

Assessment of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction using SERVQUAL Model in Palestinian Automobile Industry

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ABSTRACT— This study aims at investigating the service quality and customer satisfaction in automobile aftersales services, using the SERVQUAL Model. The study examined the variables that affect the customers' satisfaction in aftersales service centers, and assess the service quality using the SERVQUAL model. The study employs a quantitative research approach, by developing and distributing two questionnaires to a sample of 250 respondents to assess service quality and customer satisfaction in the automobile industry. The research mainly found that some service centers need to put more effort and emphasis to enhance the assurance, reliability, empathy, and tangibles dimensions. It is noted that people in all of the targeted service centers are expecting the service providers to invest more in the tangibles, and to install more visually attractive physical materials and facilities. Being the first in this field, the outcomes of this study shall be used as a reference to advance and enhance the automobile aftersales sector in the future, and support car dealers and service centers in improving the quality of their offered services to ensure customers' optimal satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: SERVQUAL, automobile, Palestine, service quality, customer satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In recent years, the influence of globalization has been spreading rapidly, affecting all aspects of humanity, where one cannot measure the interdependence of the world's economies, societies and cultures. Witnessing the impact of globalization amidst the competitive, fast driven and emerging economy, particularly in developing countries, has urged companies to seek better practices to retain and maximize their customer share of the market. Customers nowadays are more informed about products than in earlier times, hence they are usually more prompt to approach companies that not only meet their expectations but also exceed them. Thus, most companies seek to maintain their competitiveness in the market and have been focusing and emphasizing customer satisfaction. Recently, a few sectors in Palestine have been applying service quality measures. However, the automobile aftersales sector did not apply this approach yet. Service in the automotive industry, mainly at big service centers and individual car dealers, is transforming greatly and shifting towards providing quality service in general. However, there is a research deficiency regarding service quality in the automotive industry in Palestine. Quality is considered a significant turn in surviving and boosting up businesses in any industry. In the automotive industry, however, the aforementioned four key characteristics often impose challenges in formulating standards to assess and measure the quality of provided services. Rather, car dealers are struggling to sustain and enhance their relationships with their customers after purchasing the car. Usually, this kind of relationship is kept through the after-sales service center that is highly important in sustaining long-term relationships with customers of a high retention rate, and achieving and exceeding the customers' satisfaction as well [12]. This is done through campaigns, service packages, and membership cards with benefits for customers and goodwill warranty programs.

Therefore, service managers need to have a full understanding of how the quality of the services they provide are perceived and distinguished by their customers. This understanding will help them reevaluate, reassess and enhance the service quality they provide to ensure the optimal satisfaction of their customers. In this regard, [22] argued that managers and service centers should aim at determining the effective method that helps them specify the important service dimensions with the highest impact on customers' attitude, especially with the numerous factors generated from the rapidly growing change in technology. Nonetheless, service centers usually find it hard to determine what dimensions ensure the service quality to customers, and what level is required so that these dimensions deliver a high-quality service [22].

1.2 Problem Statement

SERVQUAL dimensions serve to detect the gap between customers' expectations and the perception of services received, which in turn can help companies to prioritize their work accordingly. Nonetheless, a few initiatives are found in automotive companies in Palestine, yet those are not based on studies or applied modules. For example, Peugeot Palestine offers a membership card allowing the customer to have a 30% discount on offered services, in addition to 3 times pull if any failure happened to the car. On the other hand, Citroen Palestine offers winter check for free, while both of them gives 3 years or 100,000 KM free warranty, whichever comes first, and they are handling the after-warranty period cases in what is known as 'a good-will warranty' (AutoZone Company, 2018). Working in the automotive industry for almost eleven years, the researchers have noted a gap between customers' expectations and the actual perceived quality. This dissatisfaction appears either in written and/or non-written complaints. This is the research problem that motivated this study.

1.3 Research Questions

The study will attempt to provide answers to the following specific research questions:

- 1.3.1 What is the service quality dimension [tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance] that affect the satisfaction of Palestinian automobile customers the most?
 - 1.3.2 How to improve customer satisfaction in the Palestinian automobile after-sales industry?
- Additionally, the researcher tries to answer the following sub-questions:
- 1.3.3 Do the managers in the automobile industry see the issues the customers raise as important?
 - 1.3.4 Are these issues a priority that needs to be fixed?

