

National Cheng Kung University

Institute of International Management

What works really well in your paper are the example and how you draw out dimensions of Chinese service quality. This is a rich, interesting and well done part of the paper.

You conclude that Chinese customers think about service quality differently from Western customers.

So why do you choose to draw on Western service quality models to explain your ideas? See my detailed comment below where I try to explain the problem with this. The issue of 'relationship' could be made more of - see the restaurant example - "like friends" fits Hwang's notion of instrumental *and affective* ties that starts to give a deeper theoretical backdrop to how Chinese customers build up their perceptions of service.

Mid Term Paper

Students:

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1. INTRODUCTION

This does not set the scene very well for your paper.
Something on the importance of diff service and service quality would.

t: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century written by

05), he highlighted that the world is being flattened with

diffservice and service marketing models. Pieces of productions and service model

were put together to compile the goods and service we receive today. However, the global platform also allows people of various culture backgrounds to voice and express themselves (Friedman, 2005). To succeed in this world where competition is intensifying, one key strategy is to differentiate oneself by providing high service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The perceived service quality is concluded by Parasuraman and Zeithaml into five key dimensions, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy ("SERVQUAL"). Tangibles, it is related to physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel. Reliability is the concept that with the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence are belonged to the concept – Assurance. The fifth dimension, Empathy, is about caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers, which means the understanding of customer needs. Assurance and empathy are more related to the communication, credibility, security, competence, and access.

Why so much on Western measures? Your conclusion says, "perceptions are very different from that of the

relia West"

QAUL dimension, the retail service quality scale (RSQS)

al., 1996) is also applied to see how physical aspects, \checkmark

tion, problem solving and policy might have an effect on

the retail service setting. Dabholkar (Dabholkar et al., 1996) proposed the five dimensions to enhance the concept of SERVQAUL. Physical aspects, the idea is not only the appearance of the physical facility, it also includes the convenience offered to the customers by the layout of the physical facilities. Reliability, similar to the SERVQUAL reliability dimension, is the customers view reliability as a combination of keeping promise and "doing it right". Personal interaction in RSQS is the service employees inspiring confidence and being courteous/ helpful. The personal interaction dimension can be viewed as the responsiveness and assurance and some items of empathy in SERVQUAL. A new fourth dimension, Problem solving, it emphasizes the handling of returns and exchanges as well as of complaints. This dimension is specifically related to the handling of problems and merits a separate dimension. Policy, the fifth dimension, captures aspects of service quality that are directly influenced by store policy. Its concept is to deliver the concept that whether the store's policy is responsive to customers' needs.

Table 1. Model comparison, SERVQUAL vs. RSQS

| SERVQUAL dimensions | RSQS dimensions |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| (Parasuraman et al., 1988) | (Dabholkar et al., 1996) |
| ✓ Tangible | ✓ Physical Aspect |
| ✓ Reliability | ✓ Reliability |
| ✓ Responsiveness | |
| ✓ Assurance | ✓ Personal Interaction |
| ✓ Empathy | |
| | ✓ Problem Solving |
| | ✓ Policy |

In our study, we tried to use the two service quality models, SERVQUAL and RSQS, to applied to the observation in retail service in Taiwan and analyze the phenomena to find out the most important dimension in Taiwan retail service.

2. LOCALISING SERVICE IN TAIWAN

Seven observations in different retail settings were observed to analyze how the service quality dimensions impact on the operation of customer-provider relationship.

Service relationships in Taiwan:

Case 1. Convenient stores

"Welcome!" is usually the greeting I hear when I walk into a convenience store. Today I want to buy a cup of coffee just like I usually do. The store clerk said, "Dear lady, we are running a promotion that if you buy a cup of coffee you can get one free. Would you want to try it?" "But I can't drink two cups right now." I said. "That's ok. I can leave you a purchase record here and you get the second cup next time." The clerk

said. This is really a *flexible* promotion that I bought two cups of coffee immediately. As a way to keep track of the purchase, the clerk actually signed her name on the receipt so that I can redeem the second cup on the next trip. This appeared as an unconditional trust without a system to me. After buying my coffee I also paid for my parking ticket fees. It is really *convenient* to pay various bills, for parking, phone, credit card and others, in the convenient store. It is an innovative value of convenient store. While I was appreciating the attentiveness service that convenient stores provide, a young man walked in and asked, "Do you know how to go to Cheng Kung University?" Another clerk replied, "Oh, you just go straight ar like the presentation of the experience that intersection. Then you can see the gate of the university." Thes friendly and happy to help the young man. Clerks also drew a dimensions in the young man. They were really enthusiastic. Many convenient stores are located at main intersections with bright, easy-to-recognize logo. This is really a clear land marks for people to meet, ask road direction and being good helper for nearby residents in daily

Case 2. Department Store

life.

