

ASSESSING SERVICE QUALITY GAP OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR COURIER COMPANIES IN INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Antecedent studies in various Indian service sector reveals that the Private sector has edged over the public sector in terms of overall service quality. However, a discernible study has been conducted so far on the level of service quality of courier services in both public and private sectors in India. The aim of this paper is to observe the customers' and service providers' expectations towards courier services, satisfaction level towards service quality and to explore the gap between the expectation level and actual performance between both sectors. The research utilized the SERVQUAL model as a basis to ascertain the gaps associated with the service quality of Public courier and Private courier services in India. The results reveal that both the sectors have high expectations regarding their services, but the private couriers have able to meet up the expectation level of the customers except Tangibility and Assurance aspects and there exists an expectation gap between Public and Private Sector Courier Companies regarding the service quality offered.

Key words: Service Quality. SERVQUAL model, Private Courier Company, India Post.

I. Prologue:

Service quality has increasingly attracting as a research agenda both from academicians as well as practitioners. Many researchers and marketers have focused their attention on the term service quality from various points of view. Service Quality is a comparison of expectations with performance and the simplest definition of service quality is "*The manner in which the service is provided and the way it influences the degree of satisfaction of the customer using that service*", (Singh P.,Kaur R., 2013). Considered being an achievement in customer service, service quality is related to service potential (e.g., Worker's qualifications); service process (e.g., promptness of service) and service results (e.g., Customer Satisfaction).

From the literatures available Service Gaps consist of GAP I (The Knowledge Gap) Customers' expectations versus management perceptions of customer expectations; GAP II (The Standard Gap) Organization's perceptions versus service specifications; GAP III (The Delivery Gap) Service specifications and standards versus service delivery; GAP IV (The Communication Gap) Service performance versus promises and GAP V (The Service Gap) Difference between the perceived service and expected service (Singh Parampal & Kaur Ramneek,, 2013). SERVQUAL is an empirically derived method that is used by service organizations to measure and improve service quality. The method involves the development of an understanding of the perceived service

needs of target customers. SERVQUAL considers the perceptions of customers on the relative importance of service attributes. This allows an organization to prioritize and to use its resources to improve the most critical service attributes (Parasuraman A. et al., 1994).

According to David Garvin (1998) service quality can be assessed on eight dimensions: Performance, Features, Reliability, Conformance, Durability, Serviceability, Aesthetics, and Perceived quality.

Rater concept in service marketing is the best-known model to specify the quality dimensions of the service. It is also referred to as the service quality star which was created by (Parasuraman et. al.,1990) published in their book, "Delivering Quality Service."

2. Review of Literatures

Service quality has always been a matter of research and many scholars have done extensive research on it. At one point the service quality has been taken into consideration from financial consequences point of view that it may be favorable as well as unfavorable which determines the customers' existence in a particular company (Zeithaml et. al., 1996). On the other hand, the term service quality is found to be both multidimensional as well as a hierarchical construct in which although there were various dimensions, but the customer usually considers three dimensions for forming their perception i.e., outcome, Interaction and Environmental Quality which has appropriated the hierarchical conceptualization (Brady, M.K. & Cronin, J. Jr., 2001). The influence of service quality dimensions varies across service industries i.e., for equipment-based industries the tangibles are to be appeared more important and for people-based industries responsiveness is a more important factor (Lee, H., Lee, Y. and Yoo, D. 2000).

It has been observed that some studies have focused upon the quality of service provided by the vehicle repair shop managers and the satisfaction level of customers (Miguel et. al., 2007) and some have found on Cell Phone service that Gronroos' model is more appropriate representation of Service Quality than American perspective as because it focuses not only on functional dimensions but on technical and image dimensions also (Kang G. D. & James J. 2004). But in another study, the Service Quality of a Call Centre of Mauritius perceived by the Front-Line Employees were taken in-to consideration that the perceptions of Front-Line Employees were consistently lower than their expectation as SERVQUAL dimensions have a significant relationship with the overall satisfaction of the employees (Munhurrin P. R. et. al., 2010). On the other hand, studies have put emphasis on the measurement of service quality with the help of customers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Parasuraman et. al., 1994). Similarly, some of the previous studies have focused on the perceived service quality of hotel industries and customers' expectations (Markovi'c, S. and Raspor, S., 2010; Sriyam A., 2010). Likewise, in some studies, it has been found that SERVQUAL model is not a good instrument to measure service quality in Grocery stores as customers expectation from these stores is remarkably high for which they have to pay lots of attention to the quality and the variety of products that they produce (Abu, N. K. 2004; Daniel C. N. & Berinyuy L. P. 2010).