All these questions show the significance of this study to assess customers' satisfaction, and the main factors affecting the perceived quality.

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The SERVQUAL model contains 22 elements and is usually applied and utilized to assess the service quality in various sectors; such as in hospitability, hotels, airlines, banking, restaurants, health sector and automotive services among others [7], [17]. The SERVQUAL model merges the service expectation and the service performance and proposes that the perceived service quality is pre to satisfaction [20]. Figure 1 below visualizes the process. Hence, the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL Model is applied to assess the perceived service quality and customer satisfaction in the automobile industry in Palestine, in an attempt to determine which of the five dimensions is more crucial in ensuring the customers' satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Customer Satisfaction

Several studies have been targeting the concept of customer satisfaction, such as [2], [1], [15], [23]. The high number of such studies indicates the importance of customer satisfaction in reflecting and showing the

competitive advantage of any company. Additionally, [15] noted that the number of companies around the world that observe customer satisfaction rates is continuously increasing. In this regard, claimed that the most important investment companies shall do is meeting their customers' satisfaction, as this is considered the baseline for companies' success. This was also assured by, who concluded that companies need to dedicate significant resources to improve customer satisfaction as it is a crucial element that indicates the general flourishing and success of any company. Satisfied customers usually rebound and buy more. Besides buying more, they also work as a network to reach other potential customers by sharing experiences.

2.2 Service Quality

Service quality is not a product delivered to customers or an object to touch and feel, rather it includes a deeper approach, highlighting the way service staff perform to deliver services to customers. It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon [26], [8], [9] where the customer always expects to get a better value in turn of the money spent, whether the better value of the purchased products or better services. Service Quality is “the degree fit between customers’ expectations and perceptions of service” [22]. [18], on the other hand, stated that it is what results from comparing customers' expectations before the service and the experience after receiving that service. Regardless how the concept is defined, there is no doubt that it leads to customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

2.3 After-Sale Service Quality

After-sales services are all the activities performed to maintain the quality and reliability of a purchased vehicle, which shall ensure customer satisfaction. According to, car dealers gain very little profit if they rely only on vehicles' sales. Hence, dealers started to introduce after-sales activities, such as maintenance and spare part sales, to improve their profit and revenue. Profit made from such activities can go beyond the initial purchase by three times, and sometimes five times.

2.4 SERVQUAL Dimensions and their Application

The SERVQUAL model guides investigating service quality problems. It presents five main elements of service quality, namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Four of these dimensions are related to service delivery, whereas the reliability dimension focuses on the perceived service quality of the customer. Altogether, these dimensions work as a reliable conceptual framework to improve service quality. According to [21], reliability is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately; assurance is employees’ knowledge and courtesy, and their ability to ensure customers’ trust and confidence. Tangibles are the physical facilities, equipment, and the appearance of staff; empathy is individualized attention and care, that companies provide their customers with; and responsiveness is the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

2.5 Gap Analysis

[22] conducted an exploratory, qualitative study, in which they investigated the key attributes and elements of service quality from both the viewpoint of customers and service providers. Based on this study, consistent patterns emerged, forming a set of key variations that were considered major obstacles in delivering high-quality services. The framework used to identify those service variations is called “gap analysis”, and it is considered the basis for the SERVQUAL model. According to the gap analysis theory, there are five gaps as defined below [21].

- 1) Knowledge Gap: It shows the difference between customers’ expectations and management's perceptions of those expectations.
- 2) Design Gap. It is the difference between the management's perceptions of customers’ expectations and the delivery of service quality specifications.
- 3) Performance Gap: It is the difference between service quality specifications and the service that is

delivered.

- 4) **Communication Gap:** It is the difference between service delivery and the communication delivered to the customer about that service, whether through advertisement or promotions that may increase the customers' expectations.
- 5) **Accumulation Gap.** It is the difference between customers' expectations of service and their perceptions of service performance.

