DETERMINANTS OF SERVICE QUALITY AMONG THE INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS IN KENYA

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AMANAGEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE MASTERS DEGREE IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

SUMMER 2000
STUDENTS DECLARATION.

I, the undersigned declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other College, Institution or University other than the USIU in Nairobi for an academic credit.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: 05-11-2002.

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This project paper has been presented for examination with my approval as the appointed supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my Dad Wilson, my Mum Jemimah, my late Sister Jane and my Brothers and Sisters who have always been a source of inspiration to me and who taught me to always strive for excellence.

It is also dedicated to my brother Josphat and Sister Rose who had to go through some sleepless and lonely moments as I struggled to fulfill the requirements of the MBA programme.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All the glory and honor is to God for the strength he gave me throughout this research project. Thank you to all who helped me in various ways.

Special thanks to

1. Almighty God for giving me life and the energy to continue.

2. USIU-A administration for giving me a chance to pursue the MBA programme

3. Ms Margaret Ombok my project Supervisor for the support and guidance accorded to me throughout the project.

4. Respondents without whom this study would not have been possible.

5. My brother Josphat and sister Rose who were a source of encouragement throughout the project.
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ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken to determine what customers and companies perceive to be determinants of quality service in Internet Service Providers (ISP) in Kenya.

The major objectives of the study were determining the customers' perception of quality service in Internet Service providers, determining the organizations perception of quality service in Internet Service Providers, establishing if there existed any gaps between the customers and Organizations perceptions of quality service and recommending how to close the gaps.

The population of interest consisted of individual users of Internet services in Nairobi and all the operating ISPs.

A sample size of 440 individual respondents was selected from 22 operating Internet Service providers using the convenience sampling technique.

Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The researcher assisted by two assistants distributed the questionnaire.

Data from the respondents was analyzed and presented using tables and

The results were conclusive and both individual and organizations held a positive attitude towards the tested dimensions of quality service.
CHAPTER ONE.

INTRODUCTION.

1.1 ROLE OF SERVICE QUALITY.

Companies use different competitive weapons to keep ahead of the competition.

Quality service is one of the powerful tools that companies can use to gain key competitive advantage.

Improving your service to customers helps you gain key competitive advantages over your rivals (www.qualityservice.ca)

1.2 BACKGROUND OF INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS (ISP).

The African regional computing centre (ARCC) launched the first full internet service in Kenya in the last quarter of 1995. By 1999, Form-net, Africaonline, Interconnect, Swift global, Net2000, Nairobnet and insight technologies had entered the market. Since then the number has escalated to 44 as at today (Internet Service Providers supplement, East African Standard, Wednesday, August 30, 2000).

1.3 PROBLEM DEFINITION.

As the local business becomes more competitive and opportunities open up for Kenyan companies in the East African region and beyond resulting from liberalisation and moves towards the revival of regional co-operation, high standards of quality delivery will be a major determinant of success (Steadman 1996).

To remain competitive—may be even to survive businesses will have to convert themselves into organisations of knowledgeable specialists (Drucker 1988)

The role of marketing in the delivery of quality service to customers be it in manufacturing or the service quality is bound to become more critical. It is those companies that fully embrace the philosophy of quality service delivery, placing their customers in their rightful place—first, that will thrive in the intensely competitive but challenging times ahead (Steadman 1996).
Customers are growing more discerning in their expectations of service quality in the marketplace. This is in part a reflection of the globalisation of commerce with increasing competition offering an expanding array of choices (Owino 1996).

It is the quality of service accompanying the goods that shapes the customers perception of quality delivery in those organisations.

Many studies on customer care and hence quality has been carried out. A study by Karau (1998) on banking shows how important quality service in an organisation is.

Maingi (2000) concurs with this in his research on attitudes of consumers towards the quality of service provided by insurance companies.

Peter Geer once the chairman of Barclays Bank of Kenya limited cited the biggest challenge today in the banking industry as being to deliver services to a mass market in an increasingly competitive and technologically sophisticated environment (Karau 1998).

According to Waruingi (1977) Many studies have not been carried out in less developed countries that directly address themselves to consumer dissatisfaction complaining behaviour.

According to Technical Assistance Research Programme (TARP), a nongovernmental organisation in the United States of America, the following notions were developed:

- A firm will spend 5 times more to win a customer than to retain one.
- Dissatisfied customers will tell at least 9 or 10 other people about their unhappy experience with a company.
- Only 4 out of 30 dissatisfied customers register complaints.
- 81% of customers with minor unresolved problems won't buy again from the offending company.
- 95% of customers with complaints that have been resolved quickly and satisfactorily will buy from the offending company (Ruth Karau 1998).
From this write up retaining customers is much cheaper and more profitable to the business than anything else.

Though determinants of quality service studies have been done before on other areas such as banking, this cannot be generalised to be those of Internet Service Providers.

In Kenya the list of Internet Service Providers has grown rapidly. Today there are even sub-ISPs, infor kiosks and cafes that link customers to major ISPs.

For the consumer, price is only one side of the coin. As Kenyan ISPs fight over a market of about 50000 and one that’s not likely to treble, quadruple or perform any of those internet growth miracles common in some economies-profits will remain thin. Unfortunately this leaves plenty of room for Internet Service Providers to do a terrible job. With narrow profit margins companies will not deliver the services they promise (BW 10 Daily Nation Tuesday August 29 2000).

The study was geared to studying on the determinants of quality service in the Internet Service Provision industry as seen from both the organisation as well as the customer’s perspective.

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.

The purpose of this study was to determine the determinants of quality service among Internet Service Providers from both the consumer and organisational point of view.

Specifically the study helped to:

1 Determine the customer’s perception of quality service in an Internet Service Provider.
2 Determine the organisations perception of quality service in an Internet Service Provider.
3 Establish if there existed any gap between customers and organisations perceptions of quality service.
4 Recommend strategies for closing the gap found.
1.5. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY.

The results of this study may be useful to several groups including scholars, researchers and the researcher:

Internet Service Providers may find the study useful and may use it to understand quality service from the customer’s perspective, design effective strategies for customer retention and hence increase profitability and grow market share by attracting new customers.

Scholars and Researchers may find the study useful and may use it to further research on Internet Service Providers. The study may also act as a source of knowledge.

