Measuring Perceived Service Quality Using SERVQUAL Method: A Study on Selected Restaurants in Dhaka City

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Abstract: In Bangladesh restaurant business is becoming popular day by day with the presence of world class restaurant chains. As a result, there grows an increased interest to measure the service quality of those restaurants. This study investigates the perceived service quality of different restaurants in Dhaka south city. A structured questionnaire of 22 items developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) of the SERVQUAL model proposing a five-dimensional construct of perceived service quality - tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy -was used to measure the perception of customers regarding the service quality of different restaurants. Based on the responses it was found that tangibility and reliability of the restaurants satisfied the customers whereas the rest of the factors, responsiveness, assurance and empathy failed and needs to pay attention for improvement.

Keywords: Restaurants, SERVQUAL, Perceived Service Quality.

Introduction

The restaurant business has become one of the most lucrative businesses in the world (Sabir, Irfan, Akhtar, Pervez, & Rehman, 2014). In recent years the importance of providing quality services in restaurants has attracted attention of restaurant administrators and researchers across the world and several researchers suggested that food quality and physical environment are the major components along with service (Dulen, 1999; Susskind & Chan, 2000). Gilbert et al. (2004) pointed that the critical factor to succeed in a highly competitive restaurant business is to satisfying customers through attracting them with high quality food and dedicated service. Ryu and Han (2008) specified, service quality is believed a key factor in satisfying customers and in increasing income along with increasing market share. Ha and Jang (2010) found that customers perceive and assess services based on restaurant performance during delivering service. Saravanan and Rao (2007) detailed that service organizations have started to focus on the customer perceptions of service quality because it helps in developing strategies that lead to customer satisfaction.

Like rest of the world, restaurant business in Bangladesh is also becoming a significant player, growing fast especially in Dhaka city, to lead the service sector (Islam, Mustafi, Ahmed, Rashid, Kabir, & Nazrul, 2018). Islam et al. (2018) detailed that international franchises like KFC, Pizza Hut and Nando's, with the reputation of providing quality services, along with local business group, and individuals are satisfying the needs of customers with varied products and services in many cities of Bangladesh. Despite the fastest growth, a little attention has been paid by researchers on measuring service quality of restaurant business. As SERVQUAL model, introduced by Parasuraman et al. (1985),

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was a common method followed by most of the researcher to measure service quality (Brooks, Lings, & Botschen, 1999; Chaston, 1994; Edvardsson, Tomasson & Ovretveit , 1997; Lings & Brooks, 1998; Reynoso & Moore, 1995; Young & Varble, 1997; Sahney, Banwet & Karunes, 2004), an attempt has been made to measure any actual or perceived gaps between customer expectations and perceptions of the service offered by the restaurants in Dhaka city through using this method.

Purpose of the Study

The prime objective of the study is to measure the perceived service quality of restaurants in Dhaka city. The study also aimed at providing suggestions to improve service quality of the restaurants if found any discrepancies.

Review of Literature

Service Quality

In defining and measuring service quality, there is a considerable debate in the research literature (Wisniewski, 2001). Service quality is commonly defined as the extent to which a service meets customers' expectations (Lewis & Mitchell, 1990; Dotchin & Oakland, 1994; Asubonteng, McCleary, & Swan, 1996; Wisniewski & Donnelly, 1996). If expectations exceed performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory and hence customer dissatisfaction occurs (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Lewis and Mitchell, 1990). Perceived service quality refers to the extent to which an organization can successfully serve the purpose of the customers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1990). The perceived or cognitive value of service is determined by the customers. Basically, they perceive the value of service based on their previous experience with the service delivered (Markovi & Raspo, 2010). Perceived service quality is influenced by customers' expectations, service delivery process and service outcome (Ghobadian, Speller, & Jones, 1994). Customers' favorable and unfavorable experience, as well as their positive and negative emotions may have a significant impact on the perceived service quality (Edvarsson, 2005). Service quality is basically denoted as a function of customers' expectation of the service to be provided compared with their perception of the actual service experience (Gronorous, 1984). Customers'' expectations of the service to be provided depend upon some factors such as their previous experience, image or goodwill of the organizations, price of the service etc. (Godolja & Spaho, 2014).

