

## EXPLORING THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE COMPONENTS IN SERVICE DELIVERANCE

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### **Abstract**

*Past studies have defined service quality as a form of attitude. Moreover, emerging theory and empirics in service quality have also related cognition and affect with service quality perceptions and behavioural intentions. This article integrates the findings of various researchers linking cognitive and affective components of service quality with behavioural intentions. The importance of cognition and affect components varied with the nature of service act, gender and nationality.*

### **Introduction**

Changing customer demands and increasing competition are forcing firms to cut loose from the traditional customer satisfaction paradigm and adopt proactive strategies (Kadampully 1998; Mahapatra et al., 2010). Hence, in today's world of tierce competition, quality service is a key to subsistence and success (Suresh chander et al. 2001; Aggogeri & Gentili, 2008; Rashid & Rokade, 2019). Excelling the market place on a sustained basis is impossible without delivering exceptional services which delights customer (Kadampully 1 998).

Quality is an exclusive and indistinct construct. Consumers expect quality today more than even before (Bamert and Vehrli 2005). Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) conceptualized service quality as a form of 'attitude', which results from a comparison of customers' expectations with their perception of the service performance. Expectations are, "pre-trial beliefs about a product or services". (Philip & Hazlette 1997). Most consumers enter a service encounter with some form of expectations, whether or not these expectations are met will have a significant bearing on perceived service quality. Perceived service quality can therefore be defined as the discrepancy between what the customer feels a service provider should offer (i.e. expectations) and perceptions of what the service firm actually offers. Compeau, Grewal and Monore (1998) revealed that consumers' affective as well as cognitive responses could influence quality perceptions (Chiu & Wu 2002) and consequently attitude formation and change. The present study intends to elucidate the relationship between service quality attitude and behavioral intentions.

### **Theoretical issues**

#### **Service quality**

Service quality is a global assessment based on a long term attitude (Philip Hazlett 1997) Cronin and Taylor (1992, 1994) claimed that "perceived quality is best conceptualized as an attitude" (Buttle, 1996), having a strong bearing on critical behavior outcomes. The quality constructs has been variously defined as value (Feigenbaum 1951), conformance to requirements (Crosby 1979), fitness for use (Juran et al. 1974), meeting customers' expectations (Parasuraman et al. 1985). However, because of the increased importance of the service sector, the most widely used definition of service quality is "to meet the customers' expectations" as defined by Parasuraman et.al. 1998.

## Attitude

Attitudes are complex cognitive processes (Luthans, 1973 pg121) which involve overall judgement of an object. It is a predisposition to respond in positive and negative way to someone or something in ones' environment. Focusing on specific people or objects attitudes are inferred from the things people say informally or in formal opinion polls or through their behavior (Schermerhorn et al. 2000 pp. 75).

Being good predictors of behavior, attitudes provide clues to a person's behavioral intentions; positive attitudes predict constructive behaviors while negative attitudes predict undesirable behaviours. Researchers have inconsistent viewpoints about the definition of attitudes as comprising of one, two or three- components. For ex, Thurstone and Chave (1929) opined attitudes as evaluative or affective responses to an attitude object; Zajone and Markus (1982) viewed attitudes as a two-component structure consisting of cognition and affect; Bruckler (1984) suggested, cognitive, affective and behavioral evaluations as three aspects of attitudes (Chiu 2002). Three basic components: informational comprising of beliefs and information, emotional comprising of person's feelings and behavioral involving a person's tendencies to behave in a particular way towards an object (Luthans 2002, pp. 24). That is, an attitude consists of what we know (the cognitive component), how we feel (the affect component) and what we plan to do (the behavioral component) about a stimulus or an object.