The Researcher may gain experience in research and may use the results to manage customer base and offer quality services to customers.
CHAPTER TWO.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

This chapter will cover the following topics

1. Nature and characteristics of a service.
2. Service quality—its meaning and determinants
3. Service quality gaps
4. Perception.

2.1 NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF A SERVICE.

A definition of Swan and Combs (1976) identified two important dimensions of service quality—‘instrumental’ quality describes the physical aspects of the service, while the ‘expressive’ dimension relates to the intangibles or psychological aspects.

Work by Gronroos (1984) identified ‘technical’ and ‘functional’ quality as being the two principal components of quality. Technical quality refers to the relatively quantifiable aspects of a service, which consumers receive in their interactions with a service firm. Because both customers and suppliers can easily measure it, it forms an important basis for judging service quality. Examples of technical quality include waiting time and reliability of a service.

Because services involve direct consumer-producer interaction, consumers are also influenced by how the technical quality is delivered to them. This is what Gronroos (1984) describes as functional quality and cannot be measured as objectively as the elements of technical quality. In case of waiting time (queue), functional environment is influenced by such factors as the environment in which queuing takes place and consumers perception of the manner in which queues are handled by staff.

Consumers subsequently judge service quality as the extent to which perceived service delivery matches up to these initial expectations.
In this way a service that is perceived as being of mediocre standard may be considered of high quality when compared against low expectations, but of low quality when assessed against high expectations.

Analysis of service quality is further complicated by the fact that production and consumption of a service generally occur simultaneously. Rathmell (1974) notes that there are two interfaces between the production and consumption of services. One is via the standard marketing mix and the other is through what Rathmell calls the buyer-seller interaction. Along this line Gronroos (1984) points out that a buyer of manufactured goods only encounters the traditional marketing mix variables of a manufacturer i.e. Product, Price, its Distribution and how these are communicated to him or her. Usually production processes are unseen by consumers and therefore cannot be used as a basis for quality assessment. By contrast, service inseparability results in the production process being an important basis for assessing quality.

A further problem in understanding and managing service quality flows from the intangibility, variability and inseparability of most services which results in a series of unique buyer/seller exchanges with no two services being provided in exactly the same way services are frequently described as intangible, heterogeneous and the process of consumption being inseparable from the production.

The most important characteristic of services is that of their process nature. In many situations it is difficult for the customer to evaluate the quality of the outcome of the service process. Gronroos (1998)

The key to service quality is to meet or exceed consumer service quality expectations. Their expectations are formed by their past experiences, word of mouth and advertising. The customers choose providers on this basis before receiving the service. They then compare the perceived service with the expected service and if the perceived service falls below the
expected service, customers loose interest in the provider and if the perceived service meets or exceeds their expectations, they are more likely to use the provider again (Kotler 1994). Kibera and Waruingi (1988) summarises the unique characteristics of services as being intangibility, perish ability, inseparability and heterogeneity.

It can be concluded from the above writers that analysis of service quality is complicated by the virtue of the unique characteristics of services.

2.2 SERVICE QUALITY.

2.2.1 MEANING OF QUALITY.

Marketers of services experience difficulty in understanding and controlling quality (Zeitham et al 1988). This is because services are performances rather than objects and therefore precise manufacturing specifications for uniform quality rarely can be established and enforced by the firm (Zeitham et al 1988).

Various people have defined quality differently.

Deming (1996) defines quality as a predictable degree of uniformity and dependability at low cost and suited to the market. According to Deming quality does not mean high quality. His approach advocates getting things done right the first time by bringing the customer into the organisation and by closing a close link between worker and supplier for continuous improvement.

According to Juran (1996) quality is fitness for use or conformance to specifications. Philip Crosby (1996) defines quality as conformance to requirements. He defines proof of service as flawless performance or zero defects. This means 100% satisfying performance from the customer's point of view. Costs of not achieving flawless performance is the cost of quality which includes the cost of redoing the service, compensating for poor service, loss of customers and negative word of mouth.
According to Ross (1996), quality is defined by the customer. "It begins and ends with the customer" and further it is linked to an organisation's profitability, market share and growth. Tom Peters says," unfortunately we can no longer afford to merely satisfy the customer. To win today, you have to delight and astound your customers with and services that far exceed their expectations".

According to Kessler Sheila (1995) "Quality is defined by the customer. She says that there is need to ask the customer what quality is and evaluate how well you are meeting those expectations. There is need to conduct customer surveys to determine factors such as your new customers of the year, why they came to you, what customers have you lost in the year and why they switched service. This creates a need for building and maintaining service quality in our organisations that assures continual focus on the customer.

All the authors do agree that quality is the responsibility of all employees in the organisation and should be looked at from the customer’s point of view. They all agree that quality is what customer says is quality and not what the management thinks is quality.

2.2.2 DETERMINANTS OF SERVICE QUALITY.

A survey conducted by Karau (1998) reported the following as determinants of service quality.

- Response to customer complains which entails the willingness and timeliness in attending to customer complains.
- Telephone handling, which involves how customers are treated on phone
- Prompt processing time of transactions. e.g. bills, opening accounts.
- Knowledge ability on services.
- Growth in customer base and retention rate.
- Image of the company both to internal customers and the public.
Kotler (1997) summarised the determinants of quality service into five as indicated below:

- Reliability, which is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- Responsiveness, which is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
- Assurance, which refers to the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
- Empathy, which refers to the provision of caring, individualised attention to customers.
- Tangibles, which refers to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.

According to Adrian Palmer companies to better understand the expectations and perceptions of their customers can use the SERVQUAL technique. It is applicable across a broad range of service industries and can be easily modified to take account of the specific requirements of a company. SERVQUAL is based upon a generic 22-item questionnaire, which is designed to cover five broad dimensions of service quality, which the research team consolidated from their original qualitative investigations. The five dimension covered with some description of each include:

- Tangibles-This entails the appearance of physical elements.
- Reliability-This includes dependability and accurate performance.
- Responsiveness-Included is promptness and helpfulness.
- Assurance-Included is competence, courtesy, credibility and security.
- Empathy-This includes easy access, good communications and customer understanding.
Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) undertook an exploratory qualitative study to investigate the concept of service quality and came up with the following service determinants:

- **Reliability**—This involves consistency of performance and dependability. It specifically involves accuracy in billing, keeping records correctly and performing the service at the designated time.

