library user develops a bad impression of the library and seeks out a rival. Delivering services on time, responding to customer service issues in a timely manner, delivering services accurately the first time, and maintaining error-free records are all key aspects of reliability (Armstrong, 2012). Dependability is showing to be the most significant driver of service worth gap perception across all five elements of quality (Zeithaml, 2006).

Delivering promised services: In the service industry, the ability to offer promised services accurately and reliably varies from day to day owing to the personality, abilities, and attitudes of each worker (Mohammad and Alhamadan, 2011). It's a terrific approach to lose users if you don't deliver exactly what you promised the first time. According to Messay (2012), delivery is paramount to customer satisfaction and one of the primary reasons why consumers fail to use information services. The willingness of a corporation to assist clients (users) and provide prompt service is referred to as responsiveness. When dealing with client requests, enquiries, complaints, and challenges, this dimension stresses attentiveness and promptness. Customers can evaluate how responsive a company is by how long it takes them to get help, answers to questions, or attention to their issues. The concept of responsiveness also includes the concept of flexibility and the ability to customize services to the needs of customers (Zeithaml et al, 2006).

Empathy is the kind of compassionate, one-on-one attention that a service provider gives to its consumers. The fundamental of responsiveness is shown through tailored service, which stresses that clients are not only inimitable but also distinct, and that their requirements must be addressed. As a result, customers want to be heard and valued by the businesses that supply them with services (Zeithaml et al., 2006). Empathy includes individualized attention and care conveyed through personalized service. Empathy encompasses the customer's approachability and simplicity of touch with the service they require (Zeithaml et al., 2006). The capacity of an individual to maintain a high level via their expertise and manner is referred to as assurance. The word "competency" refers to the ability to provide the service with the necessary skills and knowledge. The decency, attention, kindness, truthfulness, and integrity of contact workers is referred to as courtesy. This is likely to be particularly true for services that customers see as high-risk or for which they have doubts about their ability to predict outcomes. For example, financial, trading, and health services are only a few examples (Zelege, 2012). The business strives to develop a feeling of royalty and confidence among primary contact executives, workers, and clients in the service encounter. (Zeithaml et al., 2006). The five dimensions create twenty-two statements, each of which influences respondents' expectations and insights of the worthiness of services given by the company or organization. In the case of a library, respondents compare their expectations with their views of library services. The respondents are asked to rate how much they feel the service provider should be held accountable to offer outstanding service on a 5-point Likert scale. A second, identical gauge is given next to the beginning, on which respondents assess the real level of service provided by the service givers

in this case, the library, based on their observations. The difference between perception and expectations is measured for every declaration; the SERVQUAL groove is defined as average of the collected scores (Parasuraman, 1988).

### 3.0 Research Methodology

The descriptive research design was used in this investigation. The descriptive approach is recommended because it is appropriate for gathering data about people's attitudes, views, expectations, insights, or other concerns (Orodho and Kombo, 2003). The expectations of library customers and their insights of service worthy was described in this study. The data for this study was collected using the SERVQUAL tool. Questionnaires was given out to Machakos and Kitui university libraries' chosen users (students). The data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The underlying component in this study was service quality, and the regression coefficient is user satisfaction.

The study's target population was the students who use the library. In terms of seating capacity, the Machakos university library can handle 450 library users/clients, whereas the Kitui university library can accommodate 400 users/clients. The Yamane (1967) statistical method for determining sample size in relation to the population under investigation was used to estimate the sample size for students. The sample size of 81 respondents out of entire population of 450 respondents in MKS was therefore be the lowest acceptable number of respondents to maintain a 95 percent confidence level. The SERVQUAL model was used to assess descriptive data based on service quality (mean and standard deviation). To supplement the text, graphic images was utilized to enhance findings using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A multiple regression model was used to investigate the link between service quality and user satisfaction in academic libraries.

### 4.0 Data Analysis Results

A linear regression analysis was used to assess the association between service quality and user satisfaction at the Kitui Campus and Machakos University. The model overview, nova, and regression coefficient findings are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Sq	df	Mean Squ	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.223	1	12.223	21.05689	8.9615E-06
	Residual	92.876	160	0.580475		
	Total	105.099	161			
a. Predicted Service Quality						
b. Dependent User Satisfaction						

The ANOVA model was used to examine the significance of the regression model, with a f significance value of p less than 0.05 and an f-value of 22.164, which is significant at (p=0.00). This demonstrates that the model is statistically significant when it comes to forecasting the relationship between service quality and customer happiness.

