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Service Quality is Store-Contingent: Evidence from Organized Supermarkets in Mysuru, India

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Abstract: This study examines whether the association between retail service-quality dimensions and customer satisfaction is consistent across organised supermarket chains in an Indian tier-two city.

A cross-sectional survey covered 250 shoppers, with 50 respondents from each of five supermarkets in Mysuru: Big Bazaar, More, Easy Day, Loyal World and Reliance Mart. Convenience sampling and a structured questionnaire were used. The instrument operationalised the Retail Service Quality Scale dimensions—physical aspects, reliability, personal interaction, problem solving and policy—and four store attributes: product, location, price and promotion. The archived analysis used descriptive statistics, reliability assessment, one-sample t-tests, analysis of variance, Levene tests and Tukey HSD procedures.

The dimension-level significance pattern differs materially across chains. All five dimensions are associated with satisfaction at Loyal World, compared with four at Big Bazaar, three at Reliance Mart and two each at More and Easy Day. Policy is significant in every chain, whereas personal interaction is significant only at Big Bazaar and Loyal World. Product, location, price and promotion are reported as significant across all five stores.

Rather than treating retail service quality as a universal bundle, the study identifies a store-contingent configuration. For managers, the implication is diagnostic: common standards are appropriate for policy, while investments in layout, fulfilment, employee interaction and recovery should be prioritised by chain.

Keywords: Retail service quality, customer satisfaction, supermarkets, RSQS, organised retail, India, Mysuru

1. Introduction

Organised grocery retail combines tangible infrastructure with repeated human and process encounters. Customers assess the layout and visual environment, whether merchandise and records are dependable, how employees interact, how problems are resolved, and whether store policies reduce the effort and risk of shopping. These elements are captured by the Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS), developed specifically for retail settings in which goods and services are experienced together (Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz, 1996). The central empirical problem is not whether service quality matters in the abstract, but whether the same dimensions matter equally in different chains serving the same urban market. Service-quality models often imply transferable dimensional structures (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988), while retail evidence suggests that format and context alter the salience of individual dimensions

(Mehta, Lalwani and Han, 2000; Siu and Cheung, 2001). India provides a demanding setting: formal supermarket systems coexist with customers' expectations of accessibility, personal attention, value and assortment. This paper therefore asks: Which RSQS dimensions are associated with satisfaction in each supermarket, and which effects generalise across chains? It also examines whether product, location, price and promotion retain broad relevance. The contribution is a matched, within-city comparison in which each chain contributes the same number of respondents, reducing the risk that chain comparisons merely reproduce unequal sample sizes.

2. Conceptual background and hypotheses

2.1. Retail service quality as a multidimensional capability

RSQS represents retail service through physical aspects, reliability, personal interaction, problem solving and policy (Dabholkar et al., 1996). Physical aspects concern facilities, appearance and navigability. Reliability captures promise fulfilment, first-time accuracy and merchandise availability. Personal interaction reflects employee knowledge, assurance, responsiveness and courtesy. Problem solving concerns returns, exchanges and complaint resolution. Policy covers assortment quality, payment, parking and operating convenience. Satisfaction is a post-consumption evaluation and is conceptually distinct from perceived service quality, although the constructs are closely related (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). In supermarkets, a breakdown in any one dimension may become salient at the moment of use; however, store format, routines and customer composition can change which breakdowns are consequential.

2.2. Store attributes and contextual heterogeneity

Product, location, price and promotion complement service delivery by shaping utility before and during the visit. A store may compensate for modest interpersonal service through availability and convenience, whereas another may depend on staff-assisted navigation and recovery. Accordingly, a pooled “net effect” can conceal operationally important chain differences.

- H1: Retail service-quality dimensions are significantly associated with customer satisfaction.
- H2: The pattern of significant service-quality dimensions differs across supermarket chains.
- H3: Product, location, price and promotion are significantly associated with customer satisfaction.

Table 1: Reported p-values for RSQS dimensions by supermarket

Dimension	Big Bazaar	More	Easy Day	Loyal World	Reliance Mart
Physical aspects	.018	.375	.001	<.001	<.001
Reliability	.006	.008	.022	.002	.133
Personal interaction	.025	.216	.700	<.001	.603
Problem solving	.002	.318	.890	.012	.001
Policy	.008	.015	<.001	.007	.009

Note: Values reproduce the source tables; “.000” is reported here as < .001.

The original narrative describes Easy Day as having physical aspects, reliability and policy associated with satisfaction. This agrees with the p-value table (three of five), despite a separate summary sentence that understates the count. The table is treated as controlling evidence.

