

SERVICE QUALITY GAP MODEL

Language barrier chokes rural banking in Karnataka

“A transaction that would take one hour is doubled when villagers go to banks when the forms were in Kannada. They have to ask for someone’s help to translate their queries, fill forms and interact with the frontline staff,” explains Ravi Kiran, a farmer from Mandya. Bank employees are Hindi speakers unable to speak in Kannada. Intimidated, and unable to communicate their problems, people in rural areas come to depend on informal financial institutions, cooperative banks and money lenders. This is also a contributory factor to the low bank credit to GDP ratio — at 40.5%. A former nationalized bank manager, who was stationed in rural Ballari, explains, “A lack of knowledge in regional languages prevents banks from being able to serve a population properly, understanding major areas of business and industry,” he says.

Customer/Marketing Research Gap: This gap is the difference between what customers expect from a service and what management thinks they expect. In the case of the language barrier in rural banking in Karnataka, India, the customer expectation is that they will be able to communicate effectively with bank employees and understand the services that are offered. However, management may not be aware of this expectation, or they may not believe that it is important.

Design Gap: This gap is the difference between management's understanding of customer expectations and how they translate that understanding into service delivery policies and standards for employees. In this case, management may have policies and standards in place for communicating with customers, but these policies may not be effective in the context of a language barrier. For example, the policies may require all employees to speak Hindi, even if they do not speak Kannada.

Conformance Gap: This gap is the difference between the service delivery standards and the actual service delivery. In this case, the service delivery standards may require employees to communicate with customers in a clear and concise manner. However, if employees do not speak Kannada, they may not be able to meet this standard.

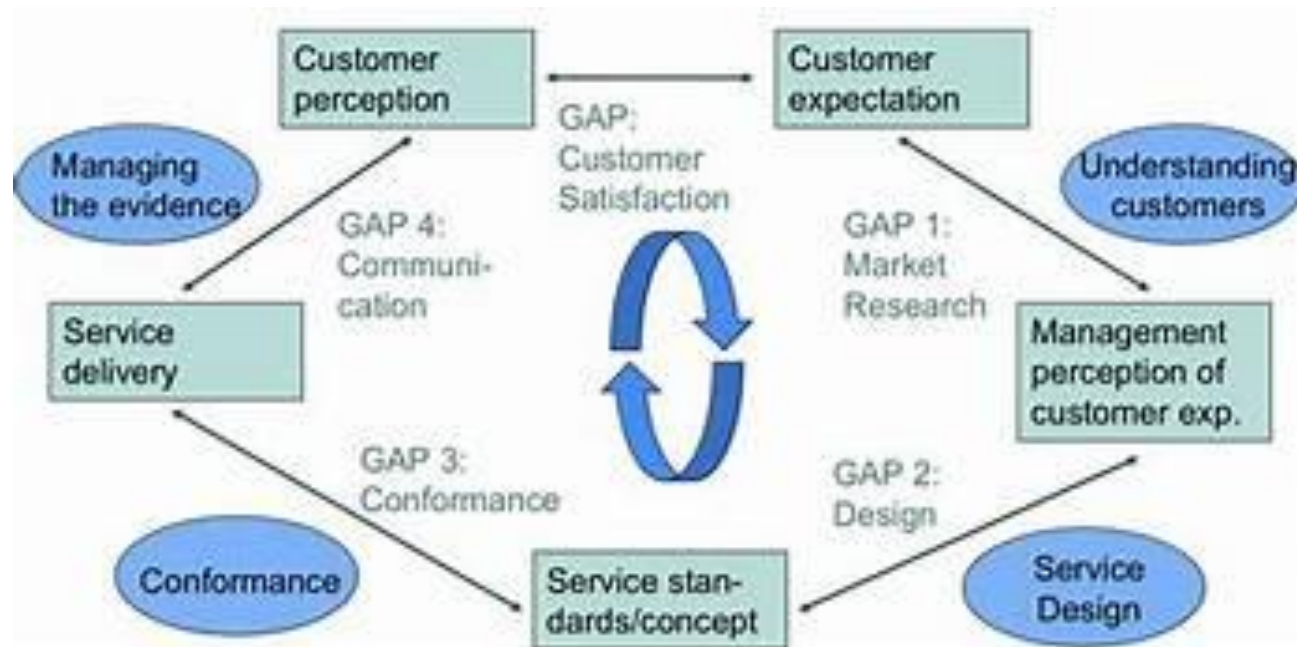
Communication Gap: This gap is the difference between the service that customers receive and the service that is communicated to them. In this case, the service that customers receive may be poor because of the language barrier. However, customers may not be aware of this because they are not being communicated with effectively.

Customer Satisfaction Gap: This gap is the difference between customer expectations and customer perceptions of the service. In this case, the customer expectation is that they will receive a high-quality service. However, their perception of the service may be low because of the language barrier.

The five gaps in the Service Quality Gap Model can be used to identify and understand the factors that contribute to customer dissatisfaction. By understanding these gaps, businesses can take steps to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In the case of the language barrier in rural banking in Karnataka, India, businesses can take the following steps to address the gaps:

- Conduct customer research to understand the customer expectation of being able to communicate effectively with bank employees.
- Develop service delivery policies and standards that are effective in the context of a language barrier.
- Train employees on how to communicate effectively with customers who do not speak Hindi.
- Make their forms and other materials available in Kannada.
- Provide translation services for customers who do not speak Hindi



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