

A Measure for Perceived Quality in Indian Banking Industry: Scale Development and Validation

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Abstract

Quality signifies performance excellence and superiority of a product or service. The customer's perception of quality has a substantial impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty in any business and banking industry is no exception. The banking industry is transforming into a more service oriented and customer centric system. The competitive landscape and rising awareness and expectations of the customers have brought the concept of quality to the centre stage. Hence, it is essential to understand the important components that constitute quality in banking services. Even though multiple scales are already established for perceived quality, there are only few scales which have been indigenously built based on Indian conditions for the banking industry. The objectives of this study are to identify the various dimensions of perceived quality and to develop a comprehensive scale in the context of the Indian banking industry. The data was collected using questionnaire method from 150 respondents in Chennai who were bank customers. The results indicated an acceptable fit between the sample data and the hypothesized eight dimensional scale for perceived quality. For future research, this scale can be extended and validated using a larger sample covering different geographies across India.

Keywords: Perceived quality, banking, customer care, efficiency, staff, security, tangibles, e-banking, ATM

Introduction

The banking industry is one of the most dominant services in the Indian economy contributing to approximately 7 percent of the Indian Gross Domestic Product (IBEF: Banking Sector in India, 2016). The Indian banking industry has undergone a major transformation post liberalization in the 1990s which led to the rise in the number of commercial banks and a highly competitive landscape (Dwivedi and Charyulu, 2012). This has transformed the banking sector with its focus gradually shifting to more service oriented and customer centric attitude (Mukerjee, 2013). In this industry characterized by minimal product differentiation, the rising competition coupled with the growing customer awareness and expectations have necessitated the banks to improve their product and service quality, which is the key differentiating factor (Jun & Cai, 2001; Mangnale & Chavan, 2012; Rahmani-Nejad et al., 2014). It has been substantiated that perceived quality is a significant driver of customer satisfaction and loyalty

(Fornell et al., 1996; Cronin et al., 2000; Johnson et al., 2001; Eklöf and Westlund, 2002) which implies that customers who perceive the quality of bank's products and services as superior are highly satisfied and more likely to become a loyal patron. In addition, it also improves the word-of-mouth, market share, profitability and financial performance (Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000; Gounaris et al. 2003).

Quality is defined as 'fitness for use' (Juran, 1974) in a consumer based approach. Zeithaml (1988) broadly described quality as superiority or excellence. It is consumer's judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority which is different from objective quality. Perceived quality of an entity can be referred to as its performance (Johnson et al., 1995). It can be of two types; viz. perceived product quality and perceived service quality. The quality of products which are nearly pure tangible service is perceived product quality while quality of pure intangible service is perceived service quality, but most companies fall between these two extremes (Bei et al., 2001). Similarly, banks, in spite of providing major services, they do include products. Thus, perceived quality is the customer's evaluation of a product or service post purchase and experiences.

The banking industry is facing a rapidly changing market, fierce competition, new technologies and rising consumer demands. Hence, the measurement of quality also needs to be augmented over time with these changing conditions. There are multiple established scales for quality in literature, but they are not entirely compatible to Indian conditions and hence cannot be used in the Indian banking context. This gap has provided an impetus to the current study which aims to develop a comprehensive scale and identify the important dimensions of perceived quality in banking industry.

Review of Literature

The research on perceived quality can be traced back to earlier work on services marketing which was led by researchers like Gronroos (1984), Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988, 1994a and 1994b), Cronin and Taylor (1992 and 1994), Dabholkar et al. (2000) and Cronin et al. (2000). Gronroos (1984) conceptualized service quality using two dimensions; namely technical quality and functional quality. Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL scale with five dimensions; reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness which provided the basis for measurement of service quality using the gap model. This is probably the well-known, universal scale designed for service quality. It is measured in terms of the gap between the performance expected by the customers and the performance they perceived they are receiving. This concept was criticized by Cronin and Taylor (1992, 1994) who introduced the SERVPERF scale employing a single

measurement of performance relative to expectations rather than two different measures (expected and perceived performance) as adopted by Parasuraman et al. (1988). Other prominent researchers continued the work on quality and added new dimensions over the years. In the context of this paper, we are concerned with the work related to perceived quality measurement in banking industry.