4.2. Supermarket attributes

For product, location, price and promotion, the source study reports significance in every chain (all $p < .001$ in the final hy-

3. Method

3.1. Design, setting and sample

The study used an exploratory-descriptive, cross-sectional design. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire that was pre-tested in a pilot study. The analytical sample comprised 250 supermarket shoppers in Mysuru, Karnataka, with 50 respondents recruited at each of Big Bazaar, More, Easy Day, Loyal World and Reliance Mart. Respondents were selected by convenience sampling. Because the source study does not establish probability selection or temporal precedence, the results are interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

3.2. Measures and analysis

The questionnaire covered the five RSQS domains and customer satisfaction, alongside product, location, price and promotion attributes and demographic characteristics. The archived study reports use of Cronbach’s alpha, means and standard deviations, one-sample t-tests, ANOVA, Levene’s test and Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons in SPSS. The present paper synthesises the reported store-level p-values at $\alpha = .05$; it does not re-estimate models because respondent-level data were not available.

4. Results

4.1. Cross-store significance pattern

Table 1 shows a pronounced store-contingent pattern. Policy meets the .05 criterion in all five stores. Physical aspects are significant in four; reliability and problem solving in three each; and personal interaction in two. Loyal World shows the broadest configuration, with all five dimensions significant. The pattern supports H1 and H2, but also shows why a single pooled statement is insufficient.

pothesis table). This supports H3. The result should be read as evidence of association, not effect magnitude: the archived tables do not provide comparable coefficients or confidence intervals.

5. Discussion

The principal finding is configurational: service quality is not a uniform recipe across stores operating in the same city. Policy

is the stable baseline, while personal interaction is the least generalisable dimension. This does not imply that interaction is unimportant in absolute terms; rather, its statistical association with satisfaction depends on the chain's operating model and customer experience. The finding extends RSQS research by shifting attention from scale-wide significance to the portability of individual dimensions across matched retail settings.

The contrast between Loyal World and More is especially instructive. At Loyal World, every domain is implicated, suggesting complementarities among facilities, fulfilment, employees, recovery and policy. At More, only reliability and policy meet the criterion. A standardised improvement programme would therefore misallocate resources: identical investments would confront different binding constraints.

Table 2: Store-level diagnostic interpretation

Store	Significant domains	Reported configuration	Managerial reading
Big Bazaar	4/5	Physical aspects, reliability, personal interaction, problem solving, policy	Broad service configuration; maintain interpersonal and recovery execution.
More	2/5	Reliability, policy	Prioritise dependable fulfilment and policy convenience; test physical and interaction redesigns before scaling.
Easy Day	2/5	Physical aspects, reliability, policy*	The source summary labels three dimensions, although its hypothesis table gives three significant <i>p</i> -values; interpret as 3/5.
Loyal World	5/5	All five dimensions	System-wide quality management is justified because every domain is associated with satisfaction.
Reliance Mart	3/5	Physical aspects, problem solving, policy	Emphasise facilities, recovery and policy; reliability and interaction are not significant in the reported model.

Table 3: Product Vs Different stores

Attribute	Big Bazaar	More	Easy Day	Loyal World	Reliance Mart
Product	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Location	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Price	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Promotion	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

The universal significance of product, location, price and promotion indicates that service design cannot be separated from the retail offer. Service-quality initiatives should be evaluated alongside assortment, access, value and communication. This aligns with the view that retail quality is experienced through both merchandise and service encounters rather than through interpersonal service alone.

6. Implications

6.1. Managerial implications

First, retailers should use policy as the cross-chain control layer: convenient operating hours, payment acceptance, parking and merchandising standards warrant consistent monitoring. Second, each chain should maintain a dimension-level satisfaction dashboard rather than one aggregate service score. Third, managers should stage interventions. Stores with weak physical-aspect associations should diagnose navigation, facilities and visual cues; stores with reliability effects should audit availability and transaction accuracy; stores with problem-solving effects should redesign returns and complaint closure. Fourth, product, location, price and promotion should remain in the same performance review because they are significant in every store.

6.2. Research implications

Future retail-service studies should formally test measurement invariance before comparing chain means, and then estimate a

multigroup structural model with effect sizes, confidence intervals and controls. A probability-based, larger sample should include kirana stores, newer digital-first formats and multiple Indian cities. Longitudinal or field-experimental designs are needed to establish whether operational changes cause satisfaction gains.

6.3. Limitations and robustness

The convenience sample limits population inference. Each store contributes only 50 respondents, reducing power and precision. The design is cross-sectional and self-reported. Multiple dimension-by-store tests raise the family-wise false-positive risk, and the source analysis does not report multiplicity adjustment, effect sizes, confidence intervals or respondent-level data. One-sample *t*-tests establish departure from a benchmark, not a causal "impact." The demographic tables also contain several *p*-values below .05 despite an omnibus narrative accepting the null; this paper therefore excludes a blanket demographic conclusion. These constraints are material and should be addressed before journal submission by recovering the raw dataset and re-estimating the models.

7. Conclusion

Across five organised supermarkets in Mysuru, customer satisfaction is linked to different combinations of retail service-quality dimensions. Policy generalises; other dimensions are chain-dependent. Product, location, price and promotion re-

main significant across the portfolio. The strategic implication is simple but consequential: standardise the baseline, diagnose the store, and invest where the local service system constrains satisfaction.

Submission note — Before submission, insert author identities, ethics approval and consent details, funding/conflict statements, CRediT roles and the journal-compliant data-availability statement.

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