Different authors have analyzed and found that expectation of the customers towards service quality should be the main focus of Insurance and Banking industries as in these industries quality of service is very important part due to its intangible nature through which these industries can be able to satisfy the expected needs of the customers (Ahmad A. & Sungip Z. 2008; Dhar R. K. & Kushwah S. V. 2009; Ghost S. F. H. & Gnanadhas M. E. 2011; Bala, N., Sandhu, H. S. and Nagpal, N., 2011; Kimando, L. N., Njogu, G.W., 2012; Siami et. al., 2012; Gupta et. al, 2012;

Anand et. al., 2014; Al-Azam A. F. M., 2015 and Pakurar M. et. al., 2019). The same conclusion has been drawn in some other studies on services provided by Airline industries (Thakor et. al., 2012 and Baker D. M. A., 2013). Similar results have been drawn from the study of four Mobile Network Companies which operates within Ghana which used the SERVQUAL dimensions to measure customer satisfaction from their high expectation (Nimako S. G. & Azumah F. K. 2009).

Similarly, in some other studies, it has been found that there is a huge gap between perceived service quality and expected service quality (Shahin et. al., 2010; Munusamy et. al., 2010; Rajeswari et. al., 2011; Mokoena, T. J., 2012; Ltifi et. al., 2012; Azizzadeh et. al., 2013; Chhatbar et. al., 2014; Lykogiannis P. 2014; and ChhatbarM. C., 2014). The same gap has been found in some other studies also which are hotel services where the management try to identify reasons of poor service quality (Blesic I. et. al., 2011), the gap based on student's opinion of M. A. Islamic Azad University of Najaf Abad's with revised SERVQUAL model (Ghasemi M. et. al., 2012), the difference in the quality perceptions towards municipal services between male and female customers (Mokhlis S. 2012), the two types of customers in the department of food and beverages i.e., external, and internal customers (Abukhalifeh A. & Som A. 2013), the different gaps in the postal service quality (Roopchund R. & Boojhawon S. 2014; Singh M. P. 2016), increase in the pressure on healthcare providers for improvement in their service quality (Mukhtar H. et. al., 2013; Jaswal A. R. 2016; Kondasani R. K. R. 2016; Linimol L. T. & Nair B. C. 2016; Johnson L. M. 2017 and Oparah P. C. et. al., 2018), the service quality in the UK mobile communications market (Almomani G. 2018), the expectation of customers from private sector banks is more than public sector banks (Banerjee N. & Sah S. 2012) and to find out the weak areas of service quality (Kumar R. S. & Vetrivel T. 2013). All these studies were conducted to find out the gap between customers' expectations and perceptions so that the service providers should try to improve their performance to deliver a high quality of service to minimize these gaps and can satisfy their customers.

Further, there are studies which try to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of service quality models so that the best fit model can be obtained (Ghotbabadi A. R. et. al., 2015). The perceived service quality of courier service and moderating ethnicity can positively influence the overall service quality (Valaei N. et. al., 2016) and there exists a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction as this relationship might be depending on SERVQUAL dimensions (Kaur R. R. & Sharma T. 2014; Tefera Y. 2018) such as in all the three service sectors i.e., Umea University, ICA & FOREX (Agbor J. M. 2011), the repurchase intention in restaurants on University of Cape Coast Campus's Customers (Mensah I. & Mensah R. D. 2018).

Although many sectors such as Vehicle repair shop, Cell Phone, Call Centre, Grocery stores, Insurance and Banking Sector, Mobile Network Companies, Hotel industry, Municipal services, Healthcare services, Courier service, Restaurants, Travel Agency, Airline Industry, etc. have been covered in previous studies but a bidirectional study in the Courier Service area is discernible. Some studies have covered the demand side and the others have covered the supply side. So, the present study has been carried out by focusing on both the service providers' as well as service user's perspective. Further, a comparative analysis of the private and public sector courier companies has not been a subject matter for many of the previous studies especially in terms of service quality. This study has considered this aspect also. Customer satisfaction towards service quality has been a prime focus for many of the previous studies. However, the satisfaction level of the service providers for given service quality has been explored discernibly. Hence, this study would like to cover up the said aspect.