In a banking service quality study, Johnston (1995) identified attentiveness, responsiveness, care, friendliness, integrity, reliability, responsiveness, availability and functionality as the main determinants of service quality. Holmlund and Kock (1996) conceptualized perceived service quality using two dimensions i.e. functional quality and economic quality. The functional dimension involved problems in accessing bank services such as ATM, working hours, information availability, etc. while the economic dimension dealt with bank charges for different services. Bahia and Nantel (2000) proposed six dimensions to measure perceived service quality of banks covering a broader range of marketing variables than SERVQUAL namely, effectiveness and assurance, access, price, tangibles, service portfolio and reliability. Till late 1990s, the studies primarily focused on retail banking with traditional dimensions mainly derived from SERVQUAL.

Later with the advent of the internet banking, many studies focused on electronic banking service quality along with retail banking. Joseph et al. (1999) studied the attributes of service quality in electronic banking and identified them as convenience, feedback/complaint management, efficiency, queue management, accessibility and customisation. In a qualitative study by Jun and Cai (2001) to find the key determinants of internet banking service quality, they proposed a comprehensive 17 dimensional scale classified into three broad categories, i.e. customer service quality, online systems quality and banking service product quality. However, the scale consisted of non-mutually exclusive and overlapping dimensions that required validation and purification. Sureshchandar et al. (2002) set up an instrument to measure customer perceptions of service quality in the context of banking which consisted of five dimensions; namely, core service or service product, human element of service delivery, systemization of service delivery, tangibles and social responsibility.

Bauer et al. (2005) supported the contention that it is favourable to withdraw from the idea of universal perception of perceived service quality. They confirmed the assumption of Gounaris and Dimitriadis (2003) to have varying dimensions across industries and proposed a specific measurement model for e-banking portals consisting of three categories; i.e. core services (basic service quality, security and trust), additional services (cross-buying service quality and added values) and

problem solving services (transaction support and responsiveness). Based on content analysis of customer reviews of online banking services, Yang et al. (2004) identified six salient online service quality dimensions as reliability, responsiveness, competence, ease-of-use, product portfolio and security. In a systematic study of scale development for service quality exclusive for retail banking, Karatepe et al. (2005) established a four dimensional scale comprising of service environment, interaction quality, empathy and reliability. Gupta and Bansal (2012) developed an instrument to measure internet banking service quality with five dimensions; namely, security/privacy, reliability, efficiency, responsiveness, and site aesthetics. In a similar study, Kundu and Datta (2014) reviewed the past studies and presented a nine dimensional service quality construct for internet banking consisting of system availability, site aesthetics, ease of use, technical performance, reliability, privacy, trust, responsiveness and customisation.

The review of some of the influential past studies reveals that there are numerous scales developed to measure service quality for retail banking in the past and specifically on internet banking post 2000. A comprehensive list of dimensions has been incorporated in these studies. However, one striking observation is that there is no longer any focus on retail banking in the Indian context. Most researchers have shifted to electronic banking and missed the all-inclusive picture with multi-channel view including

visit to banks, branch facilities, etc. There is a dearth of a comprehensive scale equally focusing on all aspects of banking i.e. retail, internet, ATM, etc. This study aims to fill this research gap by developing a scale to measure perceived quality in the context of Indian banking.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To identify the various dimensions of perceived quality; and
- To develop a comprehensive measurement scale for perceived quality in the context of the Indian banking industry.