**Table 2: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coe		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.77	0.451		8.359202	2.90E-14
	Tangibilit	0.782	0.121	0.146	6.46281	1.18E-09
	Reliability	0.463	0.079	0.126	5.860759	2.55E-08
	Responsiv	0.473	0.073	0.045	6.479452	1.08E-09
	Assuranc	0.532	0.073	0.142	7.287671	1.36E-11
	Empathy Services					
a. Depend	User Satisfaction					

The results of the linear regression model used in the investigation of the effect of the independent variable (User Satisfaction) on the dependent variable are shown in the table above (user satisfaction) The linear regression reflecting the actual link between elements included in the study took the form of  $Y=0.782X_1+0.463X_2+0.473X_3+0.532X_4+e$ , based on the regression coefficient where tangibility  $X_1$ , reliability  $X_2$ , responsiveness  $X_3$ , Assurance  $X_4$  and  $e$ =error. Based on the regression equation; service quality will increase by 0.782 ( $p = 0.000.05$ ) if the other parameters in the equation remain constant. The model shows that the predictor variable has a favorable impact on service quality in Kenyan libraries (Kitui and Machakos universities). The fact that all of the coefficients have positive values supports this. In Kenyan Libraries, a unit improvement in user satisfaction will result in a 0.82 (82.2%) increase in service quality if all other independent factors remain constant (Kitui and Machakos universities).

**Table 3: Model summary**

R square	1-(residual-total)					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.341028	0.1163	0.110777	0.761889		
a. Predict	Tangibilit	Reliability	Responsiv	Assurance	Empathy of Service	

User pleasure was the independent variable being investigated. According to the table above, the correlation coefficient, R, was 0.341, indicating a strong link between service quality and user happiness. Furthermore, the corrected R squared was 0.116, indicating that there was a 34.1 percent variance in service quality due to changes in consumer satisfaction.

## 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

Services are difficult to describe since they cannot be seen, tested, felt, or even smelled, making demand adjustments exceedingly tough to achieve. In order to decrease ambiguity, clients search for signs of service quality in the location, personnel, pricing, or anything else they may look at or observe. Due to customer feedback, several worthy representations have been developed to bridge the gap between customers and service givers. The SERVQUAL model and the Gap model are two approaches that were utilized in this study to assist identify customer requirements from quality perception. The study therefore concludes that academic libraries ensuring tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy will lead to favorable impact on service quality in Kenyan libraries and specifically the Kitui campus library at Machakos university, Kenya.

## 5.2 Recommendations

As a result of this research, it is recommended that all five SERVQUAL aspects (Assurance, Empathy, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Tangibles) be upgraded by all libraries within Kenyan universities in order to improve user perception levels. Knowing how various users perceive service quality and being able to measure levels of service quality and user satisfaction can be extremely beneficial to library administration. This could aid the management of Kitui Campus and Machakos University in continuously monitoring user satisfaction and, as a result, being able to address any concerns as they emerge. Using the SERVQUAL model to analyze service quality is an effective approach for management to have a deeper understanding of numerous aspects, as well as how they affect service quality and user satisfaction. The study revealed that there is a strong link between service quality and user satisfaction, as evidenced by the correlation coefficient,  $R$ . The study also discovered that the adjusted  $R$  squared proves that changes in consumer satisfaction caused a 36.3 percent variation in service quality. With an  $f$ -value of 22.164, which is significant at ( $p=0.00$ ), an ANOVA model was used with a significance value of  $p$  less than 0.05. This demonstrates that the model is statistically significant when it comes to forecasting the relationship between service quality and customer happiness. The regression equation predicted that if all other variables in the equation remained constant, service quality would improve by 0.775 ( $p = 0.000.05$ ). The model shows that the predictor variable has a favorable impact on service quality in Kenyan libraries (Kitui and Machakos universities). The fact that all of the coefficients have positive values supports this. In Kenyan Libraries, a unit improvement in user satisfaction will result in a 0.602 (60.2 percent) increase in service quality if all other independent parameters remain constant (Kitui and Machakos universities).

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