

Romanian customer satisfaction in Cluj-Napocabeauty salons(SERVQUAL model)

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ABSTRACT:*In the last years, the evolution of the cosmetics market in Romania has registered a sustained growth, reaching approximately 5 billion Euros in 2019(+9% compared to the previous year), Romania ranks 45th out of 149 in the ranking of European countries on quality of life. Beauty services have a significant impact on these two statistics, contributing to the country's economy and to quality of life and overall level of customer satisfaction.*

This study identifies the ideal profile of customers, determine the most important factors for customers to buying beauty service and determine the influence of factors on customer satisfaction based on SERVQUAL model. A questionnaire was applied to 246 clients who purchased beauty services in July 2019, containing twenty two items divided in five dimensions: tangibility, empathy, reliability, responsibility and assurance. The answers were analysed by descriptive and test statistics.By using Multiple Linear Regression the research found the significant or insignificant factors of customer satisfaction. For Romanian customer the confidence, safety, courteous and knowledge of employees are more important than other aspects when they buy beauty service.

KEY WORD: *customer satisfaction, SERVQUAL model, beauty salons, dimensions model*

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I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing attention of consumers on physical appearance and personal care led, on one hand, to the increase in demand for beauty services, on the other hand to the increase in customer expectations. According to a report by OrbisResearch.com, the global cosmetics market was valued at \$ 532.43 billion in 2017 and is expected to reach a market value of \$ 805.61 billion by 2023, having an annual growth of 7.14% in 2018-2023 (www.wall-street.ro, on 05.08.2020).

The constant increase of consumers' interest in beauty care products is reflected in the evolution of the Romanian cosmetics market. According to a study conducted by KeysFin in 2018, Romanian cosmetics market reached over 1.7 billion euros. In the last 5 years the increase has been almost 50% (Săndulescu, 2019).

In Romanian economy, the impact of beauty services is limited, but they influence the quality of life, providing a state of well-being of customers. Most requested beauty services are massage, hairdressers, cosmetics, make-up, manicure, and pedicure. These could be bought occasionally (wedding, baptism, name days) or usually, on a regular basis.

Customer satisfaction

The concept of consumer satisfaction increases the attention of managers from private and public companies, customer orientation become more and more used. Currently, companies from all fields are trying to offer the customer a positive experience with a long-term impact.

Satisfaction is defined as a cumulative process of a consumer experience of a good or service that will result in the feeling of pleasure or disappointment in relation to set expectations (Tinoco & Ribeiro, 2007; Monteiro de Barros, 2012).

The term satisfaction is seen as a positive aspect that encourages the repetition of the purchase, the return to a certain place where consumers had a pleasant experience, the greater openness on the part of consumers when discussing a product or service provided by the preferred brand as well as the verification of pleasant or less pleasant experiences in the circle of friends, acquaintances, relatives, etc. Based on these aspects, the emphasis is on the influence of the level of consumer satisfaction on the economic development of the company and the financial recorded results, such as an increased level of loyalty to the preferred brand, significantly improved financial results, an increased level of profitability. Of the consumer, a representative

decrease of the following transactions, a decrease of the influence of the price fluctuation on the consumer as well as the minimization of the risk of the consumers' choice of the competition (Peyton et al, 2003; Souca, 2012).

Others definitions of consumer satisfaction are increasingly associated with the company's financial results, market competitiveness, cognitive, psychological, emotional and physical aspects pursued by consumers, the level of satisfaction felt being responsible for the success or failure of a business or satisfaction. (Wong et al, 2008; Radomir, 2013).

Jenefa (2014) argues that the term consumer satisfaction and quality services provide an easy-to-understand conceptual framework because they involve the presence of quality services controlled by internal and external forces and certain uncontrollable factors (Wong et al, 2014).

Razak&Shamsudin (2019) compare the product user experience with the buyer's value expectations. So, comparing the expectation perceived by both customer and consumer before purchasing and experiencing the services (Shamsudin et al, 2018).