2.6 Customers' Expectations and Perceptions

As stated earlier, customer's perceptions of any specific service are usually a result of comparing the expectations the customer originally anticipated to receive from the provider, with how they felt from the experience they had with the service provider [25]. Expectations are defined as the customer's desires based on either experience or previous communication or information, from promotion and advertisement for example [25]. However, [21] argue that expectations are mere predictions through which they expect the service provider to provide certain qualities. Nonetheless, identifying and realizing customers' expectations is essential, as it shall influence the quality of the provided service. It shall assist the providers in allocating the gaps and weaknesses, and hence overcoming them and enhancing the service, which eventually leads to meeting customers' expectations, improve their perception, and thus ensure their satisfaction.

2.7 Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction

The first category is the basic elements that require minimal input to ensure customer satisfaction. These elements are the very basic requirements that serve the purpose of the product for which it was originally produced. For example, if a food processor does not have the needed blades that cut the food, the customer that purchased this food processor will be unsatisfied. The second category is the performance factor, which includes the performance of the service provider, and the service itself. This factor reflects how reliable the purchased product is, and whether it functions and performs well. This category also depends on the knowledge, attitude, friendliness, courtesy, professionalism, skills and awareness of the service provider or the service staff. Both components affect customer satisfaction. The third category is related to the provider's excitement and dedication for the business, including the management, outreach, and caring for the small details. If not fulfilled, this category will not necessarily lead to customers' dissatisfaction; yet fulfilling it increase customers' satisfaction.

2.8 Customer Service Communication

Customer service communication is a major component that leads to the success of any business. This component includes different fields, such as marketing, advertisement, management, psychological aspects and promotion materials among others. According to, service communication is the process and method undertaken by the service provider to present or promote the product he owns, or the service he has, to exchange it with the customer's cooperation or money. Service communication is the first step that creates an interaction between the customer and the service provider, where both will have the chance to assess the quality of the service [3].

3. Methodology and Procedure of Research

3.1 Area of Study

The survey was conducted in Ramallah six automobile service centers. For this research and maintain a transparency level and to avoid misunderstandings, it was decided to avoid mentioning the names of the brands, rather naming them as brand A, brand B, brand C, brand D, brand E and brand F. There are branches for selling these brands all over the West Bank, however, choosing Ramallah branches was for economic and

ease of accessibility reasons as it led to saving money since the researcher is based in this city.

3.2 Research Methods

This study is designed to assess service quality in the automobile industry in Palestine by using the SERVQUAL Model and assessing its five dimensions, namely assurance, responsiveness, tangibles, reliability, and empathy. There are two types of researches, induction and deduction. The induction type dictates that a theory or hypothesis is built first and data is collected to test the theory. In deduction, on the other hand, data is collected first, and the obtained result guide building the theory or hypothesis. In this study, the deduction approach is used, and collected data is qualitatively analyzed. The study was put together using a descriptive analysis approach, aiming to obtain real and realistic information. Several methods were undertaken to collect the needed data to conduct this study.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

There were two main sources of data, the primary data was obtained from the questionnaires distributed to respondents, using the sampling technique. Service quality assessment goes in two directions, the first one assesses the expectations of users, and the other one assesses their perception. Combining these two factors, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customers is determined by identifying the factors that influence their perception. To do so, two questionnaires have been designed as described below:

The first questionnaire assesses the public's expectations from automobile service centers. The first section was designed to collect information about respondents in terms of age, gender and educational qualifications. The second section aimed at collecting and identifying their expectations on the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model. 250 expectation questionnaires were distributed. The second questionnaire assess the customers' perceptions after receiving the services. Perception questionnaires were distributed to customers at the targeted service centers, and were also divided into two sections. The first section included information about respondents in terms of age, gender and educational qualifications, and the second section aimed at collecting and identifying their perceptions and opinions about the provided services, by answering questions specifically designed for each of the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. This information helped to understand the background of respondents to link it with the perceived service quality in the service center and the way they reacted to it.

3.4 Research Procedures

Since Arabic is the spoken language in Palestine, the original questionnaires that were built in English were translated from English to Arabic by professional translating services, to be able to distribute it in local service centers to be filled out. The questionnaires and their translations are found in Appendices 1, 2, 3, and 4. The questionnaires were sent to the Statistician Mr Ali Jabbarin, Dr Ashraf Almimi and Mr Sharif Abu Karsh for arbitration and enriching the content of the questionnaires. This is an important step so that the content of the questionnaires is enriched and constructed according to the experience of the aforementioned names of professionals, in a manner that ensures the best results. The modifications and comments provided were integrated into the questionnaires.