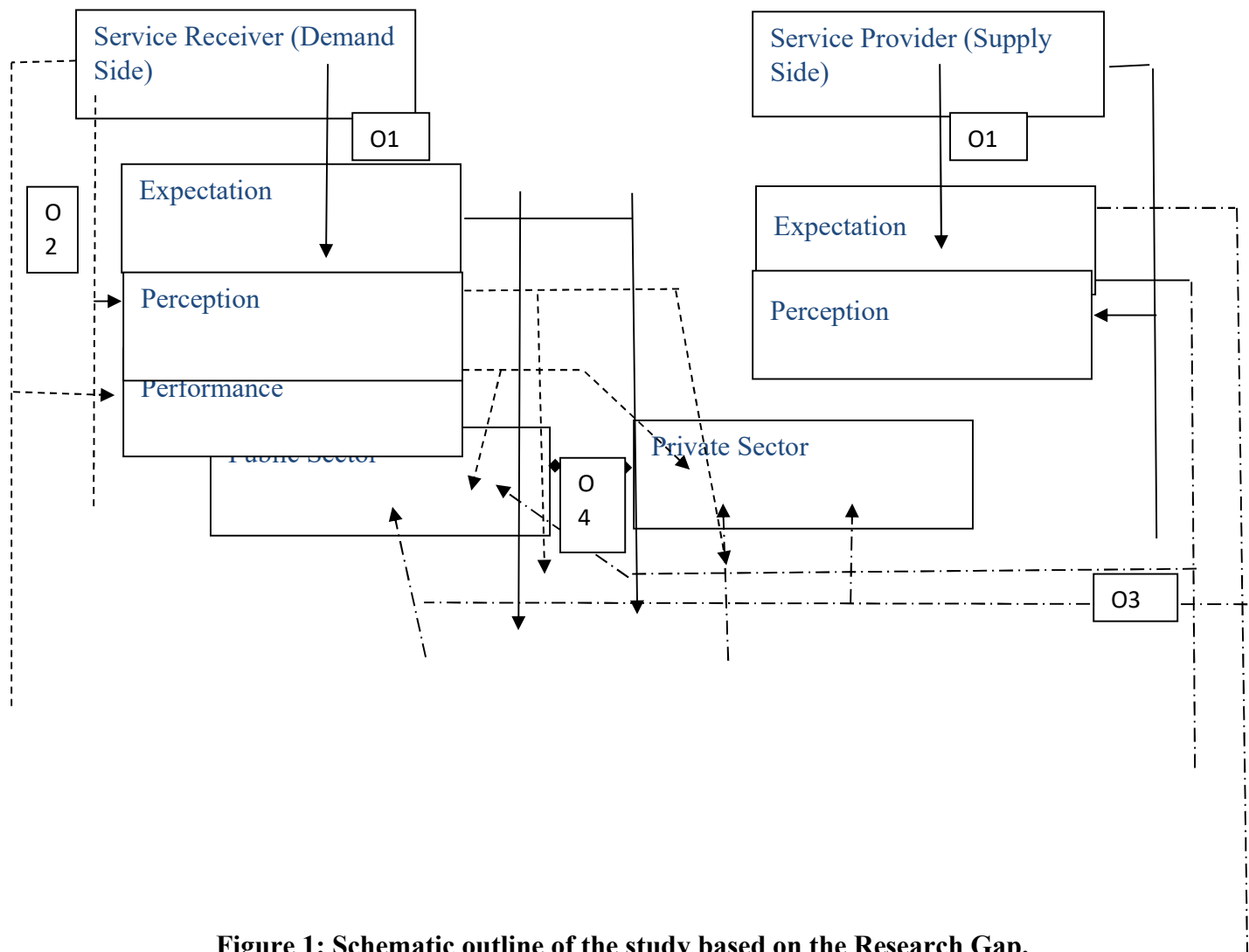


Figure 1: Schematic outline of the study based on the Research Gap.

Note: O1, O2, O3 and O4 denotes Objective Number 1,2,3 & 4 respectively set for the study.

3. Scope of the Study

The research has been conducted within the geographical territory of India in which formation wise the researcher has covered two sectors i.e., Indian Postal Department and Private Sector Courier Companies. The focus is basically not on to the **Company** rather on the two different **Sectors** one is public, and the other is the private sector and what level of quality services they provide. Since, it has been witnessed that the services offered by the India Post include various kinds of services like Banking, Insurance, Money transfer or retail services, old age Pensions, Scholarships to weaker sections etc., however for this study the researchers' focus has been on the Courier services provided by the India Post.