My mom and I went to a department store looking to buy clothes. We tried lots of clothes and decided to buy some. When the clerk was scanning the items she also asked me, "Miss, do you have the VIP card of our department? If you do, we can

smiled and said, "That's fine. I can still give you the discount this time. Hope you like our clothes and come again! It was really good news and I think the service interaction made me feel more *comfortable* and *flexible*. After paying, the clerk smiled to us and said thank you. We then went to cosmetic department. Mom wanted to buy some products. The clerk introduced some new and trendy products for Mom and made some suggestions. Mom was happy and while we planned to pay the money. The clerk said, "Ms. Chen, do you need the Taiwan - I think! ng service?" Mom felt this service is so sweet but we let go of this chance this time. The clerk then packed Mom's products with a beautiful bag and said, "Ms. Chen, here are some free samples of our newest products for you. You can try and if you like the experience with them, you are welcomed to take some more." Mom was also happy for the additional service and free samples. We left the cosmetic department with smile. Due to that the department store was holding annual sales event, we thought our purchase of over NT\$ 5,000 could allow us to accumulate some points and receive some free gifts. This policy really is a good way to keep our *loyalty* to this department store and we would like to shop here again next time. Then we left by taxi. The taxi was also arranged by the department store and the porter would record the car

provide a discount." "Oh! I don't have it. What should I do?" The pretty clerk

nlate number of the taxi to ensure our safety. This is another attentive behavior and Martin, Sebastian - please read the dialogue here. See the relationship. We don't need so many 'rules' - emphasis on the menu is reduced. The provider knows the customers taste - because they are close (developed interpersonal understanding). The customer show respect to the providers judgement in the context of their relation. There is sense of happiness at being with (possible) friends in the encounter. Free gifts come...

"Hi, Ivy!" The restaurant owner greeted me. This is a restaurant where I meet my friends often, and the owner always says hello and introduces some new dishes to me. Susan, the restaurant owner, is really a *ChinChieh* person and treats her customers as family. My friends ordered some dishes and drinks. Susan took a look at the order and

said, "Hey, Ivy, since you are my long-term customer. Today, I'd treat you with some dishes not on the menu! By the way, I will prepare some dishes you would like. I know your taste!" "Thank you. I believe you know what I want." Susan gave me a joyful smile and walked into the kitchen to prepare the dishes. Then the waiters sent

some free side dishes to us. After eating all the delicious food, my friends and I felt satisfied. The waiter suddenly came to whisper to me. "Ivy, recently, Susan is testing a new dish and hoping you can try it and give us some comments, are you ok with that?" "Of course!" I said. Susan always *surprises* me and provides me with lots of *new tastes or not-on-menu dishes*. This makes me want to invite or introduce friends to come here and eat. She makes me feel I am well-received and is regarded as a friend. These actions give me *familiarity* and *customized treatment*. It does really

personalized action. The eating experience here makes me happy, just like dining at



home.

Actually, I also had good experience in another restaurant where I ordered a bowl of fried rice. I thought it was too salty and informed the waiter. The waiter listened to me *patiently* and *made sure* they will change the flavor according to my opinion. At first, I thought this might be another general customer-handling procedure. I went on eating my other dishes. After a while, the waiter showed up and gave me a new bowl of fried rice. He said, "Dear lady, I informed our cook and remade this dish. We hope you can try it and tell us if we have changed it to the taste you preferred." This service really surprised me. I never thought about getting a new dish redone by my flavor. I was really impressed by this *responsiveness* to customer complaint.

In recent years, there is one dining trend in Taiwan where the restaurant provides a big variety of food in all-you-can-eat style. In the restaurant you can walk around to take any food you like. The selling points are "all-you-can-eat", "unlimited", "wide food variety" and "self-service model". These restaurants are showcasing an eating style called "吃到飽" (Chi Dao Bao). This service relationship provides customers with a more *flexible* service and *additional value*.

Moreover, there's one *attentive* service for female customers in western style restaurants in Taiwan. These restaurants would keep free sanitary pads in ladies' room.

This gesture looks minor but it makes female customers feel being well taken care of.