4. Findings and Data Analysis

4.1 Results of the Expectations Questionnaires

The expectations questionnaires were disseminated randomly, and a total number of 250 questionnaires were filled and collected. Table 1 shows the frequency of answers obtained from the expectations questionnaires, meaning, and the number of respondents answering each of the segmental questions for each dimension. The

scores shown in table 1 show the frequency or the repetition of scores of each of the attributes linked to the SERVQUAL dimensions. Accordingly, the average score of each dimension was calculated and the results are demonstrated in the following sections and tables.

| Table 1: expectations frequency scores | | | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. Tangibles Dimension | | Frequency of scale 1 – 5 | | | | |
| | Attributes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | Equipment should have a modern looking | 0 | 0 | 30 | 147 | 71 |
| 2 | Physical facilities should be visually appealing | 0 | 0 | 36 | 160 | 52 |
| 3 | Employees should appear neatly and well dressed | 0 | 0 | 36 | 164 | 47 |
| 4 | Service materials should be visually appealing | 0 | 0 | 32 | 152 | 64 |
| 2. Assurance Dimension | | | | | | |
| | Attributes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | The behavior of employees should instill confidence in customers | 0 | 0 | 26 | 169 | 53 |
| 2 | Customers should feel safe in their transactions | 0 | 0 | 45 | 136 | 68 |
| 3 | Employees should be consistently courteous with customers | 0 | 0 | 26 | 113 | 110 |
| 4 | Employees should know to answer the customers' questions | 0 | 0 | 28 | 130 | 91 |
| 3. Responsiveness Dimension | | | | | | |
| | Attributes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | Employees should tell customers when exactly services will be performed | 219 | 15 | 2 | 13 | 0 |
| 2 | Employees should give prompt service to customers | 187 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Employees should never be too busy to respond to customers' requests | 179 | 66 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Employees should always be willing to help customers | 183 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4. Reliability Dimension | | | | | | |
| | Attributes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | Employees should have sincere approach in problem solving | 46 | 65 | 80 | 52 | 0 |
| 2 | Employees should perform the service correctly the first time | 9 | 181 | 12 | 38 | 0 |
| 3 | Employees should provide the service at the time they promise to do so | 28 | 46 | 30 | 141 | 0 |
| 4 | Employees should emphasize on error free service | 193 | 24 | 1 | 27 | 0 |
| 5. Empathy Dimension | | | | | | |
| | Attributes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | Employees should give individual attention to customers | 144 | 103 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | The company should had convenient operating hours to all their customers | 209 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Customers best interests should be at the heart of company | 73 | 173 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Employees should understand the specific needs of customers | 205 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

4.1.1 Expectation scores of the tangibles dimension

The tangibles dimension was the second-highest demand of the respondents with an average of 77.6%. Looking at the segmental scores, the highest number is linked to the modern-looking equipment, followed by the visually appealing service material and physical facilities. The least demanded attribute is the dress code of the employees, though not very much lower than the average score, which means it is also

4.1.2 Expectation scores of the assurance dimension

The assurance dimension was the highest demand of the respondents with an average of 80.1%, looking at the segmental scores, it is noted that respondents are expecting courteous treatment from employees the most, in addition to expecting them to have the proper knowledge to answer any question. However, feeling safe during financial transactions is the least expected attribute in this dimension, which means that people have this feeling of insecurity in financial transactions and do not expect that the service providers will do anything to make them change their expectations.

4.1.3 Expectation scores of the responsiveness dimension

The responsiveness dimension was the lowest expected dimension by the respondents, with an average of only 5.9%. Looking at the segmental scores, employees' availability to respond to customers' requests was the most expected feature in this dimension, yet respondents expected the least that employees will be willing to help customers, provide them with prompt services or tell them when exactly a service will be delivered.

4.1.4 Expectation scores of the reliability dimension

The reliability dimension received an average of 34.3%. Among the attributes of this dimension, and according to the segmental scores, respondents' highest expectation is related to employees' provision of a service at the promised time, whereas the least expected attribute is providing full service with no errors.

