Review of Service Quality Dimensions and their Measurements in Indian Petro-Retailing

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Abstract: Service quality, one of the vital parts of every service, has been a concern for petro retailing worldwide. Increased focus on customer centred services led to several pieces of researchexploring what factors determine service quality and the waysof its measurement.Here, this paper tries to analyze and summarize the available pool of published Knowledge to understand what comprises Petro retailing service quality, the underlying dimensions of petro retailing service quality, and its measurement. A literature review was conducted on EBSCO, Google Scholar and other databases covering significant research in petro retailing service quality, dimensions, and measurement.It can be concluded dimensionality in the petro retailing service quality is context-specific, and customersweigh them differently. Perceptions only measure dominant petrol retailingquality evaluation over gap models and concepts. Further, Petro retailing service quality construct and its measurement has been primarily done from the customers perspective. However, the provider's view of the petro retailing service quality has not been considered.

Keywords:Petro Retailing, service quality, dimensions, measurement, SERVQUAL

I. INTRODUCTION

India has recorded 3rd position on energy consumption in 2019 after China and the USA and is expected to grow in demand year on year[1]. This opportunity resulted in more focus on the Indian petro retailing sector. Fuel such as Petrol and Diesel is sold in India at fuel stations operated by Oil Marketing Companies (OMC) through their franchisees. Fuel used to be sold as a commodity in India's pre-independence and early post-independence years. The Government regulated the fuel price (PSUs) with hardly any competition among the state-run Oil Companies. With phased deregulation of the Government's price, entry of private players in the fuel retailing sector, competition among themselves has increased considerably [2].

Global retail has transformed significantly Over the last few decades due to the evolution of technological progression, customer behaviours, outlooks,etc.,leading a significantshift in customer services[3]. Technology and the digital domain of social media plays an increasingly important role in marketing. Companies are using these channels to strengthen their Brand image and build sustainedcustomer relations [4]. Companies today increasingly use technology and social media to connect with their customers in a direct and personalized manner. Moreover, an increasing trendof customer information across different industries is visible to know their buying pattern, enabling delivery and designingcustomized services to the target customer segments for enhanced customer experience with improved service proposition [5].

Customer behaviour, habit, and expectations have changed andare still evolving. Due to technological improvement, the retail sector has witnessed a remarkable shift in customer buying behaviour. Customer behaviour towards petro-retailing is also changing since there is an overlap of general and petro retail customers. With the change in customer lifestyle, habitswith the progression of technology is visible, customer preferencesand expectations have also changed and are still evolving. While petro-retailing incorporated some significant technology-led advancements in the recent past, technologies like VR, AI etc., are used extensively in general retail. It has led to a visible shift in customer expectations and buying behaviour with technology in their buying journey and daily life [6]. AI, ML, Cloud, big data, mobile technology adoption is quite mature in the upstream part of Oil & Gas industry. The scenario is not significant in the Indian Oil & Gas downstream context, specifically in customer recognition, identification, satisfying their expectations for service/ product mix. While General retail has made rapid improvements in technology adoption to meet enriched customer expectations, petro-retailing is yet to catch up [7].

The Covid-19 affected habitats across the globeand has generated key challenges in many industries.Lockdown, social distancing caused halt for almost all sectors with a substantial impact on the economy worldwide [8]. Operational excellence was heavily impacted negatively due to logistics restrictions [9]. COVID-19 also had implications for manufacturing industries withthe interruptedflow in the supply chain. The situation also created scope for enterprises to renovate and rethink to remain relevant and agile with the change in time [10].

At the same time, Service Industries transformed itselfinto Green Business Industries regardingitschallenges and opportunities. This will be helpful to maintain a sustainable and clean environment.[11]. COVID-19 has impacted immenselythe Service sector in India, like the educationsector. Despite the challenges created due to the pandemic, many opportunities have also developed, like Open and Distance learning (ODL) using digital technology platforms to cope with the present crisis of COVID-19. Such a technology-based platform shall be helpful for the education system to sustain COVID-19 like situations in the future [12]. This demonstrates that over the last few decades, the Indian economy has evolved, Indian customer has become more perceptive,being price-sensitive at the same time [13].