- **Responsiveness**—This is willingness or readiness of employees to provide service. This involves timeliness of service in areas such as calling the customer back quickly and giving prompt service.

- **Competence**—This refers to possession of required skills and knowledge to perform a service. It involves knowledge and skill of contact personnel, knowledge and skill of operational support personnel.

- **Access**—This involves approachability and ease of contact. This means that the service is easily accessible by telephone; waiting time to receive service is not extensive, convenient location of service quality.

- **Courtesy**—Involves politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness of contact personnel.

- **Communication**—Keeping customers informed in a language they can understand and listening to them. This may mean that the company has to adjust its language for different consumers. For instance may increase the level of sophistication with a well-educated customer and speaking simply and plainly with a novice. It also involves explaining the service itself, how much the service will cost, trade off between service and cost and assuring the consumer that a problem will be handled carefully.
- Credibility-Involves trustworthiness, believability and honesty. It involves having the customers best interests at heart issues considered include company name, company reputation and personal characteristics of the contact personnel.
- Security-This is freedom from danger, risk or doubt. It involves physical safety, financial security and confidentiality.
- Knowing/understanding the customer-Involves making the effort to understand the customer needs. It involves learning the customers’ specific requirements, providing individualised attention and recognising the regular customer.
- Tangibles-This include the physical evidence of the service. They include physical facilities, appearance of personnel, tools or equipment of the service and other customers in the service facility.

2.3 SERVICE QUALITY GAPS.

Products can be good or impressive on their own but this is not what the customer wants. The products and services should meet the customer’s needs. It is important that the said company’s products meet the needs and expectations of the customer Okatch (2000) Owino (1996) identified five gaps which lead to poor service quality, the major contributing factors to the gaps and finally presented a model for continuously reducing the gaps and hence, improving service quality.

2.3.1 SERVICE GAPS.

Customers generally have expectations of quality delivery based on word of mouth, past experience, personal needs and external communications from the service provider. In the course of service delivery, customers will perceive the level of quality they are receiving based on the ten dimensions of service quality. These are Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Competence, Courtesy, Credibility, Security,
Access, Communication and Understanding of the customer. The relative Importance of each dimension varies from sector to sector.

There is a constant attempt by customers to match their expectations with their perceptions, and the degree of difference between the two represents the service quality level in the eyes of the customer. The gap between customer’s expectations and their perception is the overall determinant of the quality level and will be referred to, as gap 5. This gap is the result of four other gaps.

**Gap 1. Not knowing what customers expect.**

Knowing what customers expect is the first and most critical step in delivering quality service. Providing a service that customers perceive as excellent requires that a firm know what customers expect. Being a little bit wrong can mean loosing the customers business when another company hits the target exactly. Being a little bit wrong can mean expending money, time and other resources on things that do not count to customers. Being a little bit wrong can even mean not surviving in a fiercely competitive market.

The difference between what customers expect and what management perceive they expect is often the result of overlooking the need to fully understand customer’s expectations. Despite genuine interest in providing service quality many companies miss the mark by thinking inside out-they know what customers should want and they deliver that rather than outside in. When this happens, companies provide service that does not match customer expectation. Important features are left out and the levels of performance on features that are provided are inadequate.

Because service has few clearly defined and tangible cues, gap one is consistently larger in service organizations than it is in manufacturing.
Key reasons for gap one are:

- Lack of marketing research orientation as evidenced by insufficient marketing research, inadequate use of research findings and lack of interaction between management and customers.
- Inadequate upward communication from contact personnel to management.
- Too many levels of management separating contact personnel and decision makers.

Not only firms that do not collect information on customer’s expectations but also those that do market research on the wrong topics will have a large gap one.

To close this gap, market research must focus on service quality issues such as which features are most important to customers, what levels of these features customers expect, and what customers think the company can and should do when problems occur in service delivery—the recovery strategy.

**Gap-2 The wrong service quality standards.**

Once managers accurately understand what customers expect, their second critical challenge is to use this knowledge to set service quality standards for the organization. Management may not be willing (or able) to put in place the systems to match or exceed customer’s expectations. Resource constraints, short-term profit orientation, market conditions or management indifference could all account for gap two—the discrepancy between manager’s perceptions of customer’s expectations and the actual specifications they establish for service delivery. Many executives cannot or will not change company systems of service delivery to enhance customer’s perceptions. Doing so often requires altering the very process by which work is accomplished, acquiring new equipment and technology and the aligning of executives from different parts of the firm to collectively understand the big picture of service quality from the customers point of view.
Almost always change requires a willingness to be open to different ways of structuring, calibrating and monitoring the way service is provided. Key reasons for gap two are:

- Inadequate commitment to service quality.
- Lack of perception of feasibility.
- Inadequate task standardization.
- Absence of goal setting.

Customers contact employees and middle management cannot improve quality without strong leadership from the top. It is therefore critical for top management to constantly and visibly express their commitment to the troops.

If top management commitment is the key to setting standards for quality service delivery, middle management commitment is the key to making these standards work.

The rise of gap two is strongly affected by the extent to which managers perceive that meeting customer’s expectations is feasible. Perception of infeasibility is often the result of short-term, narrow thinking on the part of managers and an unwillingness to think creatively and optimistically.

Being open to innovation, being receptive to different and possibly better ways of doing business-thinking big—is the key to perceiving feasibility.

Managers in successful service companies have the perception that almost anything the customer wants is feasible.

The translation of managerial perceptions into specific quality standards depends on the degree to which tasks to be performed can be standardised or routinized. Some managers believe that service cannot be standardised—that customisation is essential for providing high quality service. Standardisation is perceived as being impersonal, inadequate, and not in the customer’s best interests. Further they feel that service is so intangible as to be immeasurable.
This view leads to vague and loose standard setting with little or no measurement of feedback.

Companies that have been successful in delivering consistently high service quality are noted for establishing goals or standards to guide their employees in providing service quality. Of critical importance is the fact that the goals set by these companies are based on customer’s requirements and expectations rather than internal company standards.