This really gives customers an *impressive* image and elevates the store reputation better. This service makes every female customers feel that they were treated like VIPs.

These actions above mentioned just reveal the *attentive*, *enthusiasm* and value-added relationship of customer service.

Case 4. Chinese traditional medicine stores

In traditional Chinese society, people used to go to the Chinese traditional medicine store when they have illness or when they want to get health supplement. For example, women after giving birth, people having severe cough or buying health supplement while winter is approaching (in Chinese culture called *Bu Dong*, 補冬). At the stores the storeowner would ask some questions. "What would you like to buy and for what purpose?" They become *consultants* helping us clarify what kind of herbal prescription suitable for the body condition we have. For different symptoms, they suggest different content. This is really unique in the Chinese society. The store owners are just like *professional* health consultants offering proper supplements. If our shopping list does not suit our symptoms, they would also correct us and provide a more appropriate package to us. These attitudes are *caring* and *ChinChieh*. Some stores even provide free delivery to home. In distant villages, they put all the medicine

and herbals in cars and drive around to deliver to people in need. These are not only convenient but also saving our shopping time.

Case 5. Traditional Beverage Shop

We can also experience caring service in some traditional beverage shop. I had an impressive experience in a beverage shop which sells starfruit juice. I got a terrible cough and my friend suggested me to buy starfruit juice from an amazing store. The people tending the store suggest which kind of fruit prescription customers should drink. I thought, "Ok, let's give it a try!" At the store I said to the storeowner, "Hello, I get a terrible cough and I want to buy a cup of starfruit juice." The owner said, "Excuse me, do you cough with sputum?" "Yes, I do." "Then what's the color of your sputum?" "White!" I said. The owner then said, "Oh, if you have white sputum you can't drink starfruit juice." I replied, "Why not? Then what should I drink?" The owner explained to me patiently, "For your condition, you should buy kumquat with ginseng then cook and drink the juice. If you have yellow sputum and you should drink starfruit juice. There are different prescriptions for different symptoms as they are induced from different causes." I was really surprised by the knowledge I learned. I never expected to get this type of valuable information at this type of drink shop. After I tried the prescription they provide, my cough was cured. This experience made me feel the store establish *loyalty* by providing *caring* and *professional consulting*. When I have cough problem I go to that store again since then. I also refer my friends to the store if they have cough.

Case 6. Gas Station

Different industries have their own ways to deliver the service relationship. Once I went to a gas station to get gasoline for my car. While I was waiting, a young girl with sweet smile talked to me. "Miss, I want to make a simple windshield cleaning for you. May I?" "Wow, this really interesting and special." I thought. "OK! Thanks for your *attentive* service." I replied. The girl picked up a cleaning wiper then started cleaning my windshield. She did it very carefully and for stained spots she sprayed some cleaner and cleaned again. After completed the cleaning, she smiled to me to let me know she had finished the work. This experience also *surprises* me and gives me a positive image for this gas station. A little action raised big *satisfaction*. I think this gas station creates a good connection on service relationship.

Case 7. Fresh Food Service

In Taiwan, night market is an impressive place gathering lots of street vendors in the open selling variety of food, toys and other goods. It provides an attraction as foreigners get to "watch" their food being cooked right beside the cooks. This perhaps is very different from what they are used to in their home countries. Even some desserts are also prepared in live action, like mocha (麻糬). These phenomena also

appear in sightseeing spots for tourists. This kind of food service provides the "hand-made fresh food" experience. You can watch the process and sometimes involve in the process. It makes you feel *involving and*Participation - yes in the West too.

See for example
Build-a-bear stores
This kind of service relationship seems vastly different from the case and carrops.

3. ANALYSIS

The Chinese saying "With relationship, everything is not a problem; without relationship, anything can be a problem." demonstrates the important role relationship (guanxi) plays in guiding and sometimes determining the behavior of people. In Chinese settings, people learn to define their relationship with his/ her counterparts before reacting to an event. In terms of relationship, Chinese people often relay it to different levels. One type of relationship abides by li, the central idea of the Lunyu, which is regarded as the basis for governing rules of conduct and the proper attitude expected in Chinese social context. Imrie (Imrie et al., 2002) also came up with the Confucian relational ethic (CRE) to demonstrate how the social norms are closely linked to Confucian values even up to the 21st century. Other types of relationship are those of family, friends and acquaintance whereas the family type is more devotion-oriented and supportive for that of friends. The customer-provider relationship can be viewed as one of the relationship regulated by li. With such constraints, customers expect a polite and sincere attitude as being fundamental for all

kinds of service received. In addition, as the Chinese saying reflects, people tend to look for connections or *guanxi* in a customer-provider situation in order to elevate the relationship to a level of acquaintance. By doing so, customers expect to receive extra value in the purchase made by means of discount offered or free gifts or samples provided. Through the study, it shows that customer-provider relationship many times has direct relations to the additional service or favors Chinese customers could expect. Thus, it is important for the consumers to maintain an interactive and positive relationship with the service provider.

