

# CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN SELECTED FASHION STORES IN SM MALL OF ASIA PASAY CITY

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**Abstract:** Customer satisfaction is a critical factor for customer experience and retention. It is also a competitive key in the tourism industry. Fashion sector is becoming popular in the Philippines since the fashion stores are now accessible and affordable. The five-service quality adapted by Cronin and Taylor was used in the analysis of the qualitative data gathered from two sets of interview guide questionnaire for the managers and shoppers. Moreover, purposive and snowball sampling was used as a sample technique and narrative analysis was used in the study. The results of this study were utilized for a customer satisfaction output to benefit the selected fashion stores in SM Mall of Asia. Furthermore, this research focuses on selected fashion stores in order to improve customer's satisfactory and shopping experience. It also aims to merge the fashion and tourism sector as a form of tourist attraction. Also, to introduce the existence of fashion tourism in the Philippines which is a rising concept in the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Customer satisfaction, SERVPERF, Fashion Tourism, Fashion stores, Pasay City.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is an instrument for a business establishment to improve the quality of its service and be a motivation for the company to check on the things that requires important attention. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is used to determine the strong and weak points of products and services. This can be link to the study of (Bernazzani, 2017) that customer satisfaction is used to assess if the customer is satisfied or not with the service, product, or experience.

Customer satisfaction is one of the main reasons why hospitality industry always set a good standard of their products and services. Since, if the customer satisfaction is not assessed, one cannot identify unsatisfied customers. Moreover, according to (Hose, 2017) that the foundation of any business' success is the customer that is why it is important for the customer to experience an excellent service. Because satisfied customers will repurchase the service or product of a business and more likely will develop product loyalty (Casella, et al., 2014).

Fashion is an art that anyone can wear and show off. As the world of tourism is not limited to a specific field, it can relate to anything and anyone. Hence, fashion can be related to tourism known as fashion tourism. Fashion tourism is an event where people go to unusual or new places to experience fashion. It is not only centered to simply buy apparels, accessories and cosmetics that are found in the usual place of the shoppers, but also the idea of people travelling to another place outside their usual environment to try and consume fashion.

As mention in the article of (The Balance Careers, 2018) Paris, Milan, New York and London are known for being the "Big Four" fashion capitals of the world. However, according to McKinsey Global Fashion Index, half of the sale from fashion industry such as apparel will be coming outside the Europe and North America region specifically Asia-pacific region in the next few years. Fashion industry has a big impact to tourism especially apparels because fashion apparel is continuously growing with a big market of Asian consumers, especially the Chinese people who are the big spender of luxury goods (Keller et. al., 2014). Country like China, has now many Chinese men that are also getting interested into clothing and fashion (Keller et. al., 2014). Moreover, the lifestyle of people evolves and so as their relationship with fashion shopping. Just the same as the growth of the fashion industry worldwide resulting to the increase of the number of

fashion stores. This has remained a challenge to businesses around the world. The question is, does the fashion shoppers still get the quality they deserve when consuming fashion?

In the Philippines, one of the biggest shopping centers is Divisoria, known for bargaining apparels and other products and called as “the mecca of value shopping” (Philippine Primer, 2016). Which has several malls such as, Tutuban shopping mall, 168 shopping mall, 999 shopping mall and others. Greenhills shopping center in San Juan is also a shopping destination with have great varieties of apparels and other products. Sellers in these shopping centers greet you warmly and they are eager to help you.

Pasay City has gained a reputable image needed for urban tourism to grow and developed, it has variety of business establishments including hotels, casino, airport, entertainment centers and shopping malls such as Solaire, Okada, City of Dreams, NAIA, Star City, Sm Mall of Asia and Newport mall. In which have been the subject to frequent visits from locals and tourists. In this regard, it has a reputation of being the pleasure district. Additionally, Pasay City is one of the trendy faces of Metro Manila. Moreover, having a lot of businesses leads to high population of people every day. Hence, malls are subject to, as a fashion destination that many people including tourists get interested (Images of Business Fashion, 2015). Additionally, there are a lot of fashion stores within Mall of Asia and around Pasay City. Also, there is an inflation rate of goods and services happening right now. These facts give the researcher the reason to conduct the study to evaluate the perceived service quality of the fashion stores to assess whether they still give the service the shoppers deserve even though there is a negative economic adjustment happening.