The definitions of the concept of satisfaction are based on the same central idea: the comparison of what was received with what was expected to be received. A positive result or a confirmation of expectations generates a certain level of satisfaction, and the lack or delay of a response leads to a decrease in the level of satisfaction.

SERVQUAL model

There are several methods in the literature to assess consumer satisfaction, but the best known and most used method is the one known as SERVQUAL. It is intended to determine the satisfaction of the consumer of services and not a model that aims to determine the quality of products, being in particular the basis of the used research tool.

To present the five basic analysed dimensions by the SERVQUAL scale (Parasuraman et al., 1988; HSU & Powers, 2002; Souca, 2012) are:

1. **Reliability** refers in particular to the impeccable consistency or accuracy with which it is provided in the promised service.

2. **Responsibility** can be understood as care, the willingness of staff to be useful to the consumer, to make the best decision regarding the purchase.

3. **Safety** can be translated as competence or ability that the employed staff offers to the consumers through the knowledge they have, the attention to details, the professionalism, the credibility, the seriousness and the trust that they transmit to the consumers.

4. **Empathy** is rather a feeling or effort that employees try and strive to understand, intuit and discover the wishes and needs of customers.

5. **Tangibility** is nothing but the system composed of physical facilities translated by equipment, employees and communication materials.

To identify the answer to each item, the five points Likert scale is used: 1 (total disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (total agree).

SERVQUAL model is the most used in tourist, banking, medical services research, as well as in research conducted for beauty services (Ghisi et al, 2006; Shahbazi&Akareem, 2013; Lien &Bich, 2016; Tooy&Lapian, 2018; Eresia-Eke et al ., 2019).

However, the SERVQUAL model was not accepted by all researchers, Cronin & Taylor (1994) proposing an improved version of SERVQUAL model called SERVPERF. If old model SERVQUAL analyses satisfaction level of consumers, the new model SERVPERF analyses, on the one hand, satisfaction considering the quality of services, and on the other hand, the relationship between quality and satisfaction generating future purchase intention.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To determine the ideal customer profile based on demographical, personal, educational variables.
2. To determine the level of Romanian customer satisfaction in beauty salons from Cluj-Napoca city, based on SERVQUAL model.
3. To identify the most important factors which influence the level of satisfaction.
4. To study the customer perception on SERVQUAL dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance) in beauty salons from Cluj-Napoca.

1.3 Research Methodology and Data Analysis

The applied questionnaire for this study is based on SERVQUAL scale and used non-probabilistic sampling method.

Research hypotheses

This study aims to validate or to reject the following research hypotheses:

- H1: The tangibility dimension of SERVQUAL model influences Romanian customer satisfaction in beauty services.
- H2: The empathy dimension of SERVQUAL model influences Romanian customer satisfaction in beauty services.
- H3: The reliability dimension of SERVQUAL model influences Romanian customer satisfaction in beauty services.
- H4: The assurance dimension of SERVQUAL model influences Romanian customer satisfaction in beauty services.
- H5: The responsiveness dimension of SERVQUAL model influences Romanian customer satisfaction in beauty services.
- H6: The age of customer influences the tangibility dimension of SERVQUAL model.
- H7: The age of customer influences the empathy dimension of SERVQUAL model.
- H8: The age of customer influences the reliability dimension of SERVQUAL model.
- H9: The age of customer influences the assurance dimension of SERVQUAL model.
- H10: The age of customer influences the responsiveness dimension of SERVQUAL model.

Collected data

The questionnaire was addressed to people who used in July 2019 one of the beauty services (hairdresser, makeup, cosmetics, massage, manicure, pedicure), offered by beauty salons from Cluj-Napoca. The questionnaire was distributed on the social media pages (Facebook) of several beauty salons. Between August and September 2019, a number of 246 people provided answered the questionnaire. The IBM SPSS Statistics 20 software was used for data analysis.

