Customer Journey Mapping
Group Project Report

Group 9

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Introduction

The *Independent Grocers Alliance (IGA)* was founded by Frank Grimes in the United States in 1926 when he led a group of 100 independent retailers in organising themselves into a single marketing system with a consistent supply chain but operating as a franchise business model with individual stores owned and operated separately from the brand.

One year later but closer to home, Joe David opened his first corner store in Woolloomooloo and by 1935, he had opened six more. To support his expanding business ventures, he then opened a wholesale warehouse in Redfern and established the first professionally organised group of independent retailers within Australia. Fast forward fifty years to 1988, it was Joe David who brought IGA across the Pacific, getting ten independent retailers together to better compete as one brand.

There are now over 1400 IGA stores operating nationally, with no two IGA stores alike, being family-owned small businesses, franchised to a subsidiary of the wholesaler conglomerate, *Metcash*. Globally, there are over 5000 stores in more than 30 countries making IGA today, the largest affiliated independent grocery chain in the world.

Diagnosis

Customer satisfaction is one of the most basic concepts in services marketing and refers to "the consumer's fulfilment response. It is a judgement that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment." (Oliver, 1997, p. 13)

Service quality is another critical element of customer perceptions, with this evaluation of customer service achievement being similar to but distinctly different from customer satisfaction. It is an "attitude formed by a long-term, overall evaluation of a firm's performance" (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017) and is the difference between a customer's expectation of service performance and the perceived service they receive, driven by service quality dimensions that influence their perception (figure 1).

Figure 1

*Customer Assessment of Service Quality*
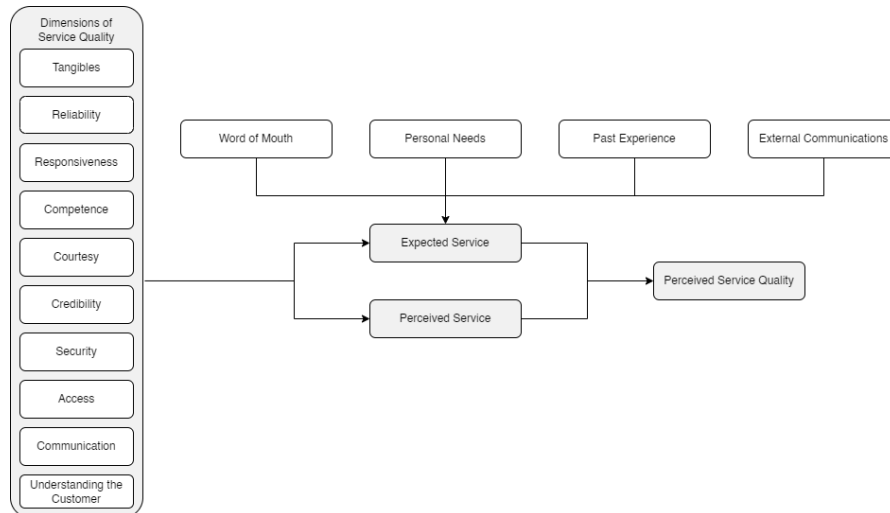
Note. Adapted from Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations by V.A. Zeithaml et al. 1990 p. 23.

Service encounters are what a customer really considers to be the "moments of truth" and provide the best opportunities for building customer satisfaction and service quality at each touch point.

Service blueprinting (figure 2) is a visual tool that simultaneously depicts the service processes within an IGA store, the strategic points of customer contact along with the physical evidence of service, from a customers' point of view. The diagram can also aid management in identifying where the "moments of truth" might occur or any "pain points" that could cause issues, as it maps all functions performed in the store including those unseen by customers.

Figure 2

Service Blueprint
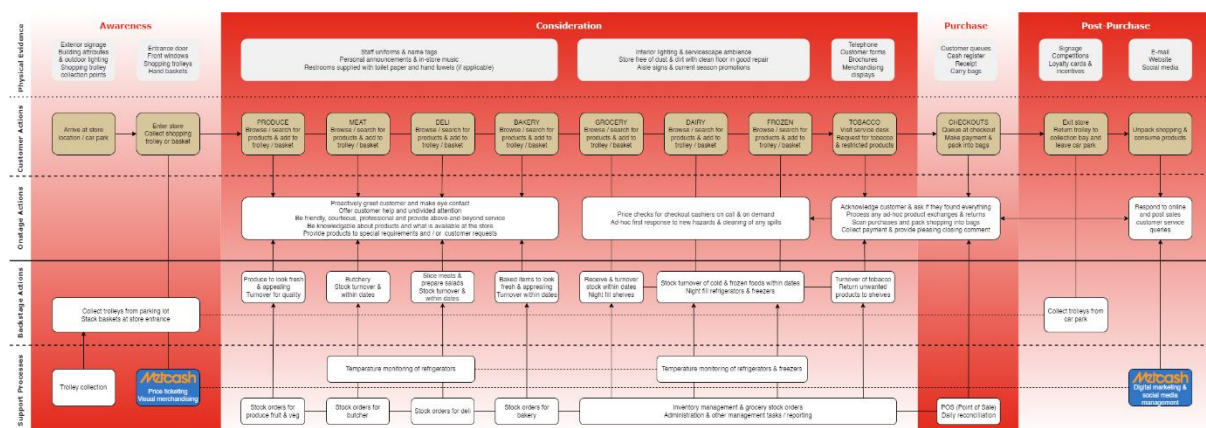
*Note. Adapted from IGA assessment questions by IGA 2022.*
https://www.iga.com/hubfs/Institute/Assessment/2022/2022-IGA-Assessment-Questions-Site-1.pdf

Having constructed the service blueprint, the unbiased opinions and real-life personal experiences of IGA customers written and posted online as consumer reviews at *ProductReview.com.au* can be used to diagnose and analyse if there are any previously unrecognised key service delivery process issues requiring service recovery.