Service Quality Gap Model

The service quality gap model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1999; Luk and Layton, 2002) identified following seven gaps (Figure 1). According to this model, the gap between consumers' expectations and perceptions are a function of several other gaps in the service delivery process (Mangold and Emin, 1991). SERVQUAL model of Parasuraman et al. (1991) uses the determinants methods of service quality and gap theory.

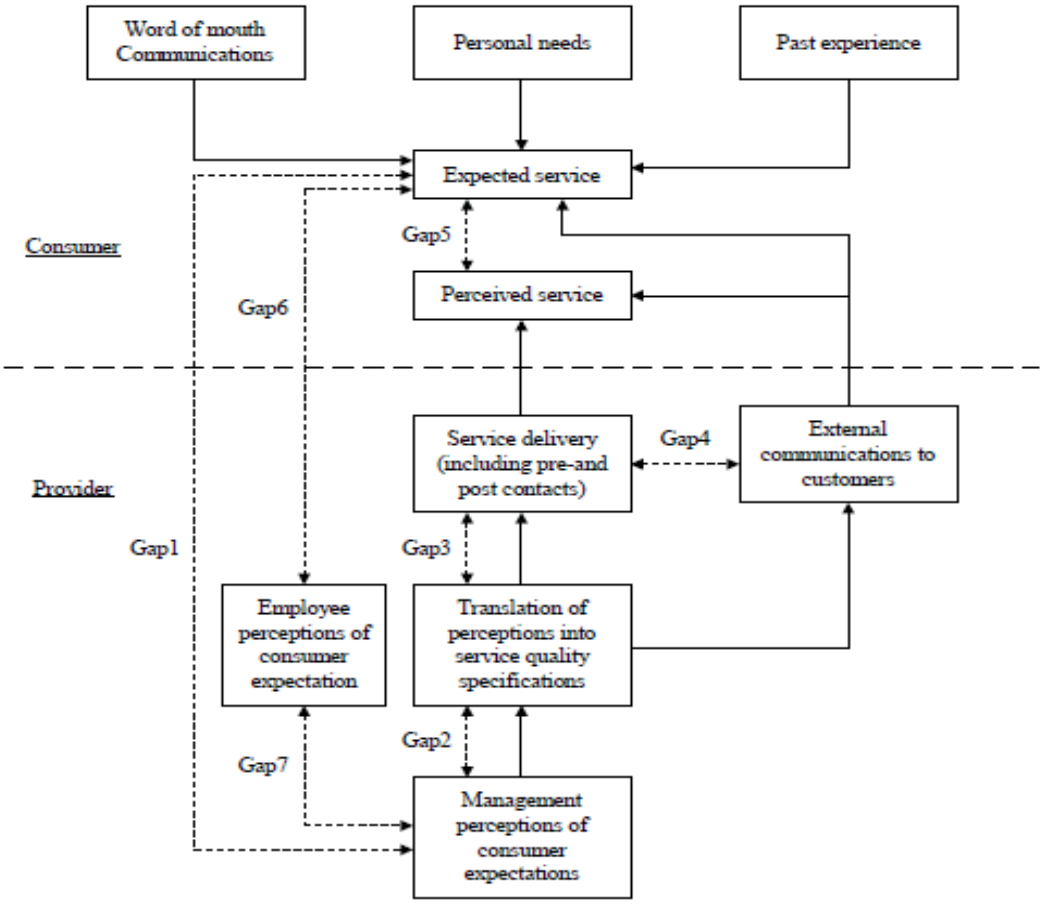


Figure 1: Model of Service quality gaps

(Source: Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Curry, 1999; Luk & Layton, 2002)

Gap1: Customers' expectations versus management perceptions

Gap2: Management perceptions versus service specifications

Gap3: Service specifications versus service delivery

Gap4: Service delivery versus external communication

Gap5: Discrepancy between customer expectations and perceptions of the service delivered

Gap6: The discrepancy between customer expectations and employees' perceptions

Gap7: The discrepancy between employee's perceptions and management perceptions

In this model, gap 5 (Figure 2) is the service quality gap showing discrepancy between customer expectations and their perceptions of the service delivered and is the only gap that can be directly measured.