1.3.1. Data Analysis to determine the ideal customer profile

Determining the ideal consumer profile has a significant impact on business of beauty and provides important information in order to improve the future marketing strategies.

By gender, the majority of customers are women (242 / 98.4%) and only 4/1.6% men attend beauty salons. Most customers come from urban areas (190 / 77.2%), while from rural areas came from only 56/22.8% of respondents. The clients are, on average, 32.36 years old, the youngest client who bought beauty services is 18 years old, while the oldest is 60 years old. Most customers (70 / 28.5%) are between 26-30 years old and 37-60 years old, followed by customers (64/26%) who are between 18-25 years old. The smallest category of customers by age is represented by those (42 / 17.1%) who are in the 31-36 age range.

Clients spend, on average, 99.32 RON (the equivalent of 20.56 euro) for a beauty service, while prices services vary between 15 RON (the equivalent of 3.10 EUR) and 804 RON, the equivalent of 166.45 EUR (1 EUR = 4.83 RON, NBR exchange rate on 07.08.2020). The average time spent by clients for beauty services is 62.13 minutes (approximately 1 hour), the minimum allocated time is 20 minutes, and the maximum allocated time is 240 minutes (4 hours). Most Romanian clients of beauty services are single (94/38.2%), followed by people married with children (92/37.4%), people married without children (48/19.5%), those unmarried couple with children (6/2.4%) and persons who are part of other widowed, divorced groups (6/2.4%). Educationally, most clients have higher education (184/74.8%), followed by customers with primary education (40/16.3%) and those with secondary education (22/8.9%).

1.3.2. Data Analysis of SERVQUAL's dimension items

This section presents the items for each dimension of the SERVQUAL model: tangibility (4 items), empathy (5 items), reliability (5 items), assurance (4 items) and responsiveness (4 items) and descriptive analysis for each item.

Table 1: The items of SERVQUAL's dimensions

SERVQUAL dimensions		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tangibility	1. Beauty salon has modern looking equipment and facilities.	2	5	4.65	.688
	2. Beauty salon has attractive visually materials.	1	5	3.84	1.261
	3. Beauty salon has attractive physical facilities.	2	5	4.44	.789
	4. Beauty salon employee are neat and tidy appearing.	1	5	4.30	.964
Empathy	1. You receive individual attention in this Beauty salon.	2	5	4.37	.860
	2. Beauty salon employee understands your specific needs.	1	5	4.24	1.023
	3. Beauty salon has convenient operating hours.	1	5	4.44	.877
	4. Beauty salon employees have your best interest at heart.	2	5	4.78	.565
	5. Beauty salon employees give you solution to your personal problems.	1	5	4.72	.692
	1. Beauty salon employees deliver what they promised.	2	5	4.47	.738

Reliability	2. Beauty salon employees show a sincere interest in solving any claimed problem.	2	5	4.58	.734
	3. Beauty salon correctly provides services the first time.	2	5	4.55	.641
	4. Beauty salon delivers services in a timely manner.	1	5	3.80	1.203
	5. Beauty salon pretends flawless performance.	2	5	4.63	.714
Assurance	1. The behaviour of employees from the beauty salon generates an increase of self-confidence.	1	5	4.46	.850
	2. You feel safe in this beauty salon.	2	5	4.76	.643
	3. Beauty salon employees are courteous to you.	2	5	4.61	.763
	4. Beauty salon employees have the knowledge to answer your question.	1	5	4.34	.955
Responsiveness	1. Beauty salon employees inform you when services will be performed.	1	5	4.59	.733
	2. Beauty salon employees provide prompt service.	1	5	4.57	.858
	3. Beauty salon employees are always willing to help you.	1	5	4.54	.831
	4. Beauty salon employees respond to your request promptly.	1	5	4.47	.831

Source: primary research and computed data

When customers buy a beauty service, they are looking for the following aspects: Modern equipment and facilities (4.65), Best interest at heart (4.78), Flawless performance (4.63), Safe feeling (4.76), Time when services will be performed (4.59).