The Philippine government establish a national policy for tourism in the entire country. Furthermore, the study is guided with a legal basis of the Consumer Act of the Philippines or the RA no. 7394 Section V ARTICLE 102 which states that *Liability for Service Quality Imperfection- The service supplier is liable for any quality imperfection that renders that services improper for consumption or decreases their value, and those resulting from inconsistency with the information contained in the offer advertisement, the consumer being entitled to demand alternatively at his option.* The RA no. 7394 will be a great help because customer should assess on what particular aspect of the fashion apparel store need further improvement. Also, this legal basis is for the right and protection of every customers to ensure that the products and services is being observed and followed. As for the fashion apparel store they are liable to respond to them immediately. Since the output of the study is to propose a customer satisfaction program.

There are a lot of studies that evaluate the service quality of establishments such as restaurants, hotels, spas and other tourism related establishments. However, there are limited studies showing the perception of store managers and fashion shoppers to the service quality of fashion stores relating to fashion tourism in which considered as a new form of tourism.

Since, there are several authors support the idea of service quality is often associated with customer satisfaction therefore, service quality can boost customer satisfaction and help retain customers (Vieira, 2016; Yip et al., 2011). Therefore, for a business to continuously improve, service quality for every sector of the business must be investigated.

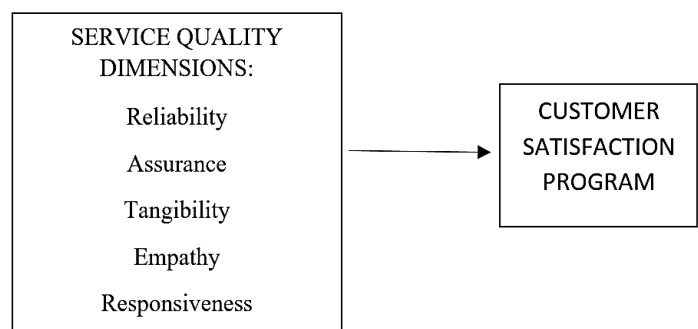


Fig. 1. Research Paradigm

The five service dimensions as proposed by (Parasuraman et al., 1988) incorporated in the SERVQUAL was adapted by (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) and developed SERVPERF, as a performance-based evaluation removing the criteria of customers’ expectation from SERVQUAL. Proper understanding of the five service dimensions would greatly impact fashion stores operators to improve their service quality, which in turn would lead to increased customer satisfaction. According to Petrit et al. (2018) that the concept of service quality is important if one wanted to understand the evolution of service quality and potential gaps in quality. As a reference, the study of Babić-Hodović, V., Arslanagić-Kalajdžić, M., Banda, A., & Sivac, A. (2019), assess the importance of performance analysis which is SERVPERF, to better improve

tourists' satisfaction in the hotel industry and also, for the hotel guests repurchase intentions and recommendations. The finding is that SERVPERF is relevant and good tool to use in assessing the quality perceived by their guests. Therefore, the researcher will be using the SERVPERF as the instrument for measuring service quality of the fashion stores in Mall of Asia of Pasay City.

The research problem/objective of this study is to evaluate the Service Quality of fashion apparel stores in Shopping Malls in Mall of Asia in Pasay City as it will serve as a basis to the proposed customer satisfaction program. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do the respondents assess the selected fashion apparel stores in terms of:
  - 1.1 Reliability
  - 1.2 Assurance
  - 1.3 Tangibility
  - 1.4 Empathy
  - 1.5 Responsiveness
2. What customer satisfaction program can be proposed based on the results of the study?

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

A questionnaire was used in this study as a research instrument in gathering and analyzing data needed in the study. On the other hand, the research design that the researcher used for this study was descriptive research.

The research participants of this study were the 5 shoppers and 5 s of the selected fashion stores (Bench, Dickies, Wrangler, Tribal, and Folded and Hung) in Pasay City. Since some of the respondents which are the managers, who chose written interview, they were given 2 to 4 weeks to write their answers. While for the shoppers, they decided to make a video interview. Hence, the researcher conducted the interview in cafe or in their own house. Before the respondents agreed to participate in the study, the researcher wrote a consent form attached to the interview guide questionnaires. The researcher personally gave it to the 5 shoppers and 5 managers. A non-probability specifically purposive and snowball sampling was used in this study. It is an effective and highly appropriate method considering that the sample frame of the study was chosen by the researcher, having the selected managers and shoppers as respondents.