In our study, a total Good, ok. e perceptions of consumers were observed. To outline the distinguish skeleton of the service relationship in Taiwan, the

No, no, no! This is a critical issue.

- Go back to SERVQUAL and see what each dimension means and the items used to measure it.
- You cannot force these dimensions to fit under the SERVQUAL structure. So for example convenient, part of Chinese thinking, is not part of Western responsiveness ("the willingness of staff to give prompt service"). Some dimensions e.g., chin-chieh, comfortable, enthusiasm don't exist in the Western definition. So this means the definition -the fundamental nature- of the construct of service quality is different.
- All these dimensions or "parts" have to be understood. They only make sense when they are understood through the lens of a culture. So SERVQUAL makes sense when seen through the eyes of Western culture. The dimensions you talk about make sense through the lens of Chinese culture. Perhaps examples help:

Western:

- I should get what I want individual expression of needs = reliability (I specify what will happen)
- When I make my needs known I expect the clerk to quickly help me = responsiveness (I directly tell the clerk what I want they should help me it is my right)
- The clerk should smile at me = empathy (*This is what service providers should do they are obliged to smile*)
- The clerk should know what they are doing = assurance (*Do they know what they are doing yes / no?*)

1.

See your Chinese examples, like the ones in the restaurant.

chin-chieh fits within the warmth of a friendly relationship
free gifts are about thanking a 'friend' for coming by and showing
appreciation for the relation
familiarity - we understand each other at a deep level (mou-chi)
See the overall flow of the example - the service quality of the experience
fits within the relation you have with the store and the person.

Extra Western dimensions are more like a teacher grading an unknown
student's paper - is it reliable (yes/no)?, did the service staff quickly
respond to me (yes/no)?, do they show they remembered me (empathy)
by knowing my name (yes/no)?

Do ask about this if it is not clear.

Table 3. Categorization of 29 Items in RSQS Dimensions

| RSQS Dimensions | | | |
|------------------|---|--|--|
| Physical Aspects | Environment, participation, freshness, pretty clerk/ smile | | |
| Reliability | None | | |
| Personal | Additional value, attentiveness, comfortable, patient, ChinChieh, | | |
| Interaction | surprise, familiarity, customized, enthusiasm, caring, trust | | |
| Problem Solving | Professional consulting, convenient, responsiveness, innovative value, assurance, informative | | |
| Policy | Flexible | | |

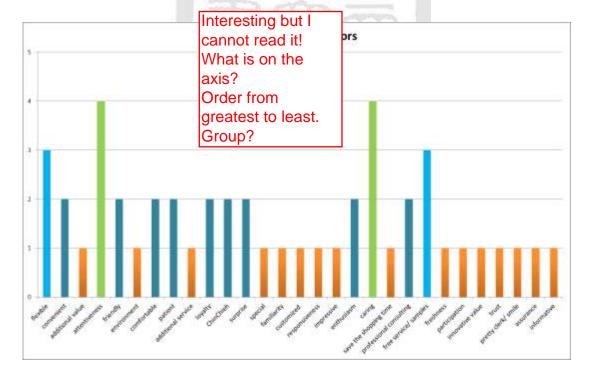
Exceptions: Generosity: Additional service, special, free service, save the shopping time, loyalty, impressive

Based on the two tables, it is discovered that four of the five dimensions are in line with SERVQUAL (Parasuraman and el., 1988) where reliability falls short to show its significance in the seven observations. Further analyzing the factors left as 'Exceptions,' we find that generosity may be used as another dimension. Factors such as additional service, free service, surprise and generosity are put in this category. The generosity act is a proactive gesture done by the shop keepers to provide extra service not within the expectations of the consumers, and many times brings surprises in a pleasant way. With such pleasant experience, the service providers impress the

customers by offering service beyond expectations service quality and gradually build loyalty of its customers.