Although customers were able to provide answers from on a scale from 1 to 5, in some cases the lowest score offered is 2. All averages are in the upper half of the ranking, close to the maximum grade possible. Thus, all aspects are important for purchasing a beauty service, but some matter more than others.

1.3.3. Data Analysis of SERVQUAL's dimensions and regression model

To obtain the 5 dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, we calculated the average of items for each dimension, which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The SERVQUAL's dimensions

SERVQUAL dimensions	Mean
Tangibility	4.3069
Empathy	4.5089
Reliability	4.4081
Assurance	4.5407
Responsiveness	4.5407

Source: primary research and computed data

Assurance dimension and responsiveness dimension have equal mean of 4.54 points and those two are more important than empathy (4.50 points), reliability (4.40 points) and tangibility (4.30 points). The most important aspects that customers are looking for when buying a beauty service are: increased self-confidence, feeling safe, employees being courteous and knowledgeable, time when services will be performed, prompt service, the help of employees, response to your request promptly. On second place, customers pay a special attention to the individual attention, the understanding of customer needs, the convenient operating hours, the best interest for customer and the solutions for personal problems. To deliver what they promised, to show interest in solving claimed problems, to provide correctly the service and in a timely manner, to pretend flawless performance, these are the most important factors for customers. When they buy a beauty service customers are less interested by modern looking equipment and facilities, attractive visually materials, attractive physical facilities and employees physical appearance.

The reliability and validity of SERVQUAL scale is calculated with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. So, the calculated value of Cronbach's Alpha (of 0.897) is more than 0.7 and the reliability of scale is confirmed for Romanian customer satisfaction in beauty salon (Taber, 2017).

Table 2: Correlations between age and SERVQUAL's dimensions

	Tangibility	Empathy	Reliability	Assurance	Responsiveness
Age	-.276**	-.001	-.054	-.045	-.085

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: primary research and computed data

There is only one statistically significant correlation at 99% confidence level between age and tangibility dimension ($r = -0.276$), confirming a weak and inverse correlation (0-0.3) (Akoglu, 2018). If the age of customers increases the level of customer satisfaction generated by tangible dimension decreases.

Based on the results, H6 is confirmed, so the age of customer influences the tangibility dimension of SERVQUAL model. The following hypotheses are not confirmed: the H7, H8, H9 and H10.

Table 2: Correlations between SERVQUAL's dimensions and satisfaction level

	Your overall satisfaction level
Tangibility	.284**
Empathy	.276**
Reliability	.276**
Assurance	.368**
Responsiveness	.245**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: primary research and computed data

According to the research methodology, there are statistically significant correlations at 99% confidence level between SERVQUAL's dimensions and customer satisfaction level. All correlations are positive (indicating a direct relationship), Assurance dimension has a medium influence { $r=0.368 \in (0.3-0.7)$ } on customer satisfaction level, and tangibility { $r=0.284 \in (0-0.3)$ }, reliability { $r=0.276 \in (0-0.3)$ }, empathy { $r=0.276 \in (0-0.3)$ }, responsiveness { $r=0.245 \in (0-0.3)$ } have a weak influence on customer satisfaction (Akoglu, 2018). Thus, both variables will have the same evolution, if one of the dimension increases the customer satisfaction will increase, and if one of dimension decreases the customer satisfaction level will decrease too.

To determine the impact of SERVQUAL's dimensions (tangibility, empathy, reliability, assurance, responsiveness) on customer satisfaction level, it was estimated the multiple linear regression model:

$$CS = \alpha + \beta_1 T + \beta_2 E + \beta_3 Ry + \beta_4 A + \beta_5 Rs + \varepsilon$$

Where,

CS = Customer Satisfaction

α = constant

T = Tangibility

E = Emphaty

Ry = Reliability

A = Assurance

Rs = Responsiveness

$\beta_1 - \beta_5$ = Coefficients for the variables.