Research Methodology

In order to develop a scale for perceived quality of banks, the first step adopted was a qualitative research which investigates the exhaustive list of factors determining quality with reference to Indian banks. Hence, a focus group discussion was undertaken with a set of bank customers and employees in order to find out the key components of perceived quality in the banking industry. After content analysis of the focus group outcomes consisting of systematic, thematic coding and interpretation, the list of important components of customers' perceived quality was derived. Table- 1 presents the frequency distribution of the key quality determinants from focus group discussion.

Table- 1 Focus Group results - Frequency distribution of themes identified

Determinants of Perceived Quality	Frequency
Core products and services	58
Accessibility	53
Customer service	25
Internet banking	25
Efficiency/quickness	21
Staff	20
Branch ambience and comfort facilities	12
Salary	12
Customer care	11
Customer relationship/loyalty	9
Reputation	9
Formalities/red tapism	8
Responsiveness	8
ATM facilities	7
Technology	7
Automated Service Quality	5
Mobile banking	5
Avoid unnecessary calls	4
Convenience	2
Reliability	2
Security	2
Empathy/Understand problems	2

The second step was to develop the data collection instrument which was a structured questionnaire. A total of 34 items were constructed for the questionnaire using the focus group outcomes and were measured using a 5-point likert scale coded as strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree. The items in the questionnaire were confirmed through content and face validity by marketing professors and banking experts. The next step was data collection using the questionnaire. The convenience sampling technique was used and the sample consisted of 150 respondents who were customers of various

banks from Chennai City, Tamil Nadu. The exploratory factor analysis was performed with varimax rotation to determine the number of valid dimensions and to categorize the constructed items under these dimensions in order to develop a measurement scale for perceived quality.

Results

Table-2 presents the results of factor analysis with the list of components of perceived quality and its factor loadings. The findings show that the components can be grouped into eight distinct and appropriate dimensions as indicated in table- 2.

Table- 2 Components of Perceived Quality in Banking Industry

	Components of Perceived Quality in Banking Industry	Dimension	Loadings
PQ26	The bank offers quick and excellent customer support in case of any problem		0.95
PQ27	The customer care is 24x7 available for help		0.948
PQ14	The bank provides clear answers to my queries	Customer care	0.939
PQ13	The bank has a dedicated customer care section with staff to resolve queries		0.931
PQ3	The customer care helpline provides speedy response and access to representatives		0.924
PQ29	The bank's ATM provides high cash withdrawal limit		0.966
PQ32	The bank allows very limited number of free ATM withdrawals every month		0.951
PQ31	The ATM machines and systems are user friendly	ATM	0.943
PQ30	The ATM facilities are maintained well		0.927
PQ22	This bank's ATM provides necessary functions and services like cash withdrawal and cheque deposits		0.918
PQ15	The bank's website interface is user friendly		0.961
PQ34	Navigation in bank's website is so easy		0.953
PQ24	The bank's website has all the functions that I need	E-Banking	0.947
PQ33	The mobile banking app provides good quality services		0.94
PQ25	The bank's website is very attractive		0.892
PQ12	The bank transactions are processed very fast		0.958
PQ11	Generally, there is no delay in any service provided		0.953
PQ10	The processing for certain services like loans, cheque clearing, etc. takes a long time	Efficiency	0.952
PQ9	Certain services like availing loans, FD, changing branch, updating personal information involves lengthy procedures and paper work		0.947