**Gap 3-The service-performance gap.**

In some cases, management does understand customer’s expectations and does set appropriate specifications, and still the service delivered by the organisation falls short of customer’s expectations. The difference between service specifications and the actual service delivery is the service-performance gap: when employees are unable and/or unwilling to perform the service at the desired level. Unfortunately, this service-performance gap is common in the service industry. Willingness to perform on the part of employees may be described as discretionary effort, the difference” between the maximum amount of effort and care that an individual can bring to his or her job, and the minimum amount of effort required to avoid being fired or punished. Employees who begin a new job giving 100% discretionary effort may be giving far less within weeks because they have had to deal with too many long lines, too many unreasonable customers, too many rules and regulations, and too few pats on the back. It can also happen when they observe that few of their associates are giving their jobs their all.

An unskilled work-force due to insufficient wage rates to attract qualified personnel, lack of training or inadequate training and high turnover resulting in workers being promoted above their level of competence can all lead to an increase in the service performance gap. People must not only be able but also be willing to perform at the required and specified service standards.
Key reasons for gap 3 are:

- Role ambiguity.
- Role conflict.
- Poor employee-job fit
- Poor technology-job fit.
- Inappropriate evaluation/compensation systems.
- Lack of teamwork.

When employees do not possess the information or training necessary to perform their jobs competently they experience role ambiguity. They are uncertain what managers or supervisors expect from them and how to satisfy those expectations, and they lack the skills, or training to satisfy customer’s expectations. Furthermore they do not know how their performance will be evaluated and rewarded.

The status of training in many firms in this country is bleak-too little too late and often of the wrong type. And unless training is supported by clear messages about management expectations, unless employees know what behaviour is appropriate and inappropriate and unless feedback on performance is provided often enough to correct problems, gap three can remain quite wide.

Most managers do not commonly give enough attention or devote sufficient resources to the recruitment and selection process, particularly for customer contact jobs situated at the lower levels of the organisation chart (telephone operators, repair technicians, etc), resulting in a mismatch between employees and jobs, and an increase in gap three.

Appropriate and reliable technology must be provided for high quality service delivery. Equipment inadequacies and failures can seriously impede employee’s performance. Many organisations measure employee performance by their output. Performance is rewarded not for service quality delivery but for other company defined goals.
For example, most bank customers want bank tellers to be accurate, fast, and friendly. Banks that measure teller's performance strictly on output such as end-of-the-day balancing of transactions overlook key aspects of job performance that customers factor into quality-of-service perceptions.

Empowering employees to satisfy customer's helps to reduce gap three. Service employees who perceive themselves to be in control of the situations they encounter in their jobs experience less stress, leading to higher performance.

The value of teamwork, employees, and managers pulling together for a common goal, cannot be over-emphasized. In most companies, support staff must provide good service to customer contact personnel to enable them service external customers effectively. The extent to which employees view other employees as customers and strive to deliver quality service internally, determines the quality of service delivered externally by the company.

**Gap 4: when promises do not match delivery.**

Accurate and appropriate company communication—advertising, personal selling, and public relations that do not over-promise or over-represent a product or service is essential in delivering service that customers perceive as high in quality. The gap between what a firm promises about the service or product and what it actually delivers must be consciously and deliberately minimized. Because of the less controllable nature of human beings (as opposed to machines), the potential to overpromise on service delivery is high.

When advertising, personal selling, or any other external communication sets up unrealistic expectations for customers, actual encounters disappoint them. It is the role of marketing to ensure that external communications accurately (if compellingly) reflect what happens in actual service encounters, while operations in turn, must deliver the promise.
Gaps can also occur when companies neglect to inform customers of special quality assurance efforts that are not feasible to them. Customers are not always aware of everything done behind the scenes to serve them well.

For instance, most insurance companies will give loans against life insurance policies. However, only a few of them actively communicate this in their advertising because they assume customers know about it. The firm that explicitly communicates the additional features may be selected over others that do not by customers who are uncertain about the quality of the service.

Customers who are aware that a firm is taking concrete steps to serve their best interests are likely to perceive a delivered service in a more favourable light.

Discrepancy between service delivery and external communications in the form of exaggerated promises and/or the absence of information about key aspects of service delivery intended to serve the customers well, can powerfully affect customer perceptions of service quality. Key reasons for gap four are:

- Inadequate horizontal communication particularly between operations, marketing and human resources, as well as across branches.
- Propensity to over-promise in communications.

Communication between different functional areas in the firm is necessary to achieve the common organisational goals. In situations where such communication is not open, perceived service quality is in Jeopardy.

Because employees are internal customers of the human resource department, the service they receive strongly affects the way they serve external customers. Incentives, motivation, training and selection must be aligned with the service quality objectives of the company if these internal customers are to deliver high quality service to the external customers.
If managers of individual branches or outlets of the same organisation have significant autonomy in procedures and policies, customers may not receive the same level of service across the branches. In this case what they expect and receive from one branch may be different from what is delivered in other branches. Under these circumstances gap four may be large.

In summary, customers have an increasing expectation of the service quality level they want in the market place. The expectations are influenced by word of mouth, personal needs, previous experiences and external communications.

Service quality is the discrepancy between customer’s expectations and customer’s perception of the delivered service. This discrepancy is gap five and is made up of gap one, two, three and four.

Gap one is the discrepancy between customers expectations and managements perception of the required service.

Gap two is the discrepancy between management’s perception and the specified quality standards of service.

Gap three is the discrepancy between specified service standards and quality of service delivered.

Gap four is the discrepancy between external communication on the service and actual delivery.

The objective of managements in those organisations that wish to maintain a competitive edge in quality service delivery is to close the gaps in all the four cases above. These results in closing the ultimate gap between the customer expectations and the customer perception of the quality of service delivered.

(Sokoni 1996).
Adrian Palmer identified five gaps where there may be a shortfall between expectation of service level and perception of actual service delivery.

Gap1 - Gap between consumer expectations and management perceptions. Management may think that they know what consumers want and proceed to deliver this when in fact consumers may expect something different.

Gap2 - Gap between management perception and service quality specification. Management may not set quality specifications or may not set them clearly. Alternatively, management may set clear quality specifications but these may not be achievable.