The Gaps Model of Service Quality (figure 3) is a conceptual framework that expands upon the service quality concept, including the causes for any possible shortfalls in service quality, referred to as "provider gaps" and must be closed in order to close the "customer gap", which is most critical to service quality delivery.

Figure 3

The Gaps Model of Service Quality
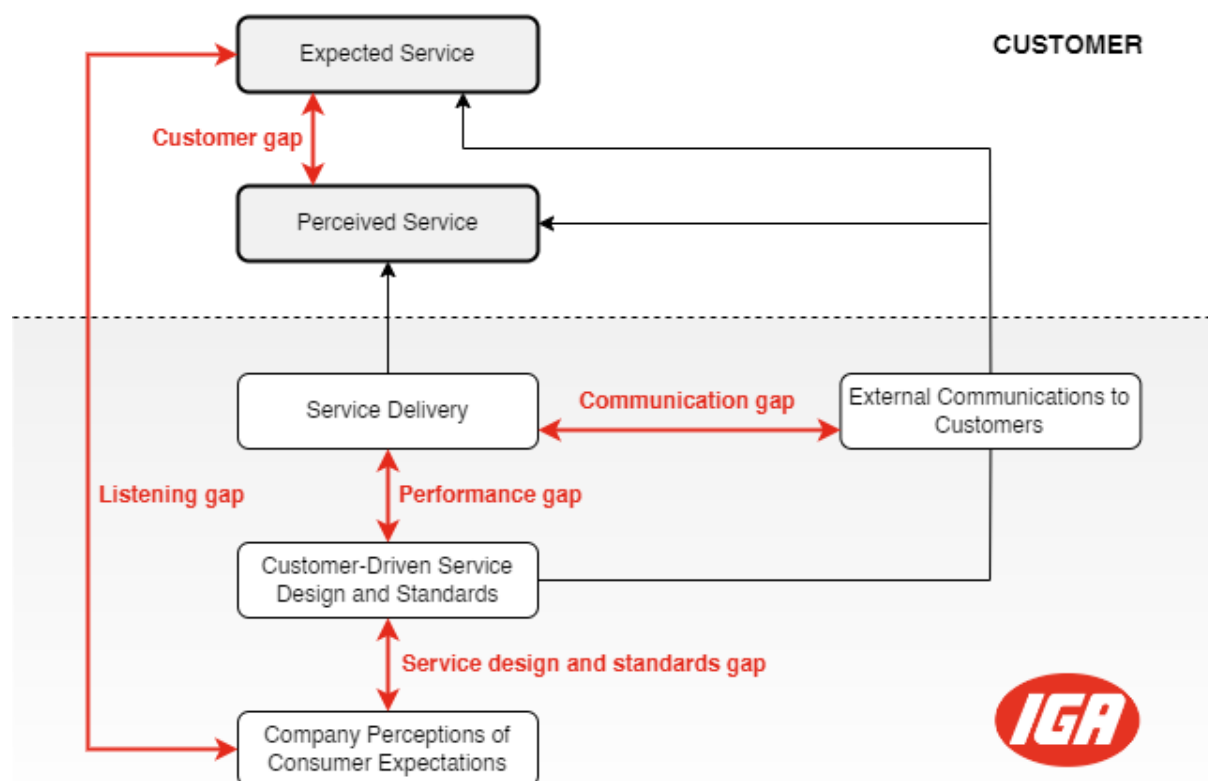
Note. Adapted from Technology's Impact on the Gaps Model of Service Quality by M.J. Bitner et al. 2010.

Gap 1: The listening gap – between customer expectations and management perceptions

Gap 2: The service design and standards gap – for the wrong service quality standards

Gap 3: The service performance gap

Gap 4: The communication gap – when promises do not match delivery

Analysis

From a sample of *n=182* reviews posted online most recently, some insights are quickly observed. Figures 4 and 5 below reflect a relatively even spread of 1 to 5 star reviews, spread relatively flat across all phases of the customer journey.