PQ2	The bank staff address the complaints in a friendly manner		0.967						
PQ5	The bank officials are very courteous and helpful	Staff	0.963						
PQ17	The bank staff give personal attention to me		0.943						
PQ28	The bank staff are well qualified and knowledgeable to deal with customer issues		0.931						
PQ18	The bank keeps the good privacy of accounts and transactions		0.963						
PQ16	The bank ensures complete security while using e-banking	Security	0.948						
PQ23	The bank ensures good security at its branch offices		0.948						
PQ19	The bank's ATM transactions are safe and secure		0.941						
PQ1	The bank is generally crowded and noisy		0.95						
PQ4	The bank provides adequate comfort facilities like AC, seating, drinking water, parking facilities, etc.	Tangibles/ Ambience	0.943						
PQ6	The branch has a spacious area and premises		0.939						
PQ20	The branch ambience is good		0.937						
PQ7	The bank offers a wide range of products and services such as loans, insurance, cards, payments and fund transfer facility	Core products and services	0.966						
PQ8	The bank's product and service features are very attractive		0.962						
PQ21	The bank does not offer certain products and services that I need		0.957						
Summary Statistics		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8
Eigen Values		8.957	5.421	4.693	3.459	2.882	2.749	2.283	1.878
% of variance explained		26.344	15.945	13.802	10.174	8.476	8.085	6.714	5.522
Cum % of variance explained		26.344	42.29	56.092	66.266	74.741	82.826	89.54	95.062
N=150		Sample = All respondents				Unit = Factor loadings			

Each of the eight dimensions have been analyzed and discussed. The first dimension identified as customer care consists of statements such as providing speedy responses, clear answers to queries, dedicated customer care section, quick response and 24x7 support. Thus, the customer care dimension represents the quality of delivering professional and helpful assistance to the customers and addressing their questions and concerns diligently. This dimension accounts for 26.34 percent of variance in perceived quality. With additional novel items such as dedicated customer care section in banks and 24x7 care, this dimension is an improvised version of the traditional responsiveness dimension established by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988) which concerns the willingness to provide service and the

timeliness of service. According to Johnston (1995) and Yang et al. (2004), superior customer care involves speedy and timely service delivery and prompt response to customer requests which provides satisfaction.

The second dimension detected in the analysis as ATM comprises of statements such as providing necessary services, maintenance, user-friendliness, number of withdrawals and cash withdrawal limit at ATM. Thus, the ATM dimension relates to the quality of functioning and services provided by the bank's ATMs which explains 15.95 percent of variance in perceived quality. Despite its importance especially in Indian banking system, there are very few studies in the past recognizing ATM as a significant

and distinct dimension of quality. Al-Hawari et al. (2005) comprehended ATM as the most frequently used electronic distribution channel to perform main banking transactions such as deposit and withdrawal anytime and incorporated ATM service as a critical element to measure bank's automated service quality. According to Karatepe et al. (2005), quality of ATMs and computerized systems in terms of proper technology and efficient functioning is an essential component of a bank's overall perceived quality.

The third dimension identified as electronic banking includes statements such as user friendly, attractive website, easy navigation, providing all necessary functions and mobile banking app service. Thus, the e-banking dimension refers to the functional and service quality offered by internet and mobile banking channels. This dimension accounts for 13.8 percent of variance in perceived quality of banks. According to Jun and Cai (2001), the increasing usage of internet and rising customer demands and expectations have necessitated greater focus on electronic banking quality. Al-Hawari et al. (2005) recognized internet banking as the widely used channel allowing consumers to use banking services anytime and anywhere. Hence, continuous improvement of its quality is crucial in terms of better ease of use, availability of up-to-date information, accurate transactions and website interface. In studies focusing exclusively on internet banking quality like Kundu and Datta (2014), each of these aspects are set as separate dimensions such as system availability, site aesthetics, ease of use and technical performance. This study has detected the important factors pertinent to Indian customers who focus mainly on the website functions and ease of use when it comes to e-banking.

The fourth dimension recognized as efficiency consists of statements such as fast transactions, speedy delivery, and no delay in service and no lengthy procedures/paper work. Thus, this dimension relates to the quality of banking services in terms of the speed, degree of red-tapism and time taken for transactions or service delivery which explains 10.17 percent of variance. Very few studies used efficiency as a distinct dimension like Joseph et al. (1999) where it refers to no wait time with statements such as connecting immediately, educating customers, provision of all options, etc. Others have incorporated some of these items into other dimensions such as reliability and responsiveness (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Jun and Cai, 2001) and effectiveness (Bahia and Nantel, 2000), but there is no special focus on the speed and efficiency of service delivery which has been identified in this study as a unique dimension of quality in the Indian banking context.