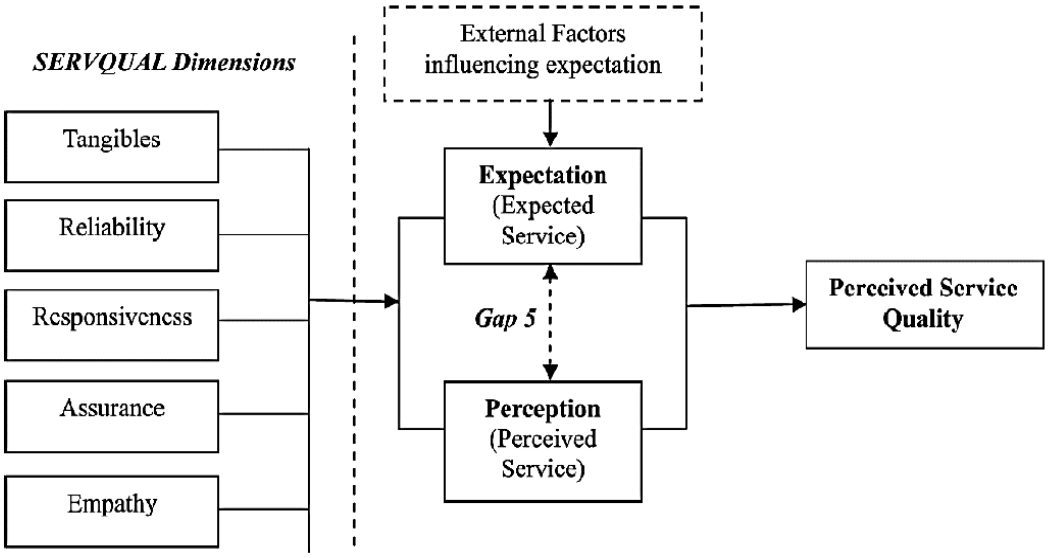


Figure 2: Measuring Service effectiveness using SERVQUAL Model

(Source: Kumar et al. 2009)

Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed the SERVQUAL model proposing a five-dimensional construct of perceived service quality - tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Table 1) - with items reflecting both expectations and perceived performance. Service quality is calculated -as the difference between perceptions and expectation with importance weights associated to each dimension. Its original service dimensions were determined by Berry et al. (1985) with subsequent refinements and industry specific adaptations. Zeithaml et al. (1983) augmented SERVQUAL to further differentiate between quality and customer satisfaction. In reality customer determines the perceived value of a service based on their experience with the service delivered and the customer's expectation, service delivery process, and service outcome have impact on perceived service quality (Ghobadian, Speller, & Jones, 1994).

Table 1: Dimensions of SERVQUAL Model

Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence
Tangibles	The appearance of physical facilities, Equipment, personnel and communication materials
Empathy	Caring, individualized attention the service firm provides to its customers
Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

(Source: Parasuraman, Ziethaml, & Berry,1988)

Methodology of the Study

Research Design and Sampling Procedure

This study is partly descriptive and partly exploratory in nature. This study is based on field survey which was conducted on service quality of well-known restaurants, purposively selected, from different areas of Dhaka South City Corporation like Motijheel, Wari, Laxmi-bazar, Ajimpur, Dhanmondi etc. Since sampling frame is not accessible, this study considered a non-probability sampling.

Questionnaire Development and Data Collection

Based on a thorough literature review, a 22-item SERVQUAL questionnaire (Appendix), developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, (1988) was modified and delivered to 150 respondents through personal visit, email attachments. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part consisted of demographic questions. The demographic questions included variables such as country of residence, age, gender, level of education, and frequency of visiting a restaurant. Last two parts examined respondents' expectations and perceptions of city restaurant service quality in two ways, one is unweighted and the other is weighted method.

The items of the questionnaire were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7, "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (7)". About 10 questionnaires were initially rejected. And to make the study convenient a sample of 100 customers (45 female and 55 male) was finalized.

Results and Discussions

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Following table (Table 2) reflects the demographic profile of the respondents compiled of (n = 100), 45% of female, with 55% of male. In terms of age group, the ages of the respondents ranged from 12 years to above 48 years, and most respondents fall into two age groups, "12 to 18" and "18 to 24", total 47.2%.