Gap3 - Gap between service quality specifications and service delivery. Unforeseen problems or poor management can lead to a service provider failing to meet service quality specifications. This may be due to human error but also mechanical breakdown of facilitating or support goods.

Gap4 - Gap between service delivery and external communication. There may be dissatisfaction with a service due to the excessively heightened expectations developed through the service provider’s communication efforts. Dissatisfaction occurs when actual delivery does not meet up to expectations held out in a company’s communications.

Gap5 - Gap between perceived service and expected service. This gap occurs as a result of one or more of the previous gaps. The way in which customers perceive actual service delivery does not match up with their initial expectations.

If the first gaps are great, the task of bridging the subsequent gaps becomes greater and indeed it could be said that in such circumstances quality service can only be achieved by good luck rather than good management.
2.4. PERCEPTION.

Perception is in the eyes of the beholder. Perception is the process by which we attribute meaning to incoming stimuli received through our five senses (Kibera and Waruingi 1988). Perception can also be defined as the process of interpreting directly through any of the senses. It also means interpreting ones own mind i.e to understand or to apprehend meaning. Perception can be said to mean the overall process, which includes the activity of the person that accompanies or immediately follows the perceptual process acquired through the senses. It is the entire process by which an individual becomes aware of the environment and interprets it to fit in his own frame of reference.

Perceiving can be illustrated by the use of the following paradigm “to perceive equals to see, hear, touch, taste, smell and the sense internally i.e psychological sensation” and this equals perceiving something or event or relation.

According to Kibera and Waruingi (1988) our perception of an object or event is the result of the interaction of two types of factors.

- Stimulus factors, which are characteristic of the physical object such as size, colour, weight or shape.
- Individual factors, which are characteristics of the individual. These factors include not only sensory processes but also past experience with similar items and basic motivations and expectations.

Marketers are interested in perception because it involves what consumers believe. To provide satisfaction effectively in the market place, marketers must understand how all their marketing activities are perceived because perception greatly influence buyer behavior. Consumers perceive the same situation differently.
Kibera and Waruingi (1988) talks about the following perception characteristics

- Consumer perception is subjective.

No two consumers perceive the same stimulus in the same way. Perception exists in the mind of the perceiver.

- Consumer perception is selective.

Selectivity of perception serves as a filter through which potentially important or favourable experiences will be allowed to flow while potentially unimportant or unfavourable experiences are locked out. Extensions of these are selective exposure and selective retention.

- Consumer perception is time related.

Most of the things we perceive are time related in that perception occurs in short durations or a series of short durations.

- Consumer perception is summative.

Consumers take many sensations that reach their awareness almost simultaneously. These sensations are summed up into a compute and unified whole before a consumer can react to them.

It is difficult to conceive how consumers could ever make their minds to buy if it were not for the fact that perception is summative.

Marketers who operate under the assumption that his/her perception of the firm, its products, service and advertisement is the same as that of customer may not develop an appropriate marketing strategy.
CONCLUSION

From the literature reviewed, one may conclude that quality service has become a competitive tool in Internet Service Provision and understanding quality service determinants is critical for management if they have to retain customers.

It may also be deduced from the literature review that there may exist some gaps between the customers and organisations perception of quality service.

Regardless of type of service, consumers tend to use similar criteria in evaluating service quality. Kotler (1997) has summarised them into five classes, which include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and the tangibles.

Parasuraman, Zeithanil and Berry (1985) on the other hand have come up with ten categories of service namely reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding or knowing the customer and tangibles.

Internet Service Provision is mostly sold directly by the company and like any other service it’s marketing is equally difficult due to the unique characteristics of services namely intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perceivability.

It can also be deduced from the literature review that various factors may contribute to consumer dissatisfaction. Such factors may include waiting time to be served, waiting time on phone, accessibility in terms of location or telephone and lack of knowledge of services offered by personnel.

Finally it is clear from the literature review that unless service quality among the Internet Service Providers is improved, most consumers will remain unsatisfied.

No study on determinants of quality service in Internet Service Providers has been done so far. This will in essence lead to customers leaving one ISP and going to another or even pulling out all together as information Technology is not as developed in Kenya.
Such actions may consequently lead to death of some ISPs or stagnation of some or even decline of the industry altogether.
CHAPTER THREE.

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 The population

The population of interest in this study consisted of all Internet Service Providers in Kenya as well as current users of Internet services in Nairobi.

The restriction of the population to current users of Internet services in Nairobi was because most of the ISPs are in Nairobi. Other reason for restricting the study to Nairobi was the fact that it was more accessible and most decision makers and customers were in Nairobi. Only the Internet service providers and subscribers were in a better position to respond on what they perceived to be quality service.

3.2 Sample frame

This consisted of all the 22 operational Internet Service Providers in Kenya.

20 customers from each Internet Service Providers were interviewed. It was difficult to obtain a detailed list containing names of customers, as the various companies wanted to maintain confidentiality of their customers.

3.3 Sample size.

A census study for the Internet Service Providers was done.

Convenience sampling was used to select the individual respondents.

3.4 Sample design.

Non-probability sampling technique was used to determine the respondents.

Key decision makers in all the operational Internet service Providers were interviewed.

Convenience sampling technique was used to select the individual respondents to be interviewed.
3.5 Data collection methods

Both primary and secondary data were collected.

The Secondary data was collected from relevant books, journals, magazines and the Internet. Primary data was used to determine what consumers and organisations perceived to be quality service and established whether there existed any gaps on perceived quality service.

The survey method was used to collect data and respondents were asked questions revolving around what they perceived to be quality service.

The questionnaires were structured in a way as to get specific information from the respondents.

Some questionnaires were pretested using a few customers and organisational heads.

Research assistants were used to collect data from various Internet Service Providers and individual respondents. The research assistants were initially trained on how to administer the questionnaire.

3.6 Operational definitions.

To determine the customer and the organisation perception of quality service and whether any gaps existed, the variables summarised by Kotler (1997) were operationalised. These variables included reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles.

Elements considered in each dimension:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Dependable service such as performing the service in the designated time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accurate service such as accuracy in billing, opening accounts and keeping records correctly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responsiveness  Providing prompt service
Calling customers back quickly.

Assurance  Knowledgeable employees on their services.
Polite, respective, considerate and friendly employees.