Upon gathering data needed for this study, an appropriate ethical guideline and with the approval of the researcher's thesis adviser and the respondents was highly observed and followed to ensure that there was no conflict between the researchers, the fashion shopping stores, shoppers and the managers. The participants have their free will to whether they prefer to answer our questions or not an accurate information regarding the purpose of the study will be provided to the research participants after it has done. Also, the data gathering was determined by the preferred set up of the respondents. The interview was based upon schedule free time of the respondents. In data collection process, the researcher gave the managers ample amount of time to answer it properly. While for the shoppers' interview session, they were given time to think before they answered. This became effective to acquire accurate data in order to make this research possible. Moreover, the researcher used narrative analysis since the information gathered from the respondents were based on their experiences.

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Reliability**

The first area that was examined under reliability is that how does the fashion store employees perform error-free purchase transaction with cards. This was stated on the written interview, "When it comes to card for example, the customer will use credit card as a form of payment this is the time that we will ask for their valid ID and check if the signature in the ID and in the credit card is the same. Also, we need to check the expiry date of the card". It denotes that an error-free purchase transaction with cards can be achieved if the staff make sure that it was not from a fraud nor expired. In addition to that, most of the shoppers that the researcher interviewed used card since it is faster than by paying with money. The researcher also asked the shoppers if the fashion store employees perform error-free purchase transaction with cards. One of the shoppers stated that, "I think the transactions with the card can only be error-free depends on the customer's card. If the card will be decline or if the payment of the card is already overdue".

The second area examined about reliability is that, how does the fashion store employees update the price list of their products and services. Most of the employees answered that in order to update their products' prices this is possible via the internet in which connects to their head office. One of them stated that, "In order to update the prices of our items, especially if there is sale, our I.T. do it and we have something to connect to our headquarters client to update the prices". While for the shoppers, they are asked if the fashion store employees update the price list of their products and services and all of them says yes. One of the shoppers even stated that, "Yes, I think they regularly check their pricelist especially if there is a sale and if they have services that they would like to offer they would change too".

The next area examined about reliability is that, why does the fashion store need their merchandise available when the shoppers want it. Most of the employees answered that to reassure their customer that the item they wanted is available. One of them stated that, "To assure the customer that his/her item is readily available". While for the shoppers, they are asked if the fashion store merchandise is available when they want it. Most of them answered that there are times that the product is not available.

The last area examined about reliability is that, when the shoppers have a problem, how does the fashion store employees solve it. Most of the staff answered that they must properly address the shopper's problem. One of the staff answered, "Hear their complain and ask what the customer want or what is the problem, be patient when the customer is mad". As for the shoppers, most of them answered that the stuff would solve their problem. One of the shoppers stated that, "The first thing that they do is they ask first what is the problem then this is where they base their solution that they will make".

### **Assurance**

The first area that was examined under assurance is that, why is trustworthiness of employees important. All of the employees have the same reason why being trustworthy is important. It is because when you are a trusted employee then surely customers will come back to your store. Also, this may lead to having regular customers which is essential to build a good name in the industry. In which, stated by one of the store employees, "It is important because our sales depend on them if the customers will trust us, they will come back again to us and be our regular customer." While for the shoppers, the researcher asks them if the store employees are trustworthy enough and all of them answered yes.

The second area that was examined under assurance is that, how does the fashion store employees make the shoppers feel safe during transaction. Three out of five employees have the same answer in which they emphasize the transparency during transaction. An explanation given by one of the employees which stated that, "For the customer to feel safe, we do eye to eye contact and when it comes to money, we count in front of them. When it comes to card transactions, we do it in front of them. We always get their I.D. as a reference". As for the shoppers, most of them said yes. To answer this question, does the fashion store employees make you feel safe during transaction. One of the shoppers stated that, "Uhm... yes, I think for me, when it comes to malls it is really safe to do transactions there since everything is recorded no one can escape or because there is cctv".

The next area examined about assurance is that, how does the fashion store employees answer the inquiries or the questions of fashion shoppers. Most of them says that they answer their customer inquiries by giving them good information about their products in a good manner. One of them stated that, "When the customer has inquiries, we should answer them in a nice way and smile". While most of the shoppers agrees that the employees answer their inquiries when asked.