Since in India, petroleum fuel is being sold as a commodity product with the same price by all marketers and had a quantum transformation forthe offering of many products and services such as ATM and othernon-fuel retailing counters in petroleum retail outlets for customer satisfaction, indicatingthat customer convenience is a growing need [14]. A recent study has shown that the adoption of theInternet of Things (IoTs) in the petro retail market in India shall behelpful to transform the fuel station into a modern technology-based outlet to deliver expected benefits to the customer [15]. Accordingly, customer behaviour,expectation & experience, in general, have changed and are still evolving with the exposure of AI and ML technologies [16]. At the same time, with the increasing engagement and usage of the latest technology,customer buying behaviour has taken a shift [17].

In the changing business environment in the current age, it is crucial to understand customer behaviour to fulfil their expectations to design the service delivery. On the other hand, customer preference is a critical dimension that indicates firms to identify customer choices and modify service delivery protocol accordingly [18]. Measuring factors that influence consumer preference helps marketing companies to

make a strategy for effective product positioningand market segmentation [19]

Thisarticleaims toinspectandsummarizethisvastpoolofunorganized published available Knowledge related to (a) petroretailing service quality, (b) dimensions of petro retailing servicequality,(c)andthemeasurementtechniquesinpetro retailing servicequalityintoanorganizedpiece of work. Consequent sections in this article will highlight these three aspects of service quality in the petro retailing sector, which will help summarise the available Knowledge and pavethepath to known to what isunknownvis a vis what is known.

II. METHOD

Databases such as Google Scholar and EBSCO were searched to identify the significant research in petro retailing servicequality. Thesearch keywordsusedin thecombinationof'fuel retailing', 'petro retailing' ', service quality 'service', 'dimensions' and'measurement'. The search results of articles are included for this study were set based on the criteria as (a)the paper should have been a full-text article in English, (b) the paper published in a peer-reviewed journal, (c) the paper shouldincludeanalysisorviewsrelatedtopetro retailingservicesand(d)thepapershouldhavecontained some qualitativeand/orquantitativefindingsrelatedtofuel retailing.Theliteraturesearchwasconductedfrom SeptembertoNovember 2021.Atotalof99articlesmettheinclusion parameters, and the articles not meeting the criteria were dropped post reviewing their title, abstract and findings.Findings from the review of the articles were segregated into three broad themes identified for the study: Petro retailing service quality, Petro retailing service quality dimensions,andmeasurementof Petrol retailing service quality.Thevariablesunderinvestigationinpreviouslyresearchedpapersandpresentedinresearcharticleswere classifiedundertherespectivephysical and non-physical aspects of service.

III. RESULT

Under the theme of petro retailing service quality, most research papers published between 2001 and 2020 included petro retailing studies conducted in various countries worldwide. However, it is very high in European and American countries. Some work has been published in African countries. While work on service quality is published in good numbers from India, few worksare available on petro retailing service quality context.At the same time,articles related to customer loyalty, satisfaction, and relationship with service quality were kept outside the study. Research articles in petro retailing aboutGovernment policies,customer behaviour satisfaction models, and levels were held outside the research preview.This resultssectionisdividedintothreeconceptualizedthemes of Petro retailing: service quality, measurement, and dimensions. The section highlights the work done under each theme, and the salient and relevant Knowledge serves the objective of thisstudy.

IV. SERVICE QUALITY CONCEPTS

Zeithaml&Bitner (1996, p. 5)[20]defined services as 'Services are deeds, processes, and performances. Whereas Kotler, Keller, Koshy, &Jha (2013, p. 338) [21] described services as 'An action, advantage, or satisfaction offered for sale that is principally intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Lovelock & Wright (1999, p. 2) [22] described services as 'An act or performance that makes benefits for customers by getting the desired change in-or on behalf of the recipient'. Thus services are strongly linked to quality and are assessed on various parameters.

Thecustomer'sevaluationofservicequalityistheir subjective assessment of services meeting the set criteria andtheirevaluationofenactmentofthe servicedelivery process.Customer usuallyhas initial expectations from the servicestheyaregoingtoconsume.Thegap,i.e.discrepancy,which ismeasuredbetweenperception developed post service receipt and thepriorantici pationsofthecustomerbeforereceivingtheservice,is known as perceived service quality [23]. *Service Quality*, therefore, can be defined as the discrepancy between consumers' perceptions of services and their expectations about that company offering such services [24] [25].However, *Petro retailing service quality* is the discrepancy between customers' perceptions of services and their expectations about fuel station services [26].

Although Fuel retailing is also a service, they are inherently different from other industries in the servicesector. Fuel retailing is still viewed as a commodity, and servicequalityisoftendifficultforthecustomersto judge even after the service is performed [27].