Figure 4

Customer Journey Phases
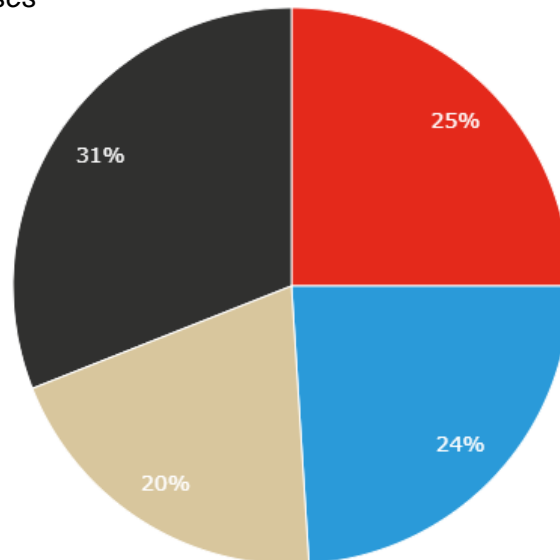
Figure 5

Customer Ratings

Note. Adapted from IGA by ProductReview 2022. https://www.productreview.com.au/listings/iga
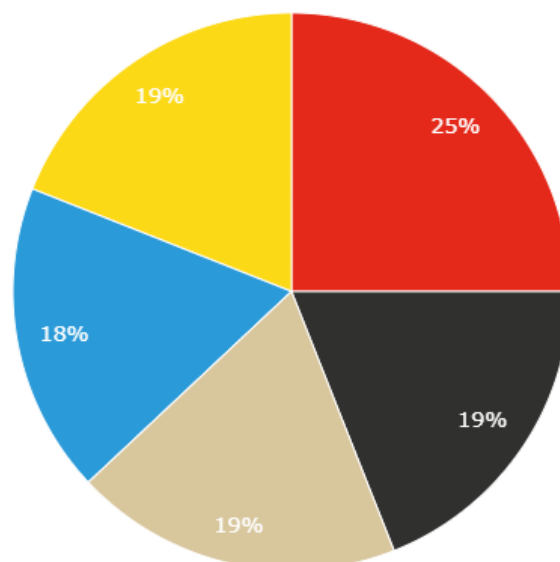
Figures 6 and 7 below reflect the overall tone and mood of the customer reviews, again with a relatively even mix of customer emotions when the sad, disgust and anger emotions are combined together for a total of 57%, correlating with the 58% negative sentiment in the figure below and well within what would be considered normal levels of negative sentiment, after accepting that positive reviews are always less probable to be left compared with negative reviews, under regular conditions..

Figure 6

Customer Emotions

Happy · Sad · Disgust · Anger · Surprise
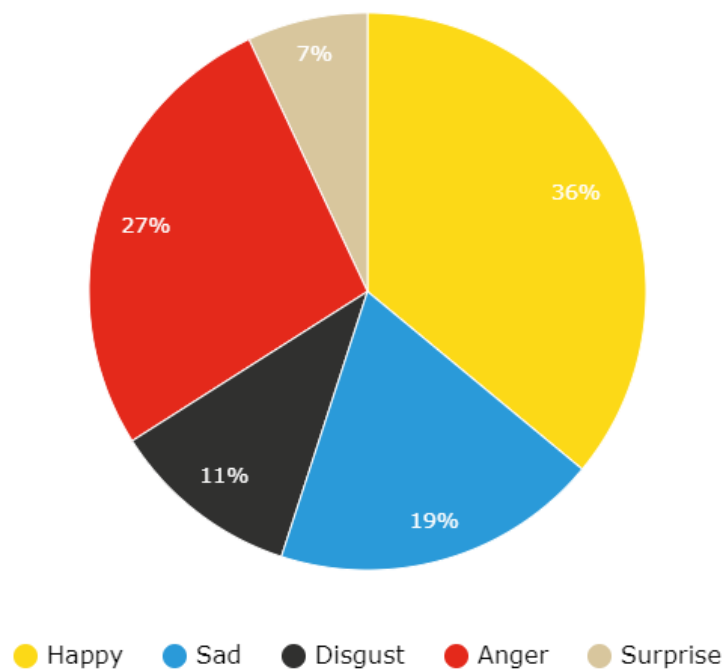
Figure 7