The quality of services was measured by the feedback received from the service users. There are four (4) focused groups namely e-commerce companies, central government departments, professional institutes and journalist were considered for this study. The justification

of selecting these as focused groups is that these bodies use courier services extensively. However, the last focus group i.e., journalist has been selected to obtain independent and neutral views on the services of courier companies and India Post.

By utilizing the RATER model, the study has been concentrated on factors like Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness. It is important to note that antecedent results reveal that for obtaining a quality services price should not be the factor. Although, the price that customer's need to pay in case of private courier services are comparatively higher than the India Post, however as a public sector, with the adoption of social welfare policy, the India Post charges are relatively lower. But it never plays any significant differences in the mindset of the customers when it comes to quality of the services. Hence, the price factor has been kept outside the purview of the present study though relative assumptions has been utilized.

4. Objectives of the study:

1. To observe the customers' and service providers' expectations towards courier services.
2. To observe the service receivers' satisfaction level towards service quality of private and public courier services
3. To observe the service providers' expectation level towards the service quality offered.
4. To explore the gap between the expectation level and actual performance between the public and private courier services in the study area.

5. Research Questions:

1. Whether the actual performances of the Public Sector Courier meet up to the expectation of the Customers?
2. Whether the actual performances of the Private Sector Courier Companies meet up to the expectation of the Customers?
3. Whether there is any expectation gap between the services of India Post and Private Sector Courier Companies?

6. Research Methodology

This study is an analytical study largely depending upon reflective views, experience and ideas expressed by the selected groups of people who are using the courier services of both public and private sectors in India. The researchers have focused on both demand as well as the supply side i.e., the quality of service expected by the customers and the perception of the employees towards customer's expectation and delivering the services thereof. So, for the purpose of the study the selected group of people was divided into two parts i.e., service receivers and service providers. For the selection of service providers from the public sector the researchers have selected India post as there is no alternative available in India and have taken 7 numbers of the head offices of India Post from across the country considering the homogeneous nature of the data set. However, for the Private courier, total 10 numbers of companies were approached to collect the data from the entire country. For the selection of the service receivers there have been four (4) focused groups namely e-commerce companies (mainly using their own courier services or private courier services- based on the observations), central government departments (mainly using India Post- based on observations), professional institutes (mainly using private courier services but beforehand used the India post- based on the observations), and journalist (both India post and Private Courier services- based on observations). So, 99 e-commerce companies; 19 Central

government departments have been selected by the researchers purposefully. However, in case of professional institutes, 5 institutes which are extensively availing the courier service have been considered while in case of journalists 13 noted journalists across the country have been selected for the study. SERVQUALmodel¹¹ has been adopted with minor changes to adopt to the situation of the data field.

6.1 Analyses and Interpretation of Data

Based on the data collected from the respondents the researchers have calculated the Weighted Mean of responses related to Expectations, and Perceptions of Service Providers and Expectations, Perceptions and Performances of Service Receivers to figure out the Average Weighted Mean. The analyses have been carried out to find out the SERVQUAL GAP scores between the India Post and Private Courier Company. The value of SERVQUAL Score could take values between -1 and 1 which means the value is ranging from being negatively related (-1) to unrelated (0) and to positively related (1). However, if the value goes beyond +1 it is assumed that there exists a perfect positive relationship between the variables and if the value is < -1 , it is assumed that there exists a perfect negative relationship between the variables (see Exhibit A). It has been considered that India Post is independent variable and Private Courier Companies are dependent variable.

Exhibit A

Strength of SERVQUAL SCORE

Strength of Positive and Negative SERVQUAL SCORE		
Perfect	+1 & > +1	-1 & < -1
Strong	+0.9	-0.9
	+0.8	-0.8
	+0.7	-0.7
Moderate	+0.6	-0.6
	+0.5	-0.5
	+0.4	-0.4
Weak	+0.3	-0.3
	+0.2	-0.2
	+0.1	-0.1
Zero	0	

Source: Self developed

Though the relationship scale has been developed based on assumptions as well as inputs received from previous literatures, however the assumptions were made based on a literature by (Dancey &

Reidy, 2007), wherein the relationship is weak if the gap score is between 0.10 and 0.3, moderate when it is between 0.40 and 0.6 and strong when it is between 0.70 and 1.00. When the gap score is equal to 1, the result is considered as perfect and vice versa.