Apart from the customers, the service providers are also equal stakeholders in the service delivery process. Their experience and perceptions about how a fuel retailing system operates are equally important [28].Evaluation of service quality variesbetween service receivers and delivery professionals. While professionals createthe design and delivery aspect of service, receivers evaluate service on their overall perception ofthe consumption of the service [29]. Fuel station management, Price of Fuel,Technology adoption and Service qualityare major factors that emerged towards better service deliverythatsignificantlyinfluencesretailpetrolconsumptionin India [27]. With the backdrop of the advancement of technology and customer habit, customer lifestyle, preferences and requirements, in general, have taken a shift and are still evolving. While petro-retailing has made some significant technology-led advances in the past few years, a clear gap seems to exist between customer expectations in Fuel vs their experience [30].The outcomes are an indicator of problems in quality, yet cannot determine whether the poor or good quality of servicewas beingprovided.

V. SERVICE QUALITY IN FUEL RETAILING

In the service industry, customer satisfaction contributes a vitalrole and service quality has become a day to day practice to provide the best value to the customer. Earlier Indian petro retailing was primarily dominated by the public sector undertaking companies, and customers visited the fuel stations to get the Fuel filled. After deregulation of the fuel prices, many private companies enteredthe market and gone were the days when customers did not have many options available and were only concerned about getting the Fuel filled [31].While the choice of fuel station is vastly dependent on the factors like location, loyalty, promotional offers, payment facility, exchange facility and price [32], Service quality holds a significant part [33].

The current expertKnowledge is a relativeassessment,whichmayvaryacross the countries andbetweenindividuals.Further, fuel retailing customers are in a state of physical or psychological discomfort or both [33] [34]; therefore, their feedback on evaluating thefuel retailing service quality may beflawed.

Inadequate quality may stimulate various emotions in the customers ranging from frustration and despair, anxiety over costs and complexities of services, tension due to inconvenience in getting what is needed from fuel stations which has little time in understanding and meet their requirements [35].Service quality can lead to extremes, while inadequate service quality can result from underusing and, at times, be avoided [36].

Petro retailing quality-specific research has identified various attributes: availability of modern equipment at fuel stations, visual appearance, meeting promises from time to time, redressal of problems

immediately, the correct quantity of Fuel, prompt services, courteousness, and attention to customers etc.[31] [23] classifiedthe quality of service asfunctional and technicalquality.It is also suggested thattechnicalqualityisapreconditiontothe applicable quality.

VI. DIMENSIONS OF FUEL RETAILING SERVICE QUALITY

Parasuraman et al. (1985) [37] identified 10 service quality dimensions in five industries. Later, they reduced these dimensions to five: Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Reliability (RATER). The dimensions are extensively used across industries in various service settings, including Petroretailing[31]. At the same time, service quality dimensions are context-specific[38].Petro Retailing quality is mainly reported on *structural aspects of*service*, processes and outcomes[39].*

Further, fuel station customers havedifferentprioritiestodifferentattributes [27].Thedimensionsofpetro retailingservicequalitycanalsobeclassifiedinline with the RATER parameters. The tangibles aspect of the service quality is attributed to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.The reliability part contributes to the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.The responsiveness aspect is attributed to the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service, and Assurance attributes to the courteous behaviourof employeesand the ability to deliver trust and confidence. In contrast,the Empathy aspect attributes to the Caring, personalized attention the firm provides its customers [31][33][34].

VII. MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUES OF SERVICE QUALITYIN PETRO RETAILING

Measurement of customers' expectations and perceptions provides a valuable insight into how the quality of Fuel retailing service is assessed [40]. Since The recipients of services determine service quality dimensions, it is difficult to measure customers' perceptions of the petro retailing experience [41].'SERVQUAL'[25]anditsamendmentshadbeenthemostprevalentscaleusedtomeasuretheservicequalityint hepetro retailing settings,whichmeasurethegapbetween the expectations and perceptions of the service providers. However, SERVQUAL scale has been criticized in various researches [40] [42][43] [44].Itisalso arguedthattheSERVQUALiscontext-specific,andtheinstrumentischallengedforitsuniversal applicability. However, it mustbemodifiedtofita particular service[45] [40]. Further, perceptions towards a service may exceed for some customers with low expectations from the petro retailing systems [27]; hence, "SERVPERF'aresuitableforservicequality measurement [46] [42] [47] andhave an advancedprognosticweight of customer satisfaction [40][42] [48][47] [49] [50].Jain and Gupta (2004) [51]believed that SERFPERF should be a preferred research instrument for comparisons between the scenarios in the same industry of different ones; however, SERVQUAL has the better diagnostic resultsinidentifying the areas of concern in the service delivery process.