The below chart calculated the importance of the 29 factors observed and it shows that attentiveness and caring accounts for the most significant aspect in this study, followed by flexibility and free service. The first two factors demonstrate that empathy or personal interaction is valued the highest in a customer-provider relationship, while the generosity and flexibility offered by the provider comes of second importance.

Graph 1. Summary of Service Quality Factors Observed



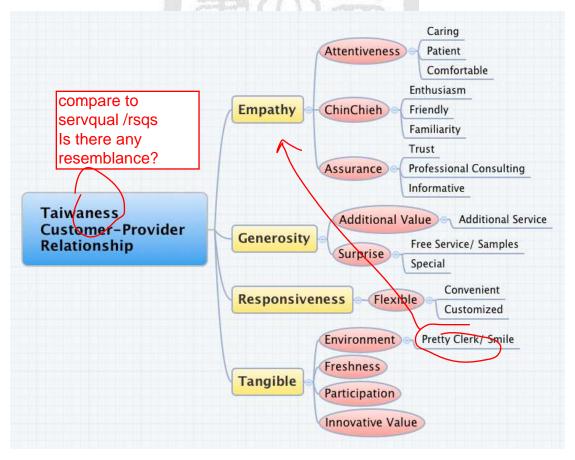
Base on the dimension and the factors, a conceptual tree diagram of the Taiwanese customer-provider relationship is built. It is identified that the relational

concept are composed of four themes:

- (1) Empathy
- (2) Generosity
- (3) Responsiveness
- (4) Tangibles.

Amongst all the constructs, empathy is taken as the most significant followed by generosity, responsiveness and tangibles. The 29 factors are then divided into the constructs based on the extent of its relation toward the major themes. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model expressed in a tree diagram.

Figure 1. Conceptual Tree Diagram of the Taiwanese Customer-Provider Relationship



4. CONCLUSION

This study assists us to understand the key factors influencing the customerprovider relationship in Chinese, and more specific, Taiwanese setting. From the level of significance, we discovered that Taiwanese service expectations and perceptions are very different from that of the West. Unlike the West, reliability was of little importance in this research, empathy was counted as the most critical one in Taiwanese culture. Besides, generosity is also highly recognized from the customers' perspective. The building of positive customer-provider relationship is thus critical in the response of service quality a customer was expecting and received. We hope this study could provide more value about the retail service relationship in Taiwan. Through this model it can be more applied to marketing strategy or operation strategy to establish customer royalty in Taiwan, even in China. This is good reference for customer-provider relationship in Taiwan. However, it can be more expanded and studied deeper to more specifically understand the relationship in the Chinese culture.

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Stanworth 2009,



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| 40% | 25% | 20% | 5% | | | | |
| | ill expand as you type) detail and imply from yo | our example | | | | | |
| Grade (%) 90% | | | | | | | |

Rules and process

Rules.

- The spirit of feedback should be positive and constructive.
- Personal attacks are not acceptable.
- This is not an opportunity to deal with past grievances.
- Avoid personalizing your comments e.g., "Bob comments in section one are rubbish".
- Keep comments as objective as possible.

Process

The following are some notes to help you with this process.

- Focus on constructive comments that include the positive and negative e.g.: *The section on company background is simple, clear and easy to follow.*The format on p.6 changes. See the font size there as compared to p.5.
- Keep comments as objective as possible by highlighting sections/position *We found your research question 2 (section 3.1.2) hard to understand.*
- In terms of the sections above (ABCD):

- A: Does the group cover key aspects of the material? *E.g.*, *if it is a proposal are the nine sections included?*
- B: Is relevant detail included in each of the sections? *E.g.*, *Is the part of the proposal on time frames cover the period of the course? Are the questions/objectives clear, precise?*
- o C: Is the layout easy to follow and attractive? E.g., are sections numbered? Page numbers? Bullets used?
- O D: Is this a group effort? E.g., Does the report flow as a 'whole' or does it look like several parts with little connection? Do the ideas compliment each other all the way through?

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| Catch the key elements to | present. | | |
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Comments (space will expand as you type)

- 1. Well organized
- 2. Good example and easy to understand
- 3. Good linage between example and theory and most of the content based on realiable theory

Grade (%) 95%

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| 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | |
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Comments (space will expand as you type)

The examples are rich and well conveyed in the presentation.

See the notes, now circulated, on presentaition introduction and design.

For more detailed feedback on the project see the first page and throughout the report.

86%

Grade (%) 20%