7. Findings& Results

7.1: Service Receiver's View:

By going through the analysis and interpretation done based on the responses, the researchers have observed that the expectations of Service Receivers of each focused group i.e., Professional Institutes, Central Government Departments, e-Com Companies, and journalist have a high level of expectations from the services provided by both India Post as well as Private Courier Company.

In case of expectations of the service providers, the researchers have observed that the dimension of responsiveness has the greatest average gap score of (-0.74). (Refer Table 1) Individually, in this category the expectation of service providers from a private courier company is greater in comparison to India Post. It has also been found that the other dimensions i.e., empathy (-0.57), assurance (-0.53), reliability (-0.45) have a smaller gap score and tangibility content (-0.24) has a minimal gap score. Hence it has been observed that both the service providers have a fair amount of understanding about the expectation level of the customer towards their services. However, it is evident that India Post has failed in the responsiveness dimension of service quality especially on the 'Promptness of Service' and 'Willingness to help' categories.

Table I

Expectations related to Service Providers of Indian Postal Department and Private Courier Company

Determinants of Service Quality	Average Weighted Mean value of Service Provider's Expectation from India Post (E₁)	Average Weighted Mean value of Service Provider's Expectation from Private Courier Company (E₂)	Average Weighted Mean difference (E₁-E₂)
Reliability	6.31	6.76	-0.45
Assurance	6.23	6.76	-0.53
Tangibility	6.20	6.44	-0.24
Empathy	5.63	6.20	-0.57

Source: Authors' representation based on Calculations

As the level of satisfaction of customers can only be achieved by comparing the expectations with the actual performances, it has been observed that the perceptions of Professional Institutes regarding India Post and Private Courier Companies (refer table 2) are not same. It has been revealed that in all the dimensions of service quality i.e., responsiveness (-

1.70), reliability (-1.36), empathy content (-1.28) has a perfect negative gap score; tangibility (-0.88) and assurance content (-0.96) have a strong negative gap score.

Table 2

Perceptions of Professional Institutes on Indian Postal Department and Private Courier Company

Determinants of Service Quality	Average Weighted Mean value of Service Receiver's Perception for India Post (P1)	Average Weighted Mean value of Service Receiver's Perception for Private Courier Company (P2)	Average Weighted Mean difference (P1-P2=G1)
Reliability	4.12	5.48	-1.36
Assurance	4.32	5.28	-0.96
Tangibility	4.24	5.12	-0.88
Empathy	3.16	4.44	-1.28
Responsiveness	3.55	5.25	-1.70

Source: Calculated from the processed data collected from Field Survey

On the other hand, the Professional Institutes' view on performance of India Post and Private Courier Company reveals that (refer table 3) all the dimensions of service quality i.e., responsiveness (-1.90), reliability (-1.44), empathy (-1.28), assurance content (-1.12) has a perfect negative gap scores and tangibility content (-0.56) has a moderate negative gap score. So, it can be inferred that the Professional Institutes are more inclined to Private Courier Companies regarding the service quality both at the perception level as well as performance level.

Table 3

Professional Institutes' view on Performance of Indian Postal Department and Private Courier Company

Determinants of Service Quality	Average Weighted Mean value of performance of India Post (P3)	Average Weighted Mean value of performance of Private Courier Company (P4)	Average Weighted Mean difference (P3-P4=G2)
Reliability	3.96	5.40	-1.44

Assurance	4.20	5.32	-1.12
Tangibility	4.52	5.08	-0.56
Empathy	3.28	4.56	-1.28
Responsiveness	3.25	5.15	-1.90

Source: Calculated from the processed data collected from Field Survey.

The perceptions level of the Central government departments for India Post and Private Courier Company shows that almost all the dimensions of service quality i.e., tangibility (2.15), assurance and empathy (1.96), reliability (1.95) and responsiveness content (1.88) have a perfect positive gap score. Again, after analyzing the responses of Central government departments' view on performance of Indian Post and Private Courier Company it has been observed that all the dimensions of service quality i.e., tangibility (2.07), empathy (1.99), reliability and responsiveness (1.92) and assurance content (1.84) have a perfect positive gap score. Thus, it can be inferred that the responses (i.e., for perception and for performance) of Central government departments' have high expectations as well as a recipient of satisfied performance from India Post in comparison to Private Courier Companies in all the dimensions.