Table 2: Demographic Information of the Respondents (n=100)

Items	Percentage	Items	Percentage
Gender		***Age***	
Male	55%	12-18	23.6%
Female	45%	18-24	23.6%
Level of Education		24-30	17.6%
Primary School	12.8%	30-36	19.6%
Secondary School	40%	36-42	11.2%
College and University	46%	42-48	3.4%
Master's or PhD	7.2%	48 and above	1.0%
Status		***Area (location) of***	

Students	48.2%	***Residence***	
Working	45.8%	Motijheel	3.6%
Retired	6%	Wari	31.2%
Previous visit to the restaurants		Laxmi-bazar	29.8%
	14.8%	Ajimpur	2.9%
Never	28.8%	Dhanmondi	32.5%
Once	56.4%		
Twice or more			

(Compiled by author)

About 45.8% of the respondents were working people, followed by 48.2% were students and 6% were retired. On the frequency of their patronage to the restaurant at which they were surveyed, 14.8% ate at the restaurant at least once, 56.4% ate at the restaurant at least once per month and only 28.8% visited the restaurant for the first time.

Table 3: Gap Score for Tangibility Dimension

SERVQUAL Statements			**Expectation (E)**	**Perception (P)**	**Gap (P-E)**
Tangibility	1.	Restaurants have up-to-date equipment.	610	613	3.00
	2.	Physical facilities are virtually appealing.	603	611	8.00
	3.	Employees are well dressed and appear neat.	603	609	6.00
	4.	Materials associated with the service of restaurant are appealing and clean.	589	580	-9.00
Average Tangibility SERVQUAL Score *(= (Σ P-E)/4)*					**2.00**
Reliability	5.	When they promise to do something by a certain time, they do it.	589	599	10.00
	6.	When customer has a problem, they should show sincere interest in solving the problem.	547	539	-8.00
	7.	Restaurants perform the service right the first time.	575	577	2.00
	8.	They provide their services at the time they promise to do so.	579	584	5.00
	9.	Restaurants keep their records accurately.	604	602	-2.00
Average Reliability SERVQUAL Score *(= (Σ P-E)/5)*					**1.40**
Responsiveness	10.	Employees make information easily obtainable by customers.	578	582	4.00
	11.	Employees give prompt services to customers.	604	601	-4.00
	12.	Employees are always willing to help customers.	591	592	1.00
	13.	Employees are never too busy to respond to customers' requests.	605	598	-7.00

Average Responsiveness SERVQUAL Score *(= (Σ P-E)/4)*					**-1.50**
Assurance	14.	The behavior of employees instill confidence in customers	541	546	5.00
	15.	Customers feel safe in their transactions with the employees.	536	533	-3.00
	16.	Employees are polite to customers.	535	532	-3.00
	17.	Employees of grocery stores have knowledge to answer customers' questions.	552	550	-2.00
Average Assurance SERVQUAL Score *(= (Σ P-E)/4)*					**-1.25**
Empathy	18.	Restaurants give customers individual attention.	579	583	4.00
	19.	Operating hours of restaurants are convenient to customers.	574	571	-3.00
	20.	Employees of restaurants give customers personal service.	569	566	-3.00
	21.	Restaurants have their customers' interest at heart	554	554	0.00
	22.	Employees of restaurants understand the specific needs of their customers.	561	557	-4.00
Average Empathy SERVQUAL Score *(= (Σ P-E)/5)*					**-1.20**

(Source: Compiled by author)

The above Gap Score table (Table 3) shows the overall expectation and perception score of the respondents, and the average gap score of each dimension. The results related to tangibility dimension indicates that restaurants are maintaining physical facilities like equipment, personnel and communication materials. Reliability dimension indicates that restaurants are keeping promises to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. The third dimension showed negative average gap (-1.50), which means customers perceive that restaurants are failed to help customer and provide prompt services. Assurance dimension is also showing negative average gap (-1.25), indicating employees lack of knowledge and courtesy, and their inability to inspire trust and confidence. Finally, the empathy dimension is showing negative average gap (-1.20), indicating restaurants' lack of willingness to help customers and provide prompt service delivery.