Overall Sentiment

Positive · Neutral · Negative
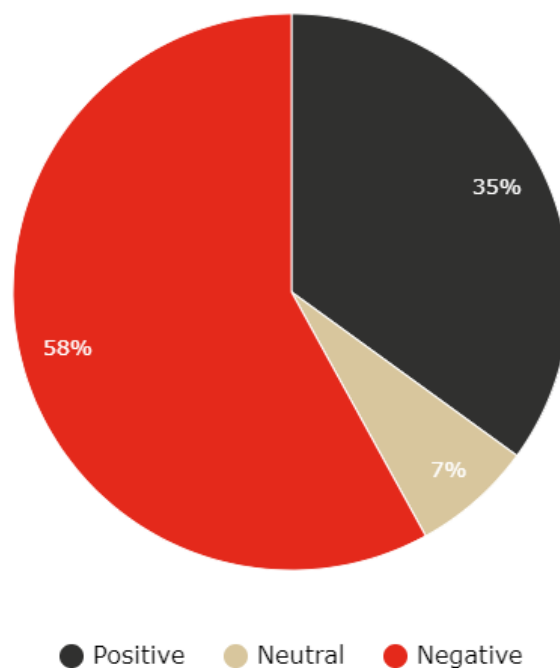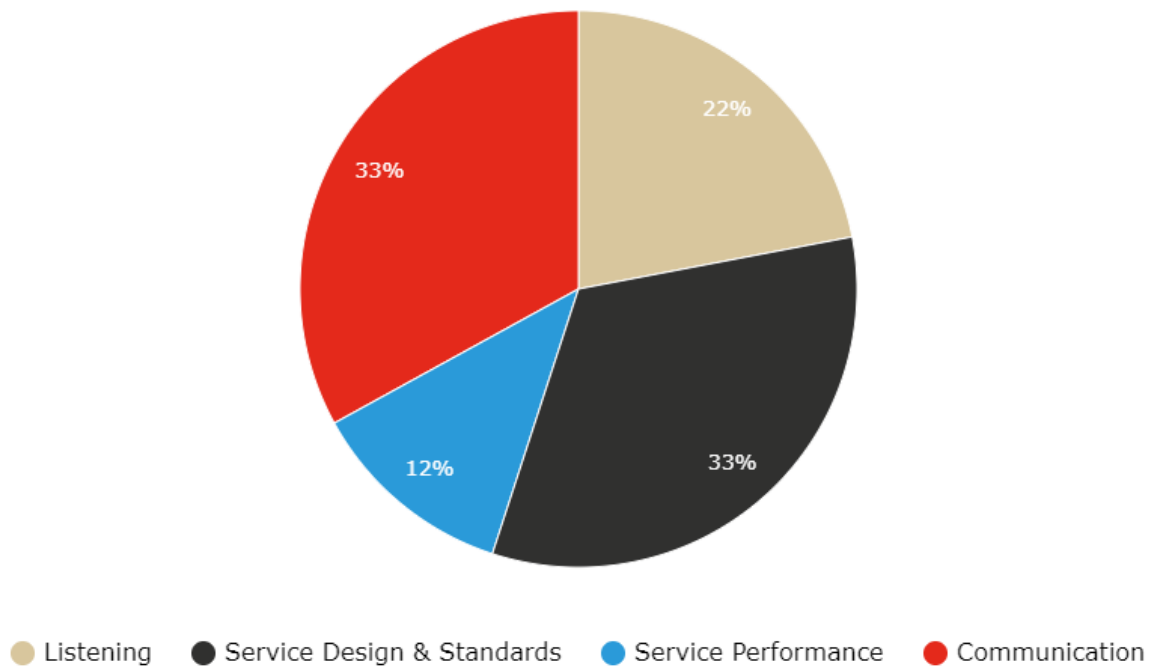
Figure 8

Gap Types

Figure 9

Gap Factors

Note. Adapted from IGA by ProductReview 2022. https://www.productreview.com.au/listings/iga
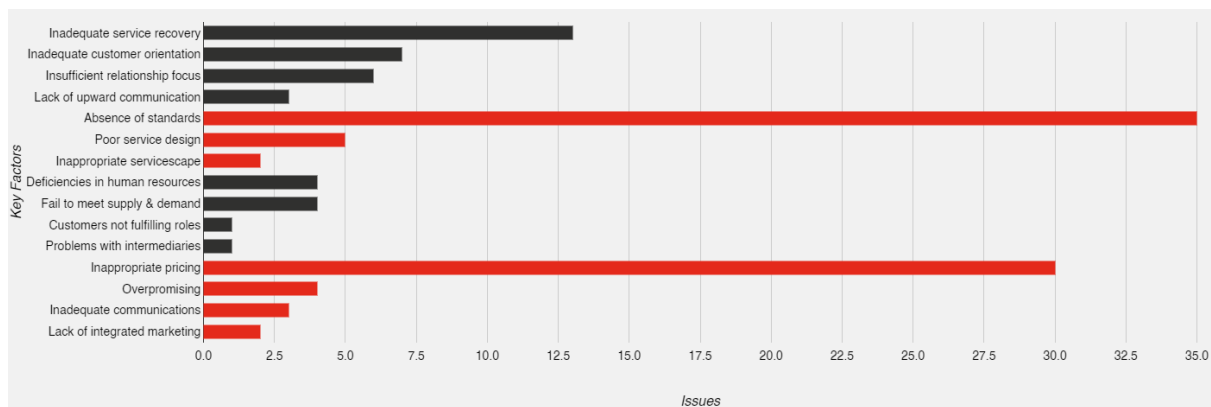
When the reviews are analysed with regards to their particular gap types and subsequent gap factors within the Gaps Model of Service Quality framework, the issues requiring immediate investigation are identified, as to why these complaints from customers have two factors receiving triple the volume of complaints as any other, as evident in figure 9 above. The absence of customer-driven standards and inappropriate pricing are service failures that must be addressed for service recovery and must continue to be monitored by management.

A customer journey map is used to illustrate all possible customer experiences possible at every stage within the customer journey from the customer's point of view (figure 10). It is a method for consideration of how service failures could be perceived by a customer in response to all possible customer actions and propose alternative strategies for closing the respective gaps identified in the full analysis of the results.