The last area examined about assurance is that, why is it important to the fashion store employees that the fashion store is in the safe and friendly place. Most of them says that it should be in a safe place in order for them to gain regular customers. One of the employees stated that, "So that many customers will come or to attract them to buy". As for the shoppers, they are asked if the store is in safe and friendly place and most of them and all of them says yes.

### **Tangibility**

The first area that was examined under tangibility is that, how does the fashion store employees maintain the store clean, attractive and has convenient fitting rooms. One of the employees explained that, "It is important to clean the store and fix the items every day". While the shoppers asked if the fashion store employees maintain the store clean, attractive and has convenient fitting rooms. Most of them agrees that the stores are clean, attractive and has convenient fitting room. However, one of the shoppers stated that, "Yes, it is. But there are times that they would forget to remove the clothes that the first shopper used in the fitting room. Although, all in all it is okay and clean".

The second area that was examined under tangibility is that, why does the appearance of fashion store's employees should be clean and neat. All of the employees answered that it should be clean and neat in order to attract customers in their

shop. One of them states that, "So that many customers will visit our store". Then for the shoppers, they answer this question, does the appearance of fashion store's employees clean and neat. All of them said yes, in which one of them states that, "Yes, I think they are neat and clean."

The next area that was examined under tangibility is that why does the materials in the fashion store for example, shopping bags, brochures, magazines & loyalty cards should be visually appealing. One of the employees said that some of their customers love the paper bag of tribal it is one of the reasons why our customers buy our products. One of the employees also stated that, "To attract them and always love our products." It was then supported by the shoppers, they answered that it is visually appealing to attract customers. As one of them says that, "Yes, for me they are visually appealing since they are using designs that attracts customers and some of them use eco-friendly and recyclable materials".

The last area examined about tangibility is that, why does modern equipment needed in purchasing transaction. Most of them says that for better and faster transaction. One of them stated that, "For fast transaction". As for the shoppers they all agree that modern equipment is needed for transactions. One of the shoppers stated that, "I think for me yes, because if the technology used is outdated then it will be difficult to accommodate large volume of customers. While if they used modern technology then the transaction process will be faster".

### **Empathy**

The first area that was examined under empathy is that how does the employees handle complaints. All of the employees answered that they should be calm and talk to the shoppers nicely. As one of them stated that, "If there is a complaint, you need to be calm and you should smile while you are talking to your customer and also, ask them what is the reason behind their angeriness". Additionally, the shoppers answer the question of does the fashion store employees handle complaints well. Most of them says not all the time. It was explained by one of the shoppers, she stated that, "Sometimes, they have this mood that they do not want to assist customers especially if there are too much people in the area. So, when they cannot handle the situation, they ask help from their supervisor or manager for example if I am already mad the supervisor is the one who gives solution to my problem." As to what the researcher observed, this happens when there is a big sale happening or during Christmas season, hundreds of people are in the SM department.

The second area examined about empathy is that, why is it important for the fashion store employees to be consistently courteous with shoppers. Most of them answered that it is important to be consistently courteous towards customer for them to be comfortable and they will continuously trust their brand. One of them stated, "For them to be comfortable while inside the store". While the shoppers asked if the employees are consistently courteous with them and they all said yes. One of them even stated that, "Yes, I think they are, that is their training, every customer that goes inside their area they greet their customers".

The next area examined about empathy is that, how important does listening to the shoppers' demands for the store's employees and why. Some of the employees answered that to provide their customer's needs. While one of them says that for avoidance of complaints. Also, this is stated by one of them, "To provide what the customer needed properly".

Lastly, the employees asked about how does the fashion store employees give individual attention to the shoppers. They all have different answers and one of them stated that, "Whoever is the first customer they will get assisted first then if there are many of customers it is good to seek help from the other staff". While to shoppers, they are asked to answer this question, does the fashion store employees give individual attention to the shoppers. Most of them answered yes, but not all the time. In which one of the shoppers stated that, "For me, yes, although if there are many shoppers for example it is sale, then there is a chance that not all of us will get accommodated or the process/services is not that fast". This is also observed by the researcher, because SM department store is a one-stop shop in all SM malls here in the Philippines. Furthermore, you will see different products specially fashion accessories, footwears and clothing.