Empathy  Giving customers individualised attention
Easy accessibility on phone.
Convenient hours of operation.

Tangibles  Good reception area and office space.
Good groomed personnel.
Good equipments.

The five variables were considered representative of customer service issues raised in the literature review.

Respondents were asked to specify the importance of the variables and this was assessed as follows:

- The scores on both 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were taken to represent dissatisfaction with quality service and negative attitude towards the service.

- The scores on neither 'agree nor disagree' were taken to represent indifference, neutral or noncommittal to the quality of service.

- The scores on both 'agree' and 'strongly agree' were taken to represent satisfaction with the quality service and a positive attitude towards the quality of service.

These variables were considered to be representative of the most quality service issues raised throughout in the literature review.

The respondents were asked to specify the importance of the five variables and scores were put together to represent negative, neutral or positive perception of service quality.
The perceptions were then analysed to see if there existed any gaps between the customer and organisation perception of quality service and recommend any strategies for closing the gap.

3.7 Data analysis techniques.

The data was analysed using percentages. Strongly Disagree and Disagree were taken to mean negative score, Neither Disagree nor Agree were taken to mean neutral and Strongly Agree and Agree were taken to mean positive attitude towards the tested determinants of quality service.

These techniques indicated what the two groups of respondents perceived to be determinants of quality service.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The researcher interviewed 440 individual respondents from 22 operational Internet Service Providers in Kenya. Key Managers from each of the 22 Internet service providers were interviewed.

Data analysis was largely based on summaries of the experiences of the respondents. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data and where necessary the data has been summarized and presented by tables and percentages. The information generated from the interviews conducted is analysed and interpreted below.

DETERMINANTS OF SERVICE QUALITY.

It was felt necessary to determine the respondents’ attitudes towards service quality offered by the Internet Service Providers. A Likert Attitude Scale was used to determine the respondents’ level of agreement with certain statements. The scores were determined and presented in percentages. Strongly Disagree and Disagree were taken to mean negative score, Neither Disagree nor Agree were taken to mean neutral and Strongly Agree and Agree were taken to mean positive attitude towards the tested determinants of quality service.

The overall results of the investigation are as summarized and presented on table 1 and 2 for individual and company respondents respectively.
Table 1

DETERMINANTS OF SERVICE QUALITY

INDIVIDUAL RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to perform the promised service dependably (advice customers properly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to perform the promised service accurately</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to help customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to provide prompt service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable employees on services they offer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courteous and friendly employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISP credibility (reputation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring and individualized attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of the offices (proximity and accessibility)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of the physical facilities (reception area and office space)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising materials (commercials in T.V., brochures and contract forms)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>3024</td>
<td>1512</td>
<td></td>
<td>4840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>62.50</td>
<td>31.22</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Total score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to perform the promised</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
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<td>service dependably (advice customers properly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to perform the promised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service accurately</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to help customers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to provide prompt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable employees on services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they offer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courteous and friendly employees</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISP credibility (reputation)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring and individualized attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of the offices (proximity and accessibility)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of the physical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilities (reception area and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>office space)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising materials (commercials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in T.V., brochures and contract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forms)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>38.43</td>
<td>55.78</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall results from individual respondents shown in table 1 indicate a 93.72% degree agreement with the stated variables of determinants of quality service (when scores 4 and 5 are added), and a 0.83% degree of disagreement of variables customers perceived not to be quality service (when scores 1 and 2 are added). 5.43% of the individual respondents were indifferent to what variables they perceived to be quality service.

The overall results from companies indicated that 94.21% of the respondents agreed that the stated variables were determinants of service quality while 0.83% disagreed. 4.96% remained non-committal. The results are documented in table 2.

From the overall results of both individual and companies, we note that there is a very small gap in what is perceived to be determinants of service quality in Internet Service Providers. 93.72% of individual respondents and 94.21% of company respondents agreed on what they perceived to be the determinants of service quality in an Internet Service Provider. However, quite a percentage were non-committal.

Besides the overall position, specific results on the five determinants of service quality were as follows:
RELIABILITY

The determinant was tested by the questions on ability to perform promised service dependably and the ability to perform the promised service accurately. The results are summarized as below

Table 3 Individual respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability to perform the promised service dependably (advice customers properly)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to perform the promised service accurately</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>440</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>880</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>58.18</td>
<td>41.82</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from the individual respondents were such that all the respondents perceived reliability to be a critical determinant of service quality. It can be argued that all individual respondents agreed that reliability was a determinant of service quality. No respondents were noncommittal.
Table 4 Company Respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to perform the promised service dependably (advice customer properly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to perform the promised service accurately</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>47.73</td>
<td>49.97</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from company respondents differ from those of individual respondents in that 2.3% of the respondents were non-committal/indifferent. However 97.7% of the company respondents agreed that reliability is an important determinant of service quality.

**RESPONSIVENESS**

This determinant was tested with the questions on the willingness to help customers and willingness to provide prompt service.

As can be seen from table 9, 1.82% of the individual respondents were noncommittal as to whether responsiveness was a determinant of service quality. 98.18% of the respondents agreed that responsiveness was an important determinant of service quality.
Table 5 Individual respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to help customers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to provide prompt service</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>352</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>58.18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 summarizes the company respondents, which show that reliability is a determinant of services quality as all the respondents (100%) agreed to this.

Table 6 Company Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to help customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to provide prompt service</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>40.91</td>
<td>59.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ASSURANCE

The respondents were asked questions on knowledgeable employees on services they offer, courteous and friendly employees and ISP credibility/reputation to test assurance as a determinant of service quality.
The results are as shown in table 7 and 8.

Table 7 Individual respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable employees on services they offer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courteous and friendly employees</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISP credibility/Good reputation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>432</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>64.85</td>
<td>32.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from individual respondents indicated that 2.42% of the respondents were indifferent on whether assurance was a determinant of service quality. 97.58% of the respondents perceived assurance to be a determinant of service quality.

Table 8 Company respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable employees on services they offer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courteous and friendly employees</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISP credibility/Good reputation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
98.50% of the company respondents perceived assurance to be a determinant of service quality. 1.5% were indifferent.