### Cognitive and Affective Components of Service Quality

Cognitions are basically bits of information and the cognitive processes involves the ways in which people process that information cognitive processes suggest that like computers, humans are information processors (Luthans 2002). The affect based component of attitude includes emotions, feelings or drives associated with an object, whereas the cognition based component includes beliefs, judgement or thoughts associated with an object. These two components are simultaneous predictors of behavior

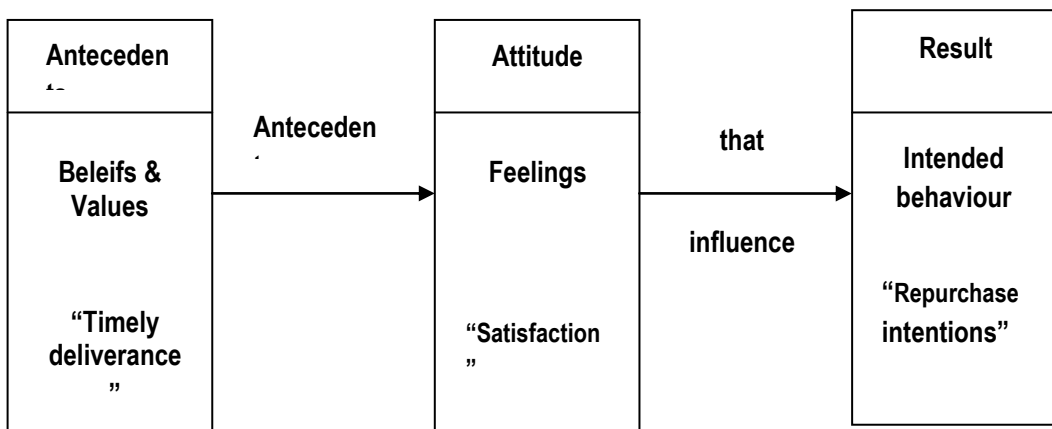
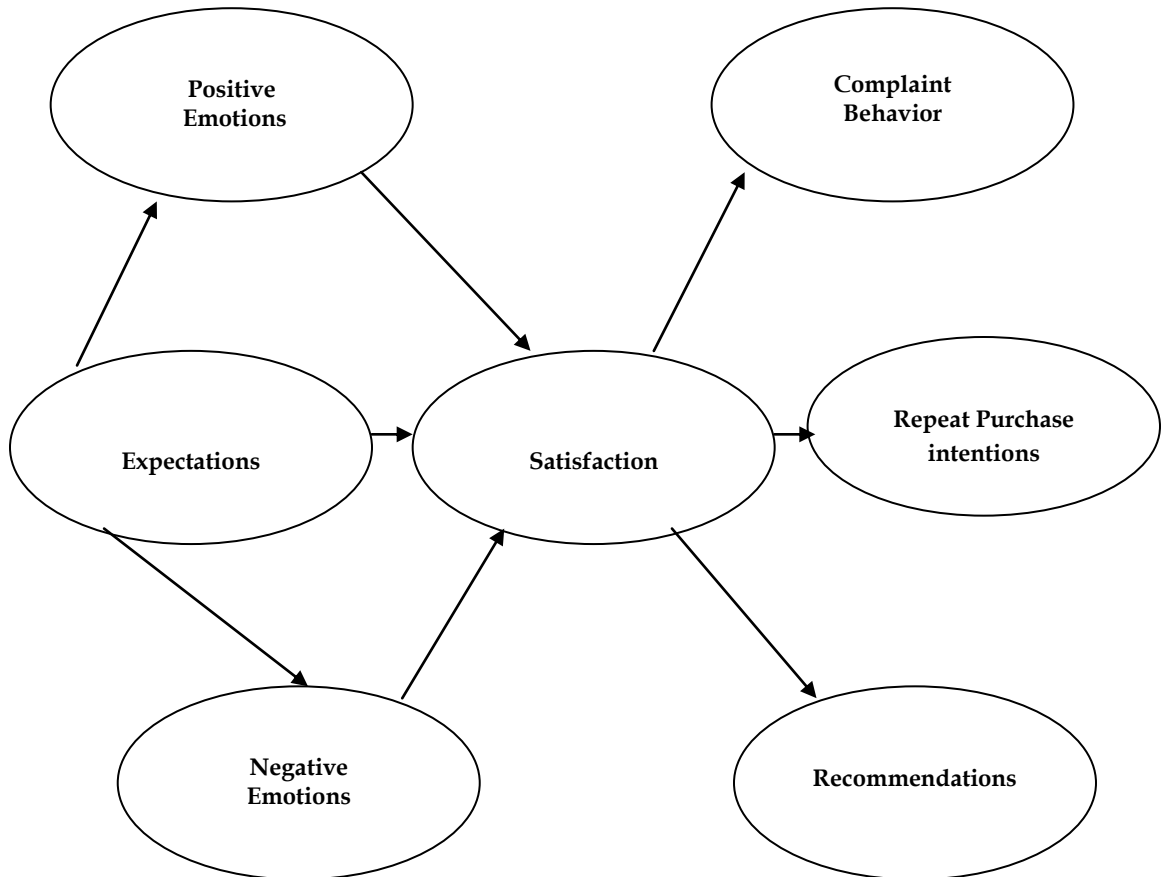