The fifth dimension identified as staff involves statements like addressing complaints in friendly manner, being courteous and helpful, well-qualified and knowledgeable

and giving personal attention. Thus, this dimension deals with the level of competence and gracious behaviour of the bank staff which accounts for 8.48 percent of variance. This human element in service delivery is a decisive aspect of bank's quality stressed by many researchers in the past, especially in retail banking. Parasuraman et al. (1985), Johnston (1995), Oppewal and Vriens (2000) and Yang et al. (2004) believed that possession of skills, expertise and professionalism in service delivery and solving customer problems is a critical determinant of quality. Jun and Cai (2001) posited that the ability and knowledge to solve problems i.e. competence along with polite and friendly behaviour signifying courtesy are the pillars of customer service quality. Sureshchandar et al. (2002) conceptualized all aspects related to involvement of staff such as skills and ability, providing prompt and right service, courteousness, care and individual attention into one dimension of human element of service delivery. Karatepe et al. (2005) deemed that individualized attention to customers and willingness of bank personnel to help and solve problems of customers indicates empathy of the staff that reveals the quality of banks.

The sixth dimension detected in the study as security comprises of statements such as privacy of accounts and transactions, security while using e-banking, at branch and ATMs. Thus, this dimensions deals with the overall security of banking services and transactions carried out through all channels i.e. internet, ATM or bank visit. This dimension accounts for 8.08 percent of variance. This is a traditional dimension of quality highlighted by numerous studies in the past. According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), security indicates freedom from danger or risk which involves physical safety, financial safety and confidentiality. In case of online banking, Jun and Cai (2001) and Yang et al. (2004) highlighted privacy and safety of online transaction information and safeguarding personal information as an essential feature of quality. This study identified security as an all inclusive dimension related to privacy and safety across all channels of banking.