EMPATHY

The determinant was tested by the question of caring and individualized attention.

3.64% of the individual respondents disagreed that this was a determinant of service quality. 21.80% were indifferent whereas 74.56% agreed that this was a determinant of service quality.

Results from company respondents indicated that 86.36% perceived empathy as a determinant of service quality. 9.10% were indifferent whereas 4.54% disagreed that empathy was determinant of service quality.

Table 9 Individual respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring and</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individualized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>54.56</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 Company respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring and</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individualized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>59.09</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TANGIBLES.

The questions asked to test this determinant were Location of the offices (proximity and accessibility), Appearance of the physical facilities (reception area and office space) and Advertising materials (commercials in T.V., Brochures and contract forms).

Results from individual respondents indicated that 89.1% perceived tangibles as an important determinant of quality service. 9.1% were indifferent and 1.8% perceived tangibles as unimportant determinant of service quality.

Table 11 Individual respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location of the offices</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(proximity and accessibility)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of the physical</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilities (reception area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and office space)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(commercials in T.V., Brochures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and contract forms)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>1320</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>68.48</td>
<td>20.62</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

86.4% of the company respondents perceived tangibles as a determinant of service quality. 12.1% were non-committal and 1.5% disagreed that tangibles are an important determinant of service quality.
Table 12 Company respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location of the offices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(proximity and accessibility)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of the physical</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilities (reception area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and office space)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising Materials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(commercials in T.V.,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochures and contract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forms)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>12.10</td>
<td>43.94</td>
<td>42.46</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual respondent were asked to rate their respective companies on how well they provide the service. As can be seen fro the table below, 93.85% were satisfied with the services their respective Internet service providers offered. 1.82% was indifferent and 4.33% were dissatisfied with the quality of service their ISP was offering.

Table 13 Rating of respective Companies on how well they provided the service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ISP performs the promised service dependably (advises customers properly)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>280</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ISP performs the promised service accurately</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>320</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ISP is always willing to help customers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>240</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ISP is always willing to provide prompt service</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ISP has knowledgeable employees</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>248</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff at the ISP are courteous and friendly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>280</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ISP has a</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>336</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Reputation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff offers a caring and individualized attention</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2224</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>3520</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percentage</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
<td>4.10%</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
<td>63.18%</td>
<td>30.67%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents who intend to change their current ISP.**

Individual respondents were asked to indicate whether they intended to change their current Internet Service Provider.

Some respondents intended to change their current ISP as indicated in Table 14 below.

**Table 14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

74.5% of the respondents did not intend to change their current ISP within three-months. 25.5% intended to change their current ISP.

**Reasons for respondents wanting to change their current ISP in the next three months.**

Some individual respondents had various reasons for wanting to change their current ISP.

As can be seen in Table 14, 75% of the respondents cited poor service as the reason for wanting to change. 25% cited high pricing as the reason for wanting to change their current ISP.

**Table 15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Service</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Pricing</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons for not wanting to change current ISP**

Some individual respondents did not intend to change their current ISP. They gave various reasons, which are summarized below.
Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Service</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good reputation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good pricing</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Good service was the most cited reason for respondents not wanting to change their current ISP. This was followed by good pricing.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher will in this chapter attempt to summarize and conclude the findings of the study. The researcher will also try to relate the findings to the research questions. The chapter will also cover recommendations, limitations and proposals for future study.

DISCUSSIONS

Both primary and secondary data was analyzed and the following facts were determined.

The first research question was to determine the customer’s perception of quality service in an Internet Service Provider. The researcher was able to come up with five dimensions, which included reliability, responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Tangibles. These dimensions were put into test and the results proved that customers perceived them to be important determinants of quality service.

100% of the individual respondents agreed that reliability was a critical determinant of quality service whereas 97.7% of the Company respondents did agree that reliability was a determinant of quality service. 98.18% and 100% of the individual and company respondents respectively perceived responsiveness as a determinant of service quality.

Assurance was also perceived to be a determinant of quality service as 97.58% and 98.50% of individual and company respondents respectively agreed that it was a determinant of quality Service.

The dimensions of Empathy and Tangibles were also perceived as critical determinants of quality service. For Empathy 74.56% and 86.36% individual and company respondents
respectively perceived it as a critical determinant of quality service. 89.1% and 86.4% of individual and company respondents perceived tangibles as a determinant of quality service. The results concur with those of Kotler (1997) who summarized the above dimensions as important determinants of quality service.

The results do agree with those of Adrian Palmers SERVQUAL technique who consolidated the 22-item questionnaire to cover the five dimensions of quality service.

The results of the research agree with those of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) who in their research found out that consumers use similar criteria in evaluating quality service regardless of the type of service. Though they used ten dimensions in their research, the ten dimensions were part of the five dimensions tested by the researcher.

Ruth Karau (1998) on her research on banking cited similar dimensions as determinants of Service quality.

Both the literature reviewed and the results of the investigation satisfied the first and second objectives, which aimed at determining the customer perception of quality service in an ISP and determining the organizations perception of quality service in an ISP.

Reactions captured in table 1 and 2 satisfy the requirements of third and fourth objectives which were to Establish if there exists a gap between customers and organizations perceptions of quality service and to Recommend strategies for closing the gap if any.

The overall results from individuals indicated that 93.72% of the total respondents perceived the tested dimensions as important determinants of quality service. 0.83% of the total respondents however disagreed that the tested dimensions were important determinants of quality service. 5.45% were neutral towards the tested dimensions of quality service. The researcher hence found out that the overall perception from individual respondents leaned
more towards positive perception of the tested dimensions as important quality service determinants.

The second research question was to determine what companies/ISPs perceived to be determinants of quality service in an ISP. The researcher found out that companies perceived the tested determinants of quality service as important. The overall results from companies indicated that 94.21% of the total respondents perceived the tested dimensions as important determinants of quality service. 0.83% totally disagreed whereas 4.96% were indifferent or non-committal. The overall perception from companies leaned more towards positive perception of the tested dimensions as important quality service determinants.

Between the two groups, there is a small gap in perception, as companies seem to have a higher perception of the tested dimensions compared to Individual respondents.

Arising from this gap, it may be worthwhile for companies to relook at those dimensions of service that individuals do not consider as determinants of service quality.