Figure 10

Customer Journey Map
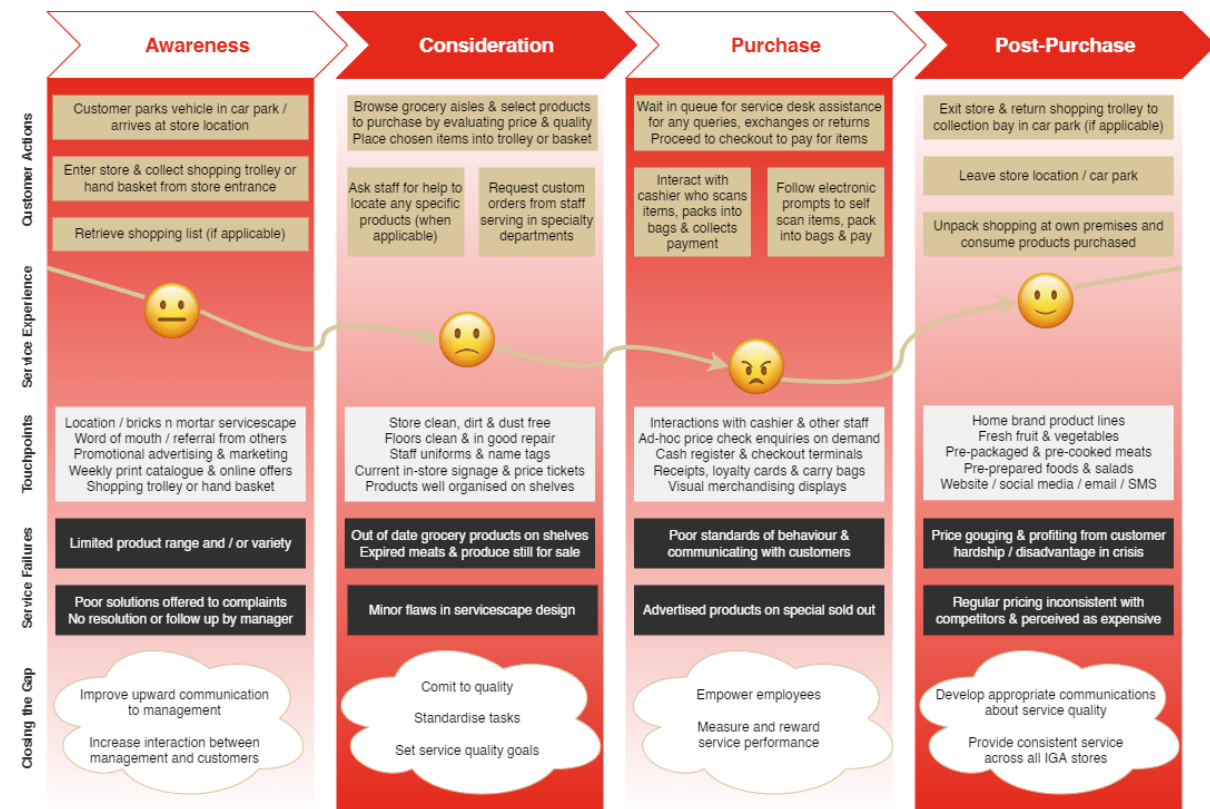
Recommendations

Provider Gap 1: Closing the Listening Gap

This gap (figure 11) represents the difference between the customers' expectations of service and management's understanding of those expectations. The lack of interaction between management and customers is exhibited through inadequate service recovery and insufficient relationship focus that can only be interpreted by both customers and IGA employees alike as having little value for the customer if not listening to their complaints or making amends when things go wrong, despite how critical maintaining these relationships is to any retailers' financial success.

It is recommended that the international IGA Shopper and Employee Feedback Program be made mandatory for all Australian retailers and their staff, as the process will help IGA managers gather, analyse, understand and act upon the feedback they receive, easily accessible through a simple mobile app. The twice annual mystery shopper assessments are recommended be made monthly for all stores, so that a culture of embracing service quality excellence be adopted and practised at all times, through internal competition with other stores, along with incentive rewards for individuals, celebrated annually in a formal / corporate Awards of Excellence dinner recognising achievements, in lieu of a company Christmas party.

Figure 11

Gap 1: The Listening Gap
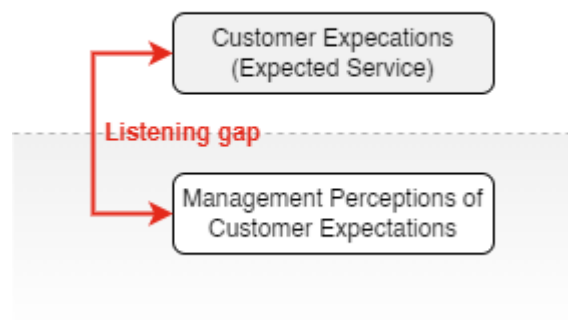
Note. Adapted from Technology's Impact on the Gaps Model of Service Quality by M.J. Bitner et al 2010.

Provider Gap 2: Closing the Service Design and Standards Gap

The absence of customer-driven standards and any formal process for setting service quality goals is of particular concern with this gap (figure 12) but is not surprising considering the lack of leadership already shown by management that has allowed out of date stock to remain on shelves rather than being rotated, and rotten meat and produce being sold to customers, despite the danger this poses to the health and wellbeing of customers, or to the reputation of the brand.