Unweighted SERVQUAL Score

Step 1. Using the SERVQUAL instrument, first the score for each of the 22 expectation questions was obtained and totaled. Next, score for each of the perception questions was obtained and totaled (Table 3). Gap score for each of the statements (Gap Score = Perception – Expectation) was calculated and totaled (Table 3).

Step 2. Average Gap Score was obtained for each dimension by assessing the Gap Scores for each of the statements that constitute the dimension and dividing the sum by the number of statements making up the dimension.

Step 3. In table 4 the average score of each dimension of the SERVQUAL instrument was transferred. The scores were summed up and divide it by five to obtain the unweighted measure of service quality.

Table 4: Calculation to obtain Unweighted SERVQUAL Score

1.	Average score of Tangibility scale	2.00
2.	Average score of Reliability scale	1.40
3.	Average score of Responsiveness scale	-1.50
4.	Average score of Assurance scale	-1.25
5.	Average score of Empathy scale	-1.20
Total		-0.55
Average Unweighted SERVQUAL Score *(= Total/5)*		- 0.11

(Compiled by author)

The average gap for tangible and reliability dimensions is positive, and for the other three, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are negative. The UNWEIGHTED Average SERVQUAL SCORE is also negative. This means the overall service quality of the restaurants were not up to expectations perceived by the respondents.

Weighted SERVQUAL Score

Step 1. In Table 5 the importance weights for each of the five dimensions constituting the SERVQUAL scale was calculated.

Table 5: The Importance given to Each Dimension

1.	The restaurants' physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.	22.60%
2.	The restaurants' ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately	24.56%
3.	The restaurants' willingness to help customers and provide prompt services	18.96%
4.	The knowledge and courtesy of the restaurants' employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence	19.04%
5.	The caring, individual attention the restaurants provide its customers	14.84%

(Compiled by author)

Step 2. In Table 6 the average SERVQUAL score for each dimension (from Table 4) and the importance weight for each dimension (from Table 5) was entered. Then the average score for each dimension were multiplied with its importance weight.

Step 3. The weighted SERVQUAL scores for each dimension were added to obtain the overall weighted SERVQUAL score.

Table 6: Calculation to obtain Weighted SERVQUAL Score

SERVQUAL Dimension		**Average for Dimension (A)** *(from Table 5)*	**Importance Weight (B)** *(from Table 6)*	**Weighted Score (A X B)**
1.	Tangibility	2.00	20.600	41.200
2.	Reliability	1.40	24.560	34.384
3.	Responsiveness	-1.50	18.040	-27.060
4.	Assurance	-1.25	18.520	-23.150
5.	Empathy	-1.20	18.280	-21.936
Total *(= Σ A X B)*			**100.00**	**-3.438**
Average Weighted SERVQUAL Score *(=Σ (A X B) /5)*				**-0.688**

(Compiled by author)

It is evident from Table 6 that customers perceived tangibility and reliability of restaurants are satisfied although the overall calculation points that overall service quality is not up to the mark.

Conclusion

According to the findings of the study tangibility and reliability factors are perceived positively by the respondents compared to responsiveness, assurance, and empathy factors of service quality which is similar to the findings of previous researchers, Dulen (1999); Susskind & Chan (2000). Again, the study results of Wu and Liang (2009); and Namkung and Jang, (2010) had similar results. The study results indicated that respondents range from teenagers to adults mostly and visit restaurants frequently which would facilitate the scope for investment in restaurants business. Therefore, the concern parties need to work mostly on assurance, empathy, and responsiveness factors through different measures like training for the employees related to prompt services, verbal and non-verbal communications, and manner and etiquettes.

Limitations and Further Research Scope

Although there are lots of restaurants in Dhaka city, the study focuses only on some restaurants of some selected areas. Again, fulfilling a 22-item questionnaire is time consuming which results in respondents' lack of willingness to give actual responses. To generalize the findings for this business sector, more exploratory studies including more respondents, and more restaurants in different geographic areas would have been conducted. In addition, omission of other factors such as price, perceived value and waiting time, related to the service quality in restaurant service could be considered in future research.