Figure shows attitude as accompanied by antecedents and results. The beliefs and values antecedents form the cognitive component of an attitude: the beliefs, opinions, knowledge, or information a person possesses. Beliefs represent ideas about them. Values can be defined as broad preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes (Schermerhorn et al. 2000, pp. 72).

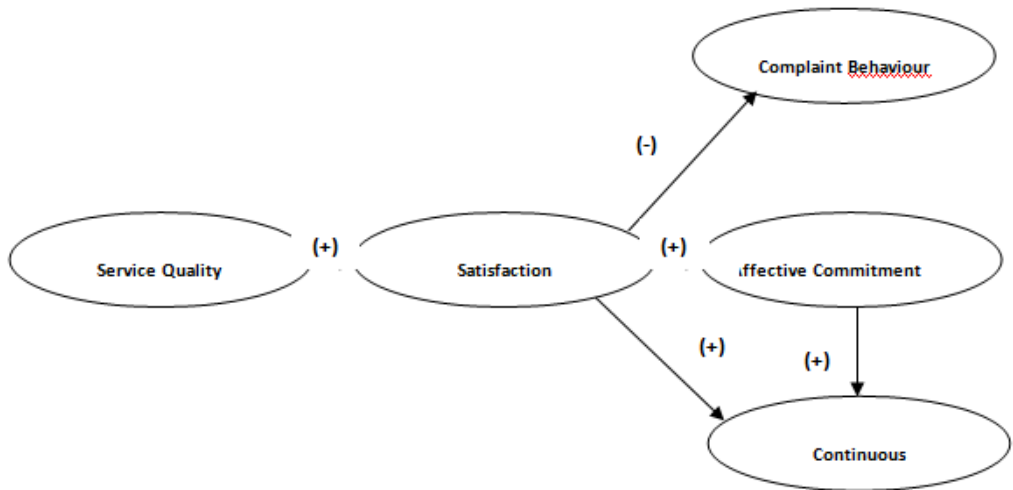
**Review of Literature:-**

The results of Mooradian and Oliver (1997) study supported consumption-based affect and cognitive judgements of confirmation/disconfirmation of expectations with satisfaction and linking satisfaction with complaints recommendations and repeat purchase intensions. (Figure – 1)