The perceptions of e-commerce companies for India Post and Private Courier Companies shows the dimensions of service quality i.e., assurance (-0.95), responsiveness (-0.88) and empathy content (-0.75) have strong negative gap score and reliability content (-0.56) has a moderate negative gap score. However, for tangibility content the perception of e-commerce companies regarding the services provided by both sectors were more or less equal as a very weak negative gap score of (-0.17) being depicted. Further, after analyzing the responses of e-commerce companies' view on performance of India Post and Private Courier Companies reveal that the dimensions of service quality i.e., empathy (-1.44), assurance content (-1.20) have a perfect negative gap scores and responsiveness content (-0.88) has a strong negative gap score whereas tangibility content i.e., (-0.59) has relatively moderate negative gap score. Thus, it can be inferred that for e-commerce companies, the Private Courier Companies' service quality is better both in terms of expectations as well as performance in comparison to India Post in all the dimensions.

The perceptions of Journalists for India Post and Private Courier Company reveal that assurance (0.27) and tangibility content (0.18) have a weak positive gap score and in case of responsiveness (-0.18), empathy (-0.17) and reliability content (-0.02) have a weak negative gap score. On the other hand, on performance of India Post and Private Courier Company the journalist group responses represent in reliability (-0.63), responsiveness (-0.61), empathy (-0.50), assurance content (-0.47) has a moderate negative gap score, and tangibility content (-0.31) has a weak negative gap score. Hence it can be inferred that Journalists view was even for both the service providers as they have preferred to use Private Courier Company for contents like reliability, empathy, and responsiveness and for rest two contents i.e., for assurance and tangibility they have preferred to use the services provided by both India Post as well as Private Courier Company.

To assess the Customers' satisfaction level towards service quality of private and public courier services the results have been depicted in Table 4:

Table 4
Differences of Perceptions Vs Differences of Performance of India Post and Private Courier Company (GAP) from Service Receiver's Perspective

Determinants of Service Quality	SERVEQUAL											
	Difference of Perceptions of Average Weighted Mean				Difference of Performance of Average Weighted Mean				GAP SCORE			
	P. I. (G ₁)	C. G. Dept. (G ₃)	E-Com Company (G ₅)	Journalists (G ₇)	P. I. (G ₂)	C. G. Dept. (G ₄)	E-Com. Company (G ₆)	Journalists (G ₈)	P. I. (G ₁ -G ₂)	C. G. Dept. (G ₃ -G ₄)	E-Com Company (G ₅ -G ₆)	Journalists (G ₇ -G ₈)
Reliability	-1.36	1.95	-0.56	-0.02	-1.44	1.92	-0.59	-0.63	0.08	0.03	0.03	0.61
Assurance	-0.96	1.96	-0.95	0.27	-1.12	1.84	-1.20	-0.47	0.16	0.12	0.25	0.74
Tangibility	-0.88	2.15	-0.17	0.18	-0.56	2.07	-0.59	-0.31	-0.32	0.08	0.42	0.49
Empathy	-1.28	1.96	-0.75	-0.17	-1.28	1.99	-1.44	-0.50	0.00	-0.03	0.69	0.33
Responsiveness	-1.70	1.88	-0.88	-0.18	-1.90	1.92	-0.88	-0.61	0.20	-0.04	0.00	0.43

Source: Calculated from the processed data collected from Field Survey.

The professional institutes were highly satisfied with the services provided by Private Courier Company in comparison to India Post as their performance exceeded their level of perception and shows a weak positive gap score for the parameter reliability, assurance, responsiveness content and no gap score for empathy content. Hence it has been inferred that Professional institutes have a remarkably high level of satisfaction with the services provided by Private Courier Companies. On the other hand, as they used India post in some rare situations, they felt that India Post has failed to satisfy them. However, the finding indicates that Tangibility dimension, has the greatest SERVQUAL gap score (-0.32) unit, signifies that the Private Courier Companies have to think of the improvement in this service dimension so that they can be able to provide better service to their customers.

The finding extracted from Central government departments' viewpoint depict that any central government departments are rarely concerned about the terms like satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction because they only have one option and i.e., India Post because they have been instructed by the Government to extensively use the India Post. However, it was observed that their performance exceeded their level of perception only for empathy and responsiveness content.