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Appendix

Respondents' Demographic Profile

Items	√	**Items**	√
Gender		***Age***	
Male		12-18	
Female		18-24	
Level of		24-30	
Education		30-36	
Primary School		36-42	
Secondary School		42-48	
College and University		48 and above	
Master's or PhD		***Status***	
Area (Location) of		Students	
Residence		Working	
Motijheel		Retired	
Wari		***Previous visit to the restaurants***	
Laxmi-bazar		Never	
Ajimpur		Once	
Dhanmondi		Twice or more	

The SERVQUAL instrument

Expectations

This survey deals with your opinions of restaurants. Please show the extent to which you think restaurants should possess the following features. What we are interested in here is a number that best shows your expectations about institutions offering restaurants services

Perceptions

The following statements relate to your feelings about the restaurants you chose. Please show the extent to which you believe the has the feature described in the statement. Here, we are interested in a number that shows your perceptions about the restaurants

Strongly Strongly Agree ... Disagree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Strongly Agree ... Disagree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

	(E)		**(P)**	**Gap Score P - E**
Tangibles		**Tangibles**		
E1. Excellent companies will have modern looking equipment.	_____	P1. the restaurants have modern looking equipment.	_____	_____
E2. The physical facilities at excellent will be visually appealing.	_____	P2. the Restaurants physical facilities are visually appealing.	_____	_____
E3. Employees at excellent restaurants will be neat appearing.	_____	P3. THE Restaurants reception desk employees are neat appearing.	_____	_____
E4. Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) will be visually appealing at excellent restaurants.	_____	P4. Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at the restaurants.	_____	_____
		Average Tangibles SERVQUAL score		_____
				_____
Reliability		**Reliability**		
E5. When excellent restaurants promise to do something by a certain time, they do.	_____	P5. When the restaurants promise to do something by a certain time, it does so.	_____	_____

E6. When a customer has a problem, excellent restaurants will show a sincere interest in solving it.		P6. When you have a problem, the restaurants show a sincere interest in solving it.	
E7. Excellent restaurants will perform the service right the first time.		P7. the restaurants perform the service right the first time.	
E8. Excellent restaurants will provide the service at the time they promise to do so.		P8. the restaurants provide its service at the time it promises to do so.	
E9. Excellent restaurants will insist on error free records		P9. the restaurants insist on error free records	
		Average Responsiveness SERVQUAL score	
Responsiveness		**Responsiveness**	
E10. Employees of excellent restaurants will tell customers exactly when services will be performed.		P10. Employees in the restaurants tell you exactly when services will be performed.	
E11. Employees of excellent restaurants will give prompt service to customers.		P11. Employees in the restaurants give you prompt service.	
E12. Employees of excellent restaurants will always be willing to help customers.		P12. Employees in the restaurants are always willing to help you.	
E13. Employees of excellent restaurants will never be too busy to respond to customers' requests.		P13. Employees in the restaurants are never too busy to respond to your request.	
		Average Responsiveness SERVQUAL score	
Assurance		**Assurance**	
E14. The behavior of employees in excellent restaurants will instill confidence in customers.		P14. The behavior of employees in the restaurants instills confidence in you.	

E15. Customers of excellent restaurants will feel safe in transactions.		P15. You feel safe in your transactions with the restaurants.	
E16. Employees of excellent restaurants will be consistently courteous with customers.		P16. Employees in the restaurants area consistently courteous with you.	
E17. Employees of excellent restaurants will have the knowledge to answer customers' questions.		P17. Employees in the restaurants have the knowledge to answer your questions.	
		Average Assurance SERVQUAL score	
Empathy		**Empathy**	
E18. Excellent restaurants will give customers individual attention.		P18. the restaurants give you individual attention.	
E19. Excellent restaurants will have operating hours convenient to all their customers.		P19. the restaurants have operating hours convenient to all its customers.	
E20. Excellent restaurants will have employees who give customers personal attention.		P20. the restaurants have employees who give you personal attention.	
E21. Excellent restaurants will have their customer's best interests at heart.		P21. the restaurants have your best interest at heart.	
E22. The employees of excellent restaurants will understand the specific needs of their customers.		P22. The employees of the restaurants understand your specific needs.	
		Average Empathy SERVQUAL scores	