**Figure – 1**

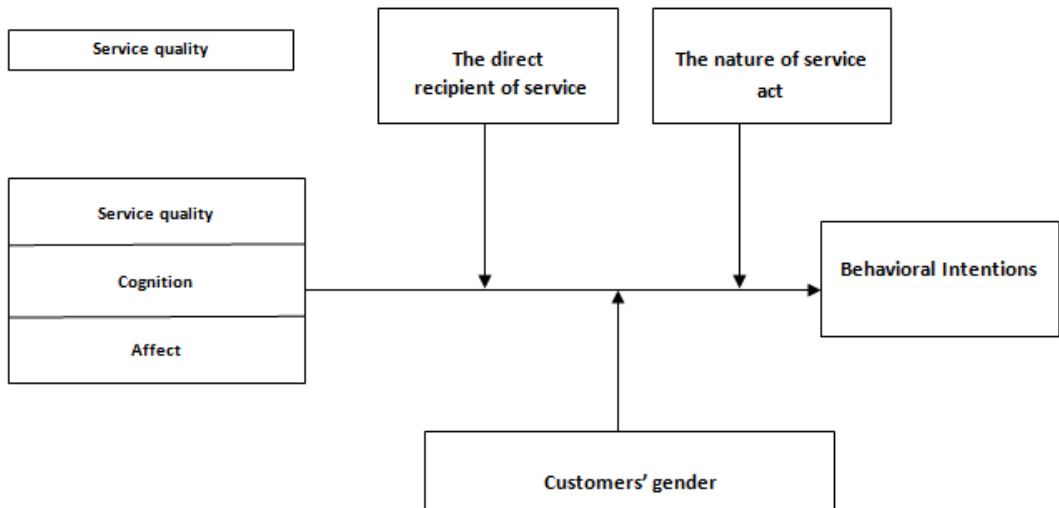


Shemwell et al. (1998) tested a model of relationships among service quality, satisfaction and selected behavioral outcomes by analyzing 156 questionnaires. Using doctor-patient relationships in Turkey as the study setting, results of a LISREL analysis suggest that the affective aspects of satisfaction have more impact than cognitive factors on patient's propensity to continue the relationship. The overall fit of the model was good (CFI=0.96), indicating that perceived service quality is positively related to perceived satisfaction. The study found perceived satisfaction to be positively related to affective and continuous commitment and negatively to complaint behaviour. (Figure – 2)



**Figure- 2**

Chiu (2002) indicated that marketers put more emphasis on improving the affective component of service quality in case of the services directed at people and providing intangible actions while in the services directed at things providing tangible actions marketers may pay much attention to improving the cognitive component of service quality to raise customer behavioural intentions. On gender differences the study indicated the importance of the affective component for female customers and cognitive component for male customers. (Figure — 3)



**Fig-3 The Framework of the Cognitive and Affective components of Service Quality**

Chiu and Wu (2002) empirically validated that cognitive and affective components of service quality positively correlate with the behavioural intentions by analyzing 440 questionnaires. Moreover, the affective service quality is more highly related to behavioural intentions that are cognition in females. Lorenzoni and Lewis (2004) investigated the attitudes and behaviours of airline front-line personnel in Britain and Italy in situations of service failure and recovery. The results show that respondents' attitude toward recovery differ by nationality.

### Conclusion

Consumers compare perceived product performance with some prior standard (expectation) and confirmation and disconfirmation of those expectations predict satisfaction (Mooradian and Oliver 1997). Improving service quality perceptions leads to higher satisfaction levels and ultimately, to a lessening of complaint behaviour, stronger emotional bonding, repeat purchase behaviour and recommendation to others. By making an actual improvement in service quality delivery, service providers can raise consumer perceptions of service quality. Prior studies have defined service quality as a form of attitude which contains both cognitive and affective component. Recent studies suggested that consumer's affective as well as cognitive responses influences quality perceptions and human behaviour. From the integration of prior literature, it was found that the affective component of service quality weighted high for the services directed at people and providing intangible actions whereas cognitive component was found more important in the services directed at things and providing tangible actions. Gender differences were also found with regard to the importance of components, citing the importance of affective component for female customers and cognitive component for male customers. Empirical validation of a positive relationship between the cognitive and affective components of service quality and behavioural intentions was found. Furthermore, influence of nationality on attitude was found to exist.

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