4.1.5 Expectation scores of the empathy dimension

The empathy dimension is the second least expected dimension to the provided in automobile service centers, with an average of 9.0%. The segmental scores show big differences between the respondents' expectations to the different attributes of this dimension, with the highest expected attribute embedded in having customers' interest at the heart of the company, followed by customers receiving the fullest attention by employees. Contrasting to that, the respondents' lowest expectation with not much emphasis was having convenient working hours. Additionally, respondents did not have high expectations regarding employees having an understanding of the customers' specific needs.

4.2 Results of the Perception Questionnaires

As mentioned before, the perception questionnaire was divided into two parts, one including demographic and personal information, and the others highlighted the actual perception of the provided services in six automobile service centers in Ramallah. The following section demonstrates the obtained results.

4.2.1 Results of the demographic and personal information

The collected demographic and personal information, quantized in Table 7 show that 75.3% of the respondents were males, and 24.7% were females. The information also showed that 95.6% of the respondents had a first or second university degree and that 74.6% were married.

4.2.2 Perception results of the SERVQUAL dimensions

The perceptions questionnaires were disseminated to the six-targeted service centers, and a total number of 250 questionnaires were collected. The frequency of answers obtained from the perceptions questionnaires.

The scores shown in Table 8 shows the frequency or the repetition of scores of each of the attributes linked to the SERVQUAL dimensions. Accordingly, the average score of each dimension was calculated and the results are demonstrated in the following sections and tables.

4.2.2.1 Perception results of the tangibles dimension scores

The average perceived tangibles score is 55.8%. This means that more than half of the respondents to the tangibility perception question believe that this dimension, and all its segmental components, matched their desired expectation of the tangibles dimension.

4.2.2.2 Perception results of the assurance dimension scores.

The average assurance score is 61.7%. This means that 61.7% of the respondents to the assurance perception question believe that this dimension, and all its segmental components, matched their desired expectation of the assurance dimension.

4.2.2.3 Perception results of the responsiveness dimension scores

The average responsiveness score is 9.0%. This means that the majority of the respondents to the responsiveness perception question believe that the service provider did not match their desired expectation of the responsiveness dimension and all its segmental components.

4.2.2.4 Perception results of the reliability dimension scores

The average reliability score is 15.5%. This means that only 15.5% of the respondents to the reliability perception question believe that this dimension, and all its segmental components, matched their desired expectation of the assurance dimension.

4.2.2.5 Perception results of the empathy dimension scores

The average empathy score is 34.3%. This means that only 34.4% of the respondents to the assurance perception question believe that this dimension, and all its segmental components, matched their desired expectation of the empathy dimension.

4.3 Calculation of Gaps

The gaps are the differences between the perceptions and the expectations. Calculating the gap score is important as the gap results measure the service quality. The gaps in the five dimensions of SERVQUAL that resulted from assessing the quality of the service in the six targeted automobile service centers. It is important to note that the negative gap indicates a value less than what was expected and hence this area or dimension should be largely improved.

5. Conclusions of Research Findings and Feasible Recommendations

5.1 Analysis of the Expectations Questionnaire

As mentioned earlier, a total number of 250 questionnaires were collected to inspect people's expectations from automobile service centers. The results obtained from these questionnaires nonetheless require some analysis and reflections. The average expectations scores of the five dimensions. According to respondents' highest expectations were the fulfilment of the assurance dimension. More specifically, and by looking back at table 3, the highest-ranking and number of answers were given to the question focusing on courteous treatment, followed by that emphasizing on acquiring the proper knowledge to answer questions. These results are probably an outcome of the actual needs people require in their daily lives, which is fair and respectful treatment, and at the same time, getting the right answers from the source. The other two questions in the

assurance dimension also received a relatively high number of ranking and answers, where respondents also look for safety during financial transactions and feeling confident while dealing with the automobile service centers. Not much lower than the highest average, the tangibles dimension is also an important aspect for the people visiting the automobile service centers. Visually appealing physical services and material and modern looking equipment gives a positive impression to the visitors and services' recipients.

5.2 Analysis of the Demographic and Personal Information

The obtained results indicate that the majority of the respondents are well educated and have a relatively balanced stable social life. This information is important as it ensures that the feedback they gave on the services provided at the examined automobile service centers is rational and not based on rapid judgments.