The studies were conducted to measure the service quality dimensions for petro retailing on the customers who have availed the services.Almost all the studies used a questionnaire as an instrument to measure the service quality,primarily in line with the items in the SERVQUAL questionnaire or modified form of it. The minimum sample selected 100 respondents [33][31][27] a).Thenumberofattributes usedinthestudiesvariedbetween3[33]and18[31], using a 3,5 or 7-point Likert scale for measuring the service quality dimensions. These dimensions vary according todemographic, culture, country, Government vs private facility, types of services required, urban vsrural customers,andsoon, leading most researchers to identifythespecificfactorsaffectingservice quality. Factor analysis, Principal component analysis, ANOVA, structuredequationmodelling,correlation, and multiple regressionwere usedasvariousanalyticaltechniquestoidentifyandmeasure multiple dimensions of service quality.

VIII. DISCUSSION

Many firms have started service quality measurement programmers [24].However, customer satisfaction is the most critical parameter for thequality of services provided on petro retailing [52][41]. Still, it is not always the accurate pointer [53]. While customer satisfaction can only be assessed post-delivery of service, Service quality assessment starts with forming customer's expectations [24][54] [55] [42] [56]. Therefore, service quality measurementfounded on satisfaction ratingscanbeprejudicedasacustomermaygetservices wellyetmaynotbesatisfiedwiththequalityofservice orvice versa.Customerssatisfactionvarieswiththeconsumercharacteristicssuchaseducation [57],consumer'sstageinservicedelivery[58]andinformationsharedduringandafter the service delivery[27].

Different aspects of the services become an obvious classification of fuel retailing service quality dimensions.Customersofthefuel retailing servicesweightheempathyandTangible factorsprovided by the petro retailing providers rather than outcomes of the services or the technical Knowledge of the serviceprovider
[59].Thefivedimensions,namelyreliability,Assurance,tangibility,responsivenessandempathy,arethemostre searchedpetro retailingservices.However,specific dimensions like the fuel station's image indicate towards branding aspect of the fuel retailing facility [60]. These dimensions are context-specific and have been primarily identified from the demand side i.e. customers. In services like petro retailing that require high experience and credence properties,thedimensionsoffuel retailing servicequalityneedtobeevaluatedfromthesupplyside, i.e., providers' [61][62].

While SERVQUAL[63] is used as a measurement toolfor evaluating service quality using the gap score between customer's expectations and perceptions of the performance of service delivered, SERVPERF [56] is used as a measurement tool using performance only.SERVQUAL has the inherent abilitytocalculatethegapbetweentheexpectationsandpreconceptionsof service delivered on the five dimensions allows the administrator to identify the area where the gapishigh.SERVQUALalso allowsassigningweightagetovariousdimensionsperceivedbythe
customers.However,itdoesnottellhowtoclosethesegaps,anditisleftforthemanagerialcapabilities. Most of the studies have not measured the desired, perceived and adequate service as called by the SERVQUAL originators themselves [64].

Giventheavailableliterature,everyattempthasbeenmadebyustoincludealmostallthestudies relevant to the fuel retailing service quality, its dimensions and measurement techniques. There may be various studies, which the Institutions may have conducted for their internal references. This study may help get insights into the different conceptualization of service quality in petro retailing as viewed in other conventionalservices.

IX. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE

The reviewed Knowledge summarized in this study suggests no single set of dimensions or measurementstandardsis availableto evaluateservicequality in Petro retailing.Service providers' view has not been incorporated almost in all the methods and scales used to measurePetro retailing servicequality. Thecustomersalonecannot assess service quality's technical & design side.Dyadic view,thatis,theinvestigationofboththeproviders and the customers, for evaluation of customer satisfaction and servicequality oftheservicedelivered,isnecessaryforunderstanding theevaluation process [29].Hence,the needtoidentifytheservicequalitydimensionsfromtheservice provider'sside is also relevant.

Further,theexistingstandardsofaccreditingthePetro retailing companies areassociatedwith the process and delivery structure. This makes the task of managing and measuring the fuel retailing servicequalityina countrylikeIndiais adifficultone.Weneedtolooktowards'whatcouldbe?'beyond'whatshould

be?'andlookthereinthePetro retailing servicequalityincorporatingbothdemand and supply side expectations andperceptions.

X. DECLARATION

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