With immediate effect, management must commit to quality and the standardisation of tasks required for food safety and handling, such as daily monitoring of refrigerator and freezer temperatures and spot checks of meat and produce items for ensured freshness in other display areas. Stock can be received into inventory, with best-before and use-by dates

recorded in the inventory system flagging that such items be rotated when expiry dates near. Checks can also be added to the monthly mystery shopper program.

Figure 12

Gap 2: The Service Design and Standards Gap
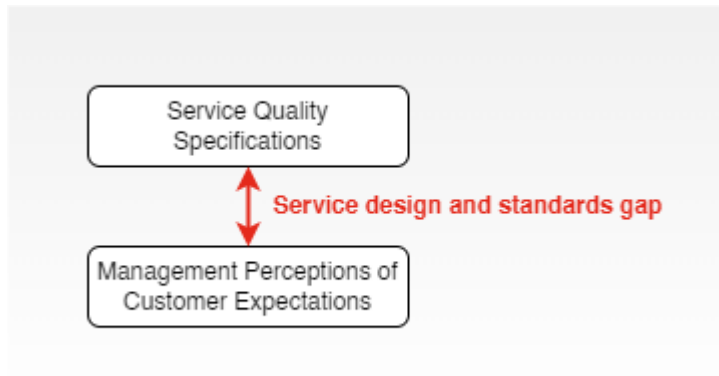
Note. Adapted from Technology's Impact on the Gaps Model of Service Quality by M.J. Bitner et al 2010.

Provider Gap 3: Closing the Service Performance Gap

While there were fewer issues in performance that drove customers to complain about this gap (figure 13), it can be seen through the consistency of the few that do that the lack of appropriate supervisory control systems and a culture of measuring and rewarding service performance non-existant that if not addressed as a human resource priority will over time be accepted as the norm.

Employees need to be empowered for delivering service quality through ongoing training and education. Retail training certifications can be implemented for digital delivery through the international award-winning *IGA Coca-Cola Institute* with custom courses designed in-house for the Australian market by IGA's own *Retail Learning Institute*.

Figure 13

Gap 3: The Service Performance Gap
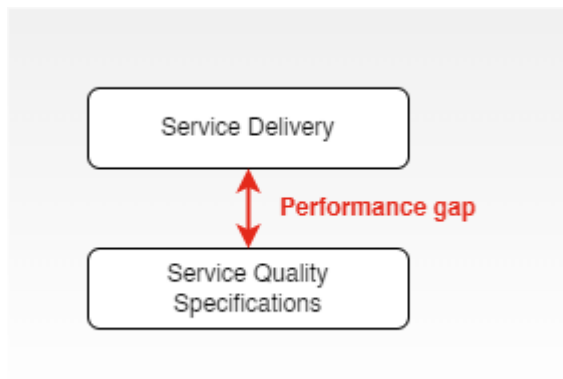
Note. Adapted from Technology's Impact on the Gaps Model of Service Quality by M.J. Bitner et al 2010.

Provider Gap 4: Closing the Communication Gap

Figure 14

Gap 4: The Communication Gap
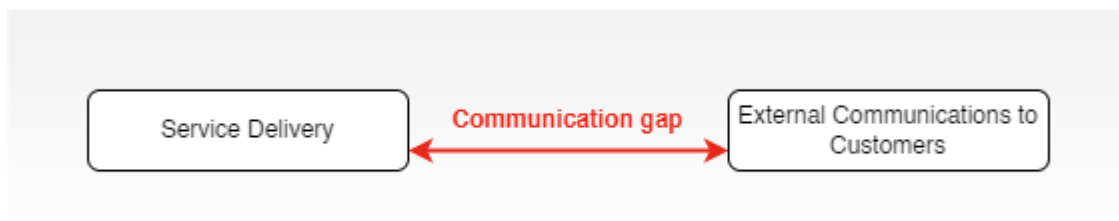
Note. Adapted from Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations by V.A. Zeithaml et al. 1990 p.116..