5.3 Analysis of the Perception Questionnaires

By looking at the results obtained from the expectation questionnaires and those obtained from the perception questionnaires, there is a huge difference between what people expect to receive from the automobile service centers and the way they perceive and reflect on the service they receive. The average of perceived dimensions. Since the questionnaires were distributed and collected from six service centers, a general segmental analysis was done in an attempt to identify which of the five SERVQUAL dimensions was ranked as the best. Table 21 clarifies these ranks, where the dimensions are arranged from the highest to the lowest quality.

5.4 Expectations versus Perceptions

The content of the expectations and perceptions questionnaires is the same, and only the formulation of the statements differed between being a general statement using the present tense for the expectation or being presented using the past tense to assess the perception after receiving the service. Nonetheless, customers' expectations and perceptions were both measured using the same five-pointer scale. In general, and by looking at the obtained scores and measuring customer satisfaction, customers were expecting to receive more of the majority of the 20 elements designated for the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. The average expectation versus the average perception of the five dimensions. The results demonstrated in the previous chapter show that customers expect more of the tangibles, assurance, and reliability dimensions in automobile service centers, whereas the responsiveness and empathy dimensions are the least demanded, or probably, the least expected.

5.5 Gap Score Analysis

As for the gap score, it was clarified earlier that it is the difference between perception and expectation. Calculating the gap score is important as the gap results measure the service quality, and hence provide an indication of customer satisfaction. In this regard, it is important to note that when the expectation score equals or is close to the perception score, this means that the quality of the provided service is high, and vice versa. Table 24 summarizes the average gaps in the five dimensions. After examining the gap scores, it was noted that the largest gap between the expectation and perception was for the tangibles dimension, whereas the responsiveness dimension has the lowest gap score, hence is perceived as the best-provided service among the five dimensions.

5.6 Segmental Analysis of the Automobile Service Centers

Based on table 21, and after assessing the expectations results, a segmental analysis is performed to the 6 service centers to evaluate which dimensions are customers pleased and satisfied with and dimensions that require improvements.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

By comparing the expectations' scores and the perceptions scores, it is noted that service centers of brand A, brand C and brand E need to put more effort and emphasis to enhance the assurance, reliability and tangibles dimensions. However, responsiveness and empathy dimensions are performing better than the general expectation of these centers. On the other hand, the service center of brand B needs to enhance the reliability and tangibles dimensions, and the brand D service center needs to enhance the tangibles and the empathy dimension. It is noted that people in all of the targeted service centers are expecting the service providers to invest more in the tangibles, and to install more visually attractive physical materials and facilities. Additionally, in five out of the six targeted service centers people were expecting more of the reliability dimension than what customers received, and in four service centers, the assurance dimension needs enhancement. The tangibles dimension is relatively important as it gives a feeling of comfort to the customers. They feel they are welcomed. Additionally, carefully installed tangibles indicate professionalism, that workflows are systematically and smoothly, and that employees and staff are well arranged.

Therefore, investing in this dimension is important, and this explains why customers' perception indicated their dissatisfaction with this dimension. Reliability and assurance dimensions on the other hand are also vital. Though a little number of the targeted service centers fulfilled them, yet the majority did not. It was mentioned earlier that the assurance dimension stresses the employees' knowledge of the service, the way they trust customers and their ability to ensure customers' trust and confidence in the service provider. As for the reliability dimension, it focuses on the providers' ability to perform the service accurately and that gives the customer a feeling that they can depend on the service provider. These two dimensions are important to maintain a healthy relationship between the service provider and the customer or client. Therefore, service centers of brands A, B, C, E and F need to invest more in these dimensions in terms of delivering the services and meeting their promises to ensure that their customers have more faith in them and the service they are providing, and hence guarantee their satisfaction.

6.2 Recommendations

In addition to the above conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Generally, all centers need to continue improving the services they are providing.
- Attention needs to be given to the way staff deals with the customers. Staff need to be evaluated regularly to ensure that the customers receive a welcoming treatment.
- Ensuring an effective monitoring system in the services centres to anticipate probably misperceptions in the future.
- Service centers need to be more punctual in delivering their services promptly with no delays.
- There is a necessity to give priority to the tangibility dimension which has a crucial impact on customers' perceptions regarding the quality of services provided by after- sales centers in the automotive industry in Palestine.
- It is recommended to use the SERVQUAL model in the different sectors and industries in Palestine, to assess the perceived quality and the customers' satisfaction from the provided service

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