However, from the findings it has also been observed that the dimensions i.e., reliability (0.03) unit and tangibility (0.08) unit have the marginal SERVQUAL gap score; therefore, it can be considered that for these dimensions they provide sufficient services to meet up to the expectation level and hence it can be inferred that Central government departments' have a high level of satisfaction with the services provided by the India Post. However, the finding of the study indicate that Assurance content has the greatest SERVQUAL gap score i.e., (0.12) unit, signifies that most of the time India Post have to think for the improvement in this service dimension. Though they were exposed to be used exclusively by a set of customers, yet the customers do feel that they are lagging in assurance content of service quality.

The e-commerce companies were highly satisfied with the services provided by Private Courier Companies in comparison to India Post, as their performance exceeds their level of perception and shows a positive SERVQUAL gap score for reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy content and no gap score for responsiveness content. Hence, it has been inferred that e-commerce companies have an exceedingly high level of satisfaction from the services provided by Private Courier Companies. On the other hand, as they use India post in rare situations, they felt that India Post has failed to live up-to the desired level of expectations.

The finding extracted from Journalists' viewpoint depicts about their neutral view as at one point they were highly satisfied with the services provided by Private Courier Company as their performance exceeded the level of perception and shows a positive SERVQUAL gap score for reliability, empathy and responsiveness content and on the other point it has also been observed that for the rest two dimensions i.e., for assurance and tangibility the services provided by both sectors were found to be satisfactory. Therefore, it can be inferred that although there were many gap scores extracted from the responses of Journalists, but it has been cleared that the actual gap was found for the service provided by India Post for the contents i.e., reliability, empathy and responsiveness signify that most of the time India Post need to think for the improvement in these service dimensions. This means the India Post need to think for the improvement in these service dimensions so that they can be able to provide better service to their customers because from Journalist's point of view, in all these three dimensions the performance of India Post was not found to be satisfactory.

Therefore, it can be inferred that although there exist many gap scores between India Post and Private Courier Companies from various service receiver's point of view as extracted from the survey, but it has been clear from the study that predominantly gap was found for the services provided by India Post for the contents i.e., reliability, empathy and responsiveness which signifies that India Post have to revisit and think for the improvement in these service dimensions.

7.2 Service Provider's View:

It is worth mentioning that the viewpoints of the service providers regarding their feeling about the expectations of their services by the customers as well as their satisfaction level in performing their services need to be assessed.

Table 5
Perceptions related to Service Providers of Indian Postal Department and Private Courier Company

Determinants of Service Quality	Average Weighted Mean value of Service Provider's Perception for India Post (P₁)	Average Weighted Mean value of Service Provider's Perception for Private Courier Company (P₂)	Average Weighted Mean difference (P₁-P₂)
Reliability	5.60	6.32	-0.72
Assurance	5.57	6.48	-0.91
Tangibility	5.69	6.44	-0.75
Empathy	5.63	6.32	-0.69
Responsiveness	5.75	6.55	-0.80

Source: Calculated from the processed data collected from Field Survey.

Table 5 shows that almost all the dimension of service quality i.e., assurance (-0.91), responsiveness (-0.80), tangibility (-0.75) and reliability content (-0.72) it has a greatest negative average gap score and there is minimal negative average gap score for empathy content (-0.69). This reveals that the employee's expectation as well as perception regarding quality services offered from Private Courier Company was more than the India Post. However, though the service providers of both sectors were satisfied from the quality of services offered by them, but still there exist SERVQUAL GAP.

Irrespective of the fact that the quality of services provide by Private Courier Company was higher than India Post, the findings indicate that in case of Tangibility dimension, their exist high service gap which indicate that it may be reflection of their motivation towards work as well as their institutional attitude that has also been reflected in their services. Further, another service gap was found in the Assurance dimension which indicates employees of Private Courier Companies to think for the improvement in this service dimension so that irrespective of their high service charges they can be able to attract more customers.