### **Responsiveness**

The first area that was examined under responsiveness was about how genuine does the fashion store employees in providing services for the shoppers and why is it important. One of them stated, "The information that we tell to the customer should be true in order for them to come back and buy again". While to shoppers, they are asked about this question, if the fashion store employees are genuine in providing services and most of the shoppers answered yes.

The second area that was examined under responsiveness was about why is it important to provide services in a fast-paced manner. Most of the employees answered that it is necessary in order to satisfy the customer. One of them stated that, "So that the customer won't get impatient and they do not need to find it in other brands ". Furthermore, the shoppers respond



to this question, do they provide services in fast-paced manner and most of them confidently said yes. In which it was elaborated by one of them and stated that, “If there are a few shoppers, yes, but if there are many shoppers then the process is slow”.

The third area that was examined under responsiveness was about how does the fashion store employees show willingness to help the fashion shoppers. Most of them answered that in order to show willingness to help the shoppers by asking them what they need. This is stated by one of the employees, “By asking them their needs and we offer them their needs.” As for the shoppers, they asked about does the fashion store employees show willingness to help them. One of them stated that, “Yes, sometimes the sales lady and the sales man is the one that approaches the customer first, so I think that they are willing to help the customers of what they need”. What the researcher observed is that, most of the employees approaches potential customers especially if they see the customer that is well-dressed.

The fourth area that was examined under responsiveness was about why does the fashion store employees should be always available to answer all the fashion shoppers’ questions. One of them stated that, “To convince the customer to buy”. The shoppers were asked if the employees are always available to answer all their inquiries and most of them said yes but it depends on the situation. One of them stated that, “Yes, however there are times that if there are a large number of shoppers, they cannot answer all the questions of their shoppers”.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The first objective of this study is to assess the service quality in selected fashion stores in SM department and help improve their services they provide to the shoppers. Based on the data gathered and from the observation, the researcher found out that employees conduct measurements in order to give an error-free transaction when dealing with cards. This can lessen the waiting time of the shoppers in the cashier of SM Department store since Mall of Asia is one of the popular destinations in the Philippines. The researcher also observed the employees on how they communicate with their customers which turns out that some of them needs to be train for communication skills since they usually ask help to their immediate supervisor which can be solved if they just listen carefully to the customer’s problem. Additionally, the researcher saw the need of proper posture. It must maintain throughout the day since as what the researcher observed from the selected stores, people are everywhere and this is the reason why the employees need good posture. The researcher also found out that all of the employees agrees that in order to make less scene in a bad situation they should be calm and respectful when they communicate to the customer. This way, the customer will feel that they are important whether if they are first time customer or a regular one.

The over-all result of the study is that employees do their job enough to satisfy the customers. It gets supported by the customers that the researcher conducts with. Although, there are some areas that needs improvements. In this case, the researcher made a customer satisfaction program to answer the second statement of the problem that is, what customer satisfaction program can be proposed based on the results of the study? Below are the ways in order to improve their service towards customer’s satisfaction.

#### Customer Satisfaction Program

##### A. Employee Performance Scorecard

Employee Performance Scorecard					
Employee Name: _____			Date: _____		
Department: _____			Over-all scorecard: _____		
Supervisor: _____					
Performance Evaluation	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Comments
Job Knowledge					
Work Quality					
Work Consistency					
Communication Skills					
Technical Skills					
Initiative					
Attitude					
Punctuality					
<b>TOTAL</b>					

*By signing this form, you confirm that you have discussed this review in detail with your supervisor. Signing this form does not necessarily indicate that you agree with this performance evaluation.*

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Fig. 2

B. Fashion shopper Satisfaction and Communication Skills Seminar

OBJECTIVE	WHO	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	HOW
Establishing performance goals of the store employees in the selected fashion stores	The store employees of the 5 selected stores in SM Moa	Seminar regarding Fashion Shopper Satisfaction and Communication Skills seminar	These 5 selected stores will hold the seminar quarterly	The seminar will hold in the activity area of SM Mall of Asia	This is batch by batch basis. Also, this will be in alphabetical order using the name of the Brands. After that, check the availability of the place and of the guest speakers. Then, prepare all the materials needed for the seminar. Impart to all the store employees ahead of time about the seminar.

Fig. N.

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