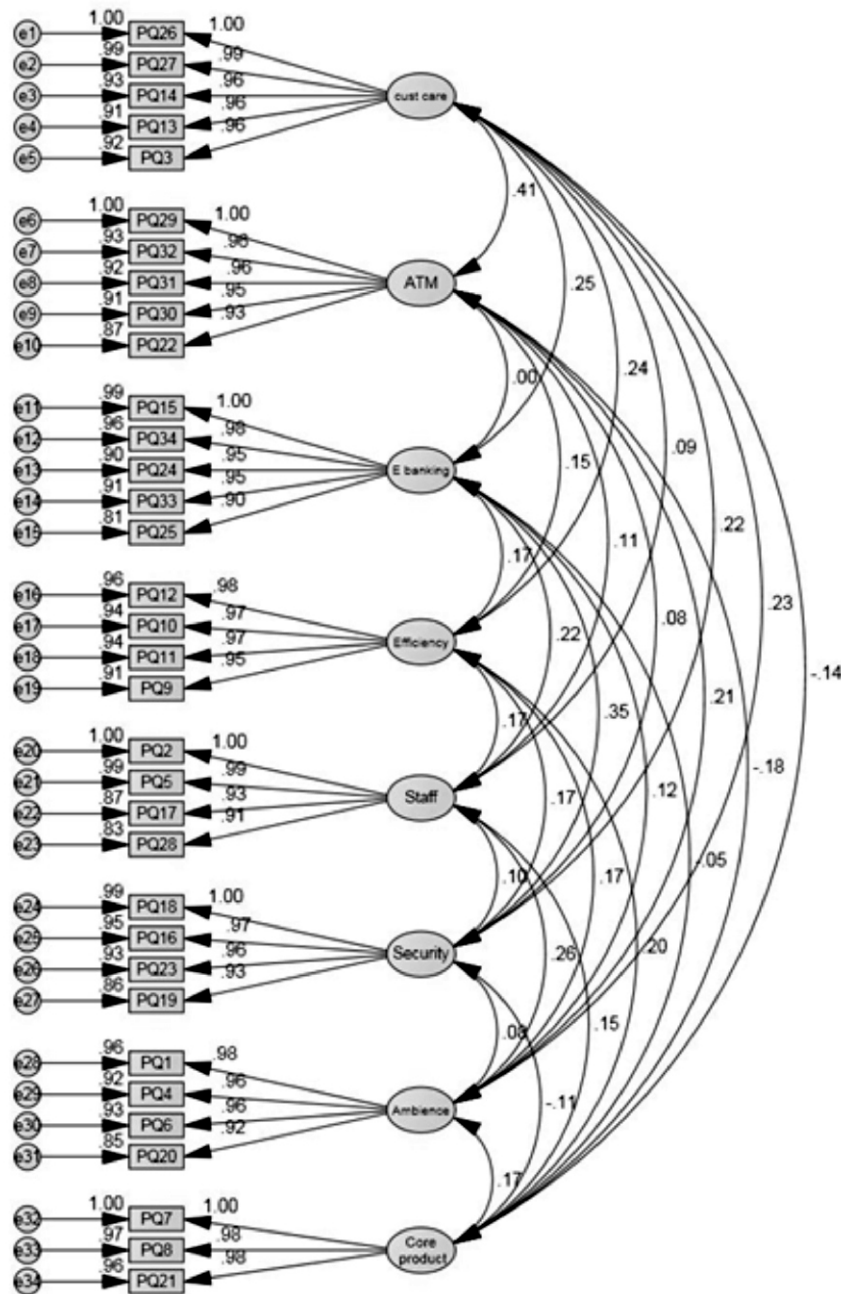
The seventh dimension recognized as tangibles includes statements such as good ambience, comfort facilities, spacious premises and crowding. Thus, this dimension refers to the tangible aspects or physical resources such as overall ambience, space and comfort facilities provided by the bank which accounts for 6.71 percent of variance in perceived quality. Karatepe et al. (2005) identified that the appearance, interior and exterior facilities of the bank is an important measure of service quality of banks and termed these as service environment. According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), tangibles refers to the physical evidence of service which includes physical facilities, tools and equipments used, appearance of personnel and other customers in service facility. However, the tangible

dimension in this study incorporates only the physical facilities and ambience of the bank and not the human element.

The eighth dimension identified as core products and services consists of statements like providing wide range of products and services and variety of features. Thus, this dimension deals with the quality of core products and services provided by the bank which explains 5.52 percent

of variance. Bahia and Nantel (2000) conceptualized this dimension as services portfolio describing it as the complete gamut of services and its consistency with the latest innovations in banking services. Jun and Cai (2001) perceived this aspect as one of the important considerations of customers in selecting their banks. Yang et al. (2004) believed that customers are more inclined to patronize banks which offer substantial variety of services as they are more likely to fulfil their diverse needs.

Figure- 1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis with the eight dimensions of Perceived Quality



The measurement model showed an adequate data fit. The overall GFI statistics of the general model suggested that the proposed model was consistent with the data based on relative (GFI, IFI, CFI) and absolute (RMSEA) indices of fit: CMIN = 650.73, $p < 0.000$, $c2/df = 1.304$, GFI = 0.814, IFI = 0.985, CFI = 0.985, RMSEA = 0.045. The $c2/df$ ratio was 1.304 which is within the prescribed range of 3

indicating an acceptable fit between the sample data and hypothetical model. The reliability analysis was carried out to test for internal consistency based on computation of cronbach alpha (reliability coefficient). The reliability for the eight factors found in the analysis as indicated in table- 3 was above the threshold of 0.7 and were considered reliable and adequate (Nunnally, 1978).

Table- 3 Reliability Analysis

Dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Customer care	5	0.990
ATM	5	0.984
E-banking	5	0.981
Efficiency	4	0.984
Staff	4	0.980
Security	4	0.982
Tangibles	4	0.977
Core products and services	3	0.992
Total	34	0.905

Thus, this study attempts to explore the important elements of perceived quality of banking services based on qualitative research and then to statistically classify them into eight valid dimensions.