Gap 5: The Customer Gap = Service Quality

Figure 15

Gap 5: The Customer Gap
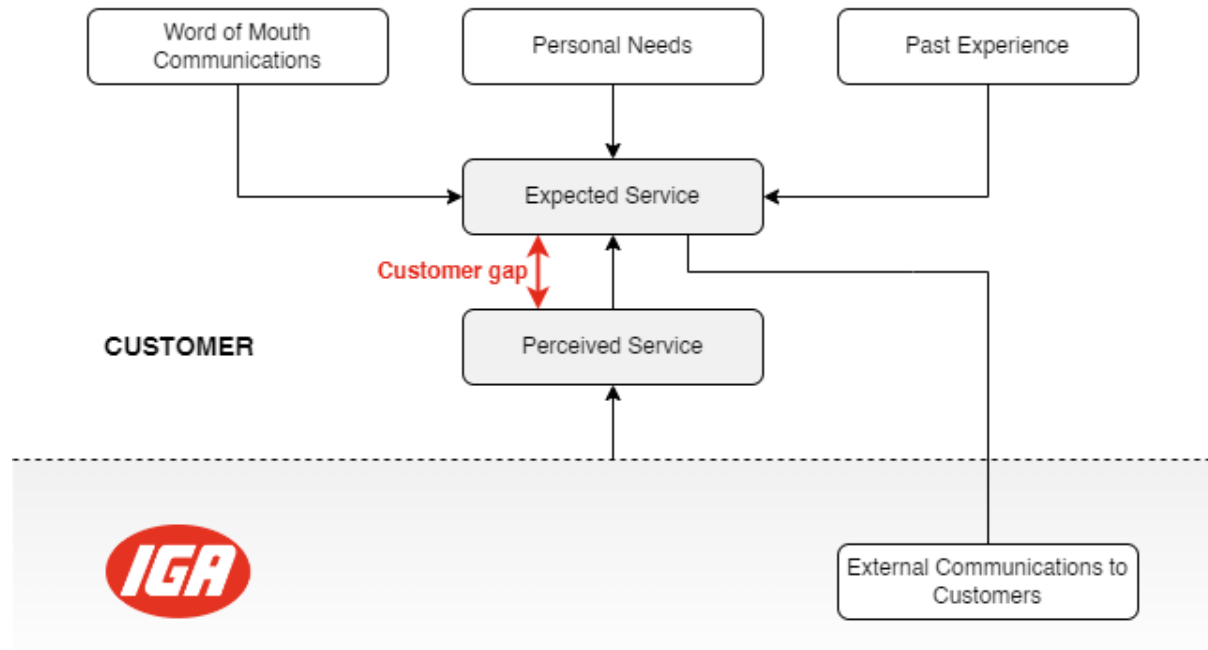
Note. Adapted from Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations by V.A. Zeithaml et al. 1990 p. 37.

Figure 16

Process Model for Continuous Measurement and Improvement of Service Quality
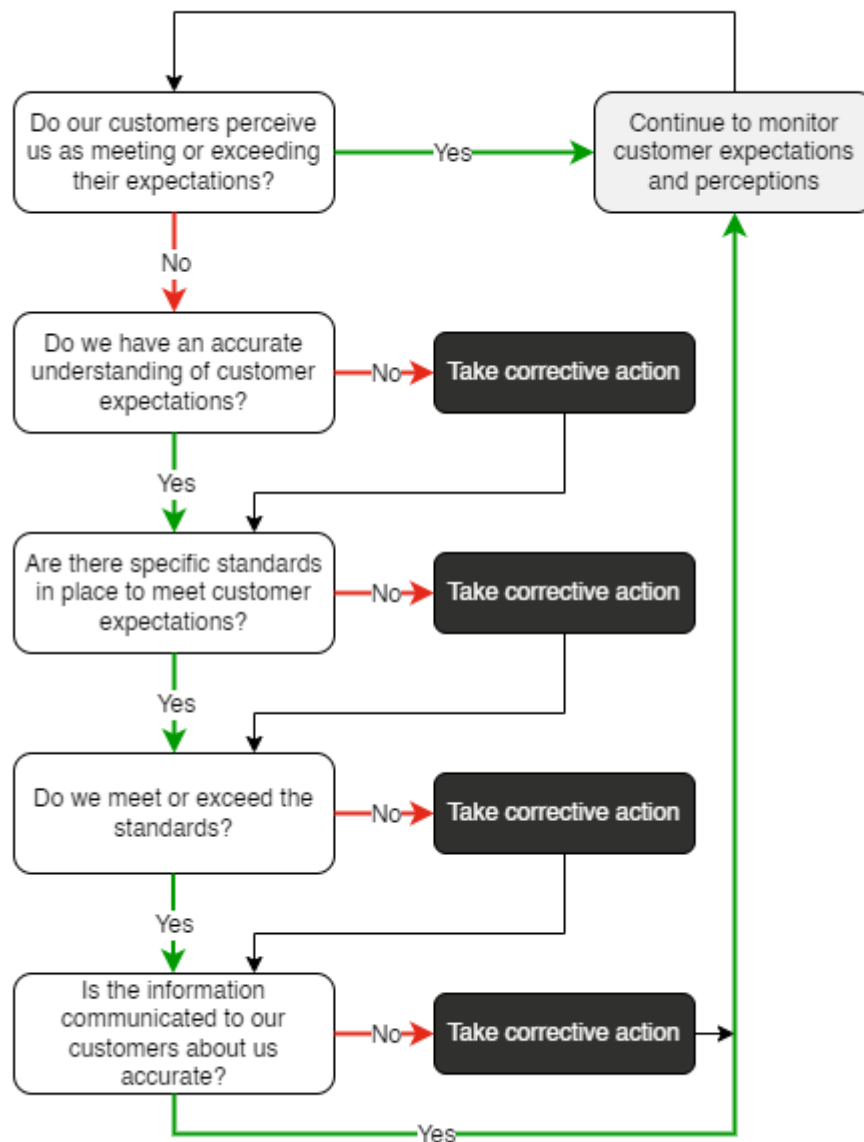
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| Physical Evidence | **Awareness** | | **Consideration** | | | | **Purchase** | **Post-Purchase** | |