ε = Error

Table 3: Multiple Regression results

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Sig.
(Constant)	2.649	.000
Tangibility	.031	.721
Empathy	.171	.230
Reliability	.038	.730
Assurance	.382	.004
Responsiveness	-.197	.138
	R Square	.145
	Adjusted R Square	.127
	F statistics	8.153

Source: primary research and computed data

Table 3 shows the results of multiple regression model. Adjusted R Square is 0.127 for this model. Only 12.7% of the variation of customer satisfaction is explained by these five dimensions of SERVQUAL scale.

The importance of all five dimensions on Romanian customer satisfaction in Cluj-Napoca beauty salons is represented in Table 3, but only assurance dimension is statistically significant at 5% significance level, the other four dimensions have an insignificant impact over Romanian customer satisfaction level. For Romanian customer the confidence, the safety feeling, courteous and knowledge of employees are more important than other aspects.

Certainly, SERVQUAL model is limited because there are a lot of others elements which influence customer satisfaction like: economic, demographic, social, psychological, political aspects. Thus, the SERVQUAL model could be better if the researchers will include many other relevant aspects.

1.4 Findings and Interpretation

Ideal customer profile for beauty services is: adult women came from urban environment, having superior studies, single or married with children, spending around 100 RON (approx. 20 EUR) on a beauty

service (massage, cosmetics, make-up, hairdressers, manicure, pedicure) and approximately 1 hour on the purchased beauty service. For each manager of beauty salon is important to be aware of the customer profile because he will be able to create offers and promotions for him/her, and custom services to clients personal and specific needs.

All five factors of SERVQUAL scale are important for customers when they buy a beauty service, but for Romanian customer only the confidence, safety feeling, courteous and knowledge of employees are significant. Thus, the Romanian managers of beauty salons will try to improve those aspects for increased level of satisfaction. Most of the time, in order to meet the expectations of the customers, the service providers follow training courses in the specific domain, communication and customer relationship courses.

The section of Literature review presents the customer satisfaction like a result between expectations and perceptions. If differences decreases the level of satisfaction increases. The managers of beauty salons desire a higher level of satisfaction because it conducts to a successful and efficient business. Beauty salon could develop new services and buy modern and performant equipment. At the end, the business will longer survive on the market.

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APPENDIX – QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Beauty salon has modern looking equipments and facilities.					
2. Beauty salon has attractive visually materials.					
3. Beauty salon has attractive physical facilities.					

4.	Beauty salon employee are neat and tidy appearing.					
5.	You receive individual attention in this Beauty salon.					
6.	Beauty salon employee understand your specific needs.					
7.	Beauty salon has convenient operating hours.					
8.	Beauty salon has your best interest at heart.					
9.	Beauty salon employees give you solution to your personal					
10.	Beauty salon employees deliver what they promised.					
11.	Beauty salon employees shows a sincere interest in solving any problem claimed.					
12.	Beauty salon provides service correctly the first time.					
13.	Beauty salon delivers service timely.					
14.	Beauty salon pretend flawless performance.					
15.	The behavior of employees in Beauty salon provider grow confidence in you.					
16.	You feel safe in this Beauty salon.					
17.	Beauty salon employees are courteous to you.					
18.	Beauty salon employees have the knowledge to answer your					
19.	Beauty salon employees informs you when services will be					
20.	Beauty salon employees provide you prompt service.					
21.	Beauty salon employees are always willing to help you.					
22.	Beauty salon employees respond to your request promptly.					

2. Indicate average time did you spend for beauty service:.....

3. Indicate average amount did you spend for beauty service:.....

4. How satisfied are you with the way of service provided?

Not at all satisfied	Slightly Satisfied	Neutral	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied

5. You are:

- Woman
 Man

6. Your age is:

7. Your marital status is:

- Single
- Married without children
- Married with children
- Unmarried with children
- Others:

8. Last school graduated:

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Higher education

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