Conclusion

With the rising competition and customer expectations for superior service, quality has become a key differentiating factor in banking industry where there is minimal product differentiation. Hence, it is the need of the hour for the banks to understand customer's perception of quality and deliver the same. The concept of overall quality of banks perceived by Indian customers is quite different from that of other countries. While overseas customers are rapidly heading towards a completely automated system, India, which is still dominated by retail banking and preference for personal visit to banks to utilize services, has still a long way to go.

Hence, it is essential to evaluate perceived quality using a combination of dimensions considered significant in the Indian context. This study has managed to accomplish this objective of developing an indigenous measurement scale for perceived quality in banking sector. This consists of a balanced set of dimensions focusing on all key channels and aspects of banking. This empirical study could be significant to banks which provide an insight into the psyche of their customers for more accurate measurement of quality perceptions and for designing better strategies to improve their quality in future. However, it should be noted that this study was based in Chennai and hence limited to perceptions of banking customers in and around Chennai City, Tamil Nadu. For further research, this scale can be extended and validated by using a larger sample size covering different geographical locations of India.

Table- 4 Descriptive Statistics - Components of Perceived Quality

Components of Perceived Quality	Mean	SD	Dimension	Mean	SD
The bank offers quick and excellent customer support in case of any problem	2.66	1.39			
The customer care is 24x7 available for help	2.65	1.33			
The bank provides clear answers to my queries	2.65	1.30	Customer care	2.65	1.32
The bank has a dedicated customer care section with staff to resolve queries	2.65	1.34			
The customer care helpline provides speedy response and access to representatives	2.64	1.35			

The bank's ATM provides high cash withdrawal limit	2.61	1.35			
The bank allows very limited number of free ATM withdrawals every month	2.61	1.33			
The ATM machines and systems are user friendly	2.61	1.38	ATM	2.6	1.31
The ATM facilities are maintained well	2.61	1.35			
This bank's ATM provides necessary functions and services like cash withdrawal and cheque deposits	2.60	1.35			
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The bank's website interface is user friendly	2.45	1.40			
Navigation in bank's website is so easy	2.45	1.41			
The bank's website has all the functions that I need	2.43	1.38	E-Banking	2.44	1.35
The mobile banking app provides good quality services	2.45	1.41			
The bank's website is very attractive	2.44	1.42			
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The bank transactions are processed very fast	2.37	1.37			
Generally, there is no delay in any service provided	2.38	1.39	Efficiency	2.38	1.34
The processing for certain services like loans, cheque clearing, etc. takes a long time	2.37	1.35			
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Certain services like availing loans, FD, changing branch, updating personal information involves lengthy procedures and paper-work	2.41	1.39			
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The bank staff address the complaints in a friendly manner	2.23	1.40			
The bank officials are very courteous and helpful	2.27	1.45	Staff	2.24	1.33
The bank staff give personal attention to me	2.23	1.33			
The bank staff are well qualified and knowledgeable to deal with customer issues	2.21	1.32			
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The bank keeps the good privacy of accounts and transactions	2.79	1.43			
The bank ensures complete security while using e-banking	2.80	1.45	Security	2.79	1.39
The bank ensures good security at its branch offices	2.79	1.43			

The bank's ATM transactions are safe and secure	2.79	1.39		
The bank is generally crowded and noisy	2.22	1.42		
The bank provides adequate comfort facilities like AC, seating, drinking water, parking facilities, etc.	2.21	1.36	Tangibles/Ambience	2.21 1.32
The branch has a spacious area and premises	2.22	1.31		
The branch ambience is good	2.17	1.37		
The bank offers a wide range of products and services such as loans, insurance, cards, payments and fund transfer facility	2.82	1.40	Core products and services	2.83 1.38
The bank's product and service features are very attractive	2.82	1.41		
The bank does not offer certain products and services that I need	2.85	1.35		

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