Awareness

Consideration

Purchase

Post-Purchase

Physical Evidence

| Exterior signage
Building attributes
& outdoor lighting
Shopping trolley
collection points | Entrance door
Front windows
Shopping trolleys
Hand baskets | Staff uniforms & name tags
Personal announcements & in-store music
Restrooms supplied with toilet paper and hand towels (if applicable) | Interior lighting & servicescape ambience
Store free of dust & dirt with clean floor in good repair
Aisle signs & current season promotions | Telephone
Customer forms
Brochures
Merchandising
displays | Customer queues
Cash register
Receipt
Carry bags | Signage
Competitions
Loyalty cards &
incentives | E-mail
Website
Social media |

Customer Actions

| Arrive at store
location / car park | Enter store
Collect shopping
trolley or basket | PRODUCE
Browse / search for
products & add to
trolley / basket | MEAT
Browse / search for
products & add to
trolley / basket | DELI
Browse / search for
products & add to
trolley / basket | BAKERY
Browse / search for
products & add to
trolley / basket | GROCERY
Browse / search for
products & add to
trolley / basket | DAIRY
Browse / search for
products & add to
trolley / basket | FROZEN
Browse / search for
products & add to
trolley / basket | TOBACCO
Visit service desk
Request for tobacco
& restricted products | CHECKOUTS
Queue at checkout
Make payment &
pack into bags | Exit store
Return trolley to
collection bay and
leave car park | Unpack shopping &
consume products |

Onstage Actions

Proactively greet customer and make eye contact
Offer customer help and undivided attention
Be friendly, courteous, professional and provide above-and-beyond service
Be knowledgable about products and what is available at the store
Provide products to special requirements and / or customer requests

Price checks for checkout cashiers on call & on demand
Ad-hoc first response to new hazards & cleaning of any spills

Acknowledge customer & ask if they found everything
Process any ad-hoc product exchanges & returns
Scan purchases and pack shopping into bags
Collect payment & provide pleasing closing comment

Respond to online
and post sales
customer service
queries

Backstage Actions

| Produce to look fresh
& appealing
Turnover for quality | Butchery
Stock turnover &
within dates | Slice meats &
prepare salads
Stock turnover &
within dates | Baked items to look
fresh & appreaing
Turnover within dates | Receive & turnover
stock within dates
Night fill shelves | Stock turnover of cold & frozen foods within dates
Night fill refrigerators & freezers | Turnover of tobacco
Return unwanted
products to shelves |

Collect trolleys from parking lot
Stack baskets at store entrance

Collect trolleys from
car park

Support Processes

Trolley collection

Metcash
Price ticketing
Visual merchandising

Temperature monitoring of refrigerators

Temperature monitoring of refrigerators & freezers

Metcash
Digital marketing &
social media
management

| Stock orders for
produce fruit & veg | Stock orders for
butcher | Stock orders for deli | Stock orders for
bakery | Inventory management & grocery stock orders
Administration & other management tasks / reporting | POS (Point of Sale)
Daily reconcilliation |

Awareness	Consideration	Purchase	Post-Purchase

Customer Actions

Awareness	Consideration	Purchase	Post-Purchase
Customer parks vehicle in car park / arrives at store location	Browse grocery aisles & select products to purchase by evaluating price & quality. Place chosen items into trolley or basket	Wait in queue for service desk assistance for any queries, exchanges or returns. Proceed to checkout to pay for items	Exit store & return shopping trolley to collection bay in car park (if applicable)
Enter store & collect shopping trolley or hand basket from store entrance	Ask staff for help to locate any specific products (when applicable) / Request custom orders from staff serving in specialty departments	Interact with cashier who scans items, packs into bags & collects payment / Follow electronic prompts to self scan items, pack into bags & pay	Leave store location / car park
Retrieve shopping list (if applicable)			Unpack shopping at own premises and consume products purchased

Service Experience

🙂 (Awareness) 🙁 (Consideration) 😠 (Purchase) 🙂 (Post-Purchase)

Touchpoints

Awareness	Consideration	Purchase	Post-Purchase
Location / bricks n mortar servicescape / Word of mouth / referral from others / Promotional advertising & marketing / Weekly print catalogue & online offers / Shopping trolley or hand basket	Store clean, dirt & dust free / Floors clean & in good repair / Staff uniforms & name tags / Current in-store signage & price tickets / Products well organised on shelves	Interactions with cashier & other staff / Ad-hoc price check enquiries on demand / Cash register & checkout terminals / Receipts, loyalty cards & carry bags / Visual merchandising displays	Home brand product lines / Fresh fruit & vegetables / Pre-packaged & pre-cooked meats / Pre-prepared foods & salads / Website / social media / email / SMS

Service Failures

Awareness	Consideration	Purchase	Post-Purchase
Limited product range and / or variety	Out of date grocery products on shelves. Expired meats & produce still for sale	Poor standards of behaviour & communicating with customers	Price gouging & profiting from customer hardship / disadvantage in crisis
Poor solutions offered to complaints. No resolution or follow up by manager	Minor flaws in servicescape design	Advertised products on special sold out	Regular pricing inconsistent with competitors & perceived as expensive

Closing the Gap

Awareness	Consideration	Purchase	Post-Purchase
Improve upward communication to management / Increase interaction between management and customers	Comit to quality / Standardise tasks / Set service quality goals	Empower employees / Measure and reward service performance	Develop appropriate communications about service quality / Provide consistent service across all IGA stores