8. Addressing the Research Questions

- A. The finding of this study revealed that the actual performance of India Post varies for each group of service receivers. Professional Institutes mainly prefer to use the services provided by some well-established Private Courier Company, and they sometimes go for the use of India Post therefore in comparison to the India Post's performance, the performance of Private Courier Company was better meet up with their expectations. Likewise, Service Receivers of e-commerce Company mainly use either their own courier services or they

also prefer to use the services provided by some well-established Private Courier Company. Therefore, in comparison to the India Post's performance, the performance of Private Courier Company was better meet up with their expectations. Further it has also been observed that the Service Receivers of Central Government Department seldom use the services provided by Private Courier Companies as they only have one option to use India Post as per the instruction of the Government and there is no other alternative available for them due to which the performance of India Post successfully meets the expectations of Central Government Department. On the other hand, it has been observed that Journalists, the performance of Private Courier Companies were meeting the expectations in comparison to India Post. Therefore overall, it can be addressed to the first Research Question that except Central Government Departments, for each group of Customers, expectations from India Post were more than the actual performance.

- B. The finding of this study it can be inferred that for each group of Customers, Private Courier Companies try to meet the expectations from their quick service and better performance except in case of Central Government Departments however for certain other reasons then service quality.
- C. It has been observed from the study that the expectations of each focused group were more than the performances of both the India Post as well as Private Courier Company's courier services. However, the performance of private courier companies has found to be better than India Post. It can be inferred from the study that there exists expectation gap between India post and Private Sector Courier Companies because although India post is more reliable and convenient in comparison to the private courier services but regarding quality of service it can be inferred that private courier company's performance is better than India post's service because of their prompt services. The same has been depicted by Journalists as in this study the Journalists view was more emphasized due to their neutral position. The finding of this study demonstrates that although there were many gap scores extracted from the study, but the expectation gap belongs to the service provided by India Post for the contents i.e., reliability, empathy and responsiveness has been predominant.

9. Epilogue

The RATER model seems to be an appropriate tool to measure the service quality of Courier companies as undertaken in this study. The models paved the researchers a guideline to observe the expectations, Perceptions and Performance matrix from the Customer's perspective. At the same time the expectation and perception matrix of service providers has led to certain interesting observations.

From the study it has been observed that there is a gap between the desired service level and Ideal service level for which it has failed to generate a delightful service experience from both the sector under consideration. Although the predictive service level of India Post is high but according to the customer's viewpoint, they fall sort to the adequate service level and vice versa in case of Private courier services.

The conclusion extracted from the study reveals that India Post is lagging in Reliability, Empathy and Responsiveness content as per the Customer's point of view. However, a close look into the responses received from the Providers, it reveals an important issue that they

themselves believe that they are unable to meet the expectations of the customers. Some of the main reasons could be the high competition, lack of motivation and lack of professional attitude due to their service terms and conditions. These has affected their quality of services. They have edges over Private Courier Companies in terms of Tangibility and Assurance content as per the views of the customers. Although not within the purview of the study, the India Post have charges relatively lower than the private courier companies, they are in a better position strategically as in combination of their Tangibility and Assurance factors they can easily overcome the lagging factors like Reliability, Empathy and Responsiveness in comparison to the Private Courier Companies. The motivation level should be improved by bringing professional attitude among the employees of the India post so that prompt, hard and innovative work can be expected from the employees of India Post to deal with the stiff competition offered by the private players.

It has also revealed from the study that Private Courier Companies are also lagging behind especially for Tangibility and Assurance content as per the opinion of the customers, that does not mean that the Services provided by Private Courier Companies is superior/inferior to India Post. It can be concluded that these GAP can be removed if the employees of Private Courier Company will try to improve their services through which they can be able to attract more customers irrespective of their high service charges. Further, it can be stated that although India Post is preferred due to its low cost, high faith etc. but at urgency, the services of Private Courier Companies are highly in demand.

Thus, the study concludes that a healthy competitive environment needs to be created in the courier sector in India for improvement of service quality. It endorses consideration of internal factors that impact consumer expectations which include individual needs, level of involvement, past experience, and service philosophy. Although consumer expectations are often modified by situational factors, promotions, pricing, distribution, service personnel, firm image, and pre-service waiting factors are the key to improvise the service quality in a competitive environment.

10. Scope for Future Study:

In future research it would be interesting to carry out this study from an international perspective. Since this study proposed the combined study of demand and supply side of courier services provided by both India Post and Private Courier Companies by using SERVQUAL MODELS where the supply side i.e., service provider's expectations and perception and demand side i.e., service receiver's expectations, perceptions and performance being compared in order to measure the level of expectations, satisfactions and SERVQUAL Gaps, for the improvements of service quality of both sectors, it would be more comprehensive if the research be carried out taking in to cognition of different models and different institutions.

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