Substantial number of company and individual respondents was neutral and non-committal. This means that the level of awareness of what is considered as quality service is low.

The third research question was to determine the consumers perception of the services offered by their respective ISPs. The researcher found out that 4.33% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the services their respective ISPs were offering. 93.85% of the respondents were satisfied whereas 1.82% were non-committal or neutral.

The main area of dissatisfaction was the fact that the ISPs did not have courteous and friendly staff. This was followed by the ISPs being unable to perform the promised service accurately, the ISPs not having knowledgeable employees and the ISPs not having a good reputation.

Some respondents intended to change their current ISPs. The 74.5% of the respondents who wished to change their ISP cited poor service as the main reason for wanting to change. Pricing followed this.
The 25.50% of the respondents who had no intentions of changing their current ISP cited good Service as the major reason for not wanting to change.

These results confirm that quality service is key in Internet service provision as customers will either stay or move depending on the perceived service that they receive.

Out of the research questions addressed in this study, none of them have been tested before in ISPs.

The study came up with conclusive findings from both the individual and company respondents

CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken to determine the determinants of quality service in the ISP industry as seen from both the organizational and customers perspective. Five key dimensions were considered and included reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. Both individuals and company respondents perceived all the determinants as critical determinants of quality service.

The results of the research were that both individuals and companies perceived the tested dimensions as determinants of quality service.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

Some gaps on the perception of quality service from company and individual perspectives arose from the study. It is clear from the study that the ISPs need to take action to rectify the areas which customers were not satisfied with.

The ISPs also need to educate customers more on quality service aspects. Areas that ISPs may need to take action include

- Ensuring that they have courteous and friendly staff
- Ensuring that they perform the promised service accurately
- Ensuring that they have knowledgeable employees
• Ensuring that they have good reputation.

It is also clear from the study that consumer's change their ISP due to poor service and companies hence need to provide good service from the customer's point of view.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.

The following factor constrained the study.

• The study covered consumers of Nairobi and the generalizations based on the outcomes of the study may not be quite applicable to the whole of Kenya.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.

The concluded study covered individual consumers and senior managers of ISPs. It would be of interest if studies were undertaken to determine the determinants of quality service as perceived by the resellers of the services (info-kiosks, cyber cafés and e touches). Such a study would perhaps make one understand better what quality service in ISP is all about as the resellers are constantly in touch with the consumer and provide the service to the consumer directly.

Since the study considered 22 operational ISPs in Nairobi, it may be useful in future to carry out similar studies from different regions in Kenya. In this way one may be able to compare the results obtained from the selected region and those from Nairobi.
APPENDIX A

COVER NOTE.

USIU-A
P.O BOX 14634
NAIROBI

Dear respondent,

I am a student from USIU-A, currently undertaking a research on the determinants of service quality among the Internet Service Providers in Kenya.

You have been identified as one of the respondents due to the fact that you are an Internet service provider/user.

I would appreciate if you could spare some time from your busy schedule and provide information on the attached questionnaire.

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research.

Yours sincerely

MARY MUGO.
APPENDIX B

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY –AFRICA

QUESTIONNAIRE ONE: -FOR CUSTOMERS.

INSTRUCTIONS

You may not disclose your name

Please read the questions and answer as honestly as possible by ticking or writing the correct answers as appropriate.

1. Name (optional)

2. Sex. Please tick one.
   Male   Female

3. Please indicate your age

4. Please indicate your current Internet Service Provider

5. Is the current Internet Service Provider, your first ISP to subscribe with?
   Yes    No
   (If yes go to 6, if no go to 7)

6. What made you choose the ISP?

7. What made you change the ISP?

8. How long have you been with the current ISP?

9. Do you intent to change your ISP in the next three months?
   Yes    No
10. If your answer to question 9 is yes please indicate the reasons why.


11. If your answer in question 9 is No please indicate why you are not intending to change your current ISP.


12. Please indicate by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about what you perceive to be quality service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) Ability to perform the Promised service dependably (Advice customers properly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Ability to perform the Promised service accurately</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Willingness to help customers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) Willingness to provide Prompt service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v) Knowledgeable employees On services they offer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi) Courteous and friendly Employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii) ISP credibility (Good reputation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii) Caring and individualized Attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix) Location of the offices (Proximity and accessibility)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question(12) continued.

x) Appearance of the physical facilities
   (Reception area and office space)
   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

xi) Advertising materials
    (Commercials in T.V, brochures
     and contract forms)
   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

xii) Any other (specify)

Thank you for your cooperation
APPENDIX C.

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-AFRICA

QUESTIONNAIRE TWO: -FOR COMPANIES

INSTRUCTION

Please read the questions indicated below and answer as honestly as possible by ticking () or writing the correct answers as appropriate.

QUESTIONS.

1. Name of your company

2. Your designation or position in your company

3. What is the approximate number of you Internet subscribers? Please tick one
   I. Over 5000 subscribers
   ii Between 2000 and 5000 subscribers
   iii. Between 1000 and 2000 subscribers. 
   iv. Below 1000 subscribers.

4. What are some of the reasons why customers in your company cancel their Subscriptions? Please tick all that apply.
   i. Pricing
   ii. Poor customer service
   iii) Inadequate after sale service.
   iv) Lack of knowledgeable employees
   v) Poor reputation
   vi) Others (please specify)
5. Please rank the reasons given in question 4 above in terms of most important, starting with most important to the least important why customers cancel their services.

6. Please indicate by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about what you perceive to be quality service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) Ability to perform the Promised service dependably (Advice customers properly)</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Ability to perform the Promised service accurately</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Willingness to help Customers.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) Willingness to provide Prompt service</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v) Knowledgeable employees on services they offer.</td>
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<td>vi) Courteous and friendly Employees.</td>
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<td>vii) ISP credibility (Good reputation)</td>
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<td>viii) Caring and individualised attention.</td>
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<td>ix) Location of the offices. (Proximity and accessibility)</td>
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<td>x) Appearance of the physical Facilities (reception area and Office space)</td>
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<td>xi) Advertising materials (Commercials in T.V, brochures and contract forms)</td>
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<td>xii) Any other (specify).</td>
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APPENDIX D

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