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## A STUDY ON WOMEN CONSUMERS' SERVICE EXPECTATIONS AT A BEAUTY PARLOUR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUMBAI CITY

**VIDYA B. PANICKER**  
**RESEARCH SCHOLAR**  
**UNIVERSITY OF MUMBAI**  
**MUMBAI**

**DR. KHALIL AHMAD MOHAMMAD**  
**HEAD**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**BURHANI COLLEGE OF COMMERCE & ARTS**  
**MUMBAI**

### ABSTRACT

*"Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder." Looking and feeling beautiful matters to women and it is very important for them to feel appreciated both in their personal life and at their work places. Looking good, boosts their confidence level. Most women spend a lot of time, effort and money to look and feel good. For enhancing and maintaining their beauty, women are dependent on various beauty products and services. The beauty and beauty care industry caters to this particular demand of women consumers. The beauty and wellness industry in India was around US\$ 7736 million in 2012-13 and is expected to double by 2017-18. It employs a workforce of 3.4 million and the changing demographics of women in India will greatly contribute towards its growth and success. One of the major contributors of the beauty care service industry are beauty salons / parlours. The beauty care service industry consists of both organised and unorganized players. The main criteria which determines the success of beauty salons is service quality which is synonymous with effective and efficient customer service. These dimensions of 'Service Quality' leads to customer satisfaction which in turn results into customer loyalty. Also, the need of this study is to find out the factors which are important for selection of a particular beauty parlour by women.*

### KEYWORDS

beauty care industry, beauty parlour, beauty salon, women consumers, working women.

### INTRODUCTION

**B**eing beautiful matters." Since time immemorial beauty has been given a lot of importance. People have always been influenced by beauty and have taken efforts for its upkeep. Being attractive gives one confidence to face challenges in their work and personal life. Therefore, people do not hesitate to spend on beauty products, beauty services, apparels, accessories etc.

The changing demographics in India has brought a lot of focus to the beauty industry. Since the opening up of the Indian Economy since 1991, not only major domestic players have entered the beauty industry but also several foreign players have entered the Indian market. The major positives for these companies is the ever growing Indian population and the totally 'transformed' Indian woman. Indian women have never been more aware about their looks, personality and attire. The beauty industry has always had its major focus on women. Since time immemorial women have been known for resorting to various ways for preserving and maintaining their beauty; be it hair, skin general health or overall personality. In the earlier times, women resorted to household remedies for grooming themselves. However, since the past five decades the demographics of women has undergone a rapid change due to rise in education levels, increasing income patterns and greater awareness for the need of self-grooming etc. Beauty has become a parameter for success among women both at their jobs and in their personal life and therefore they have become more conscious about their health and beauty. This psychographic change that is change in lifestyle patterns of women has given an impetus to the beauty industry in India; both for beauty products as well as beauty services such as beauty parlours, hair salons and spas.

According to a report of National Skill Development Corporation prepared by KPMG (Consulting firm), the global beauty and wellness industry is pegged at around \$ 1.4 trillion. The major markets for this particular industry are China, Brazil, US, Indonesia, followed by India. Also, this particular industry is expected to grow at a CAGR of 18.6% driven by the increasing number of affluent and middle class customers all over the world. (Bhushan R. et.al. 2015)

In India, the beauty and wellness industry is expected to double by 2017-18 due to the changing demographics and economic prosperity. This industry has become so attractive that many domestic as well as international companies are trying to enter this sector. Domestic companies like VLCC, Kaya, Naturals, Javed Habib, Belleza, Anushka Salons, Strands Salon and Trends in Vogue are already in the fray. Many MNC's have also entered the Indian market driven by the increasing population, changing demographics and affluence.

There has been a rapid increase in number of beauty salons in each and every locality in the urban cities as well as towns in India. Personal grooming industry rose by leaps and bounds with different products entering the market place as well as various companies entering this arena with their varied products. Small private parlours and more recently conglomerates like Hindustan Lever, ITC, La'Oreal entered the Indian market space with their creative and innovative beauty services. The Indian beauty industry consists of both organised and unorganised players. Among the organised players are Marico's Kaya Skin Clinic, Shahnaz Husain Herbals, Keune, Lakme Beauty Salon, VLCC, Jawed Habib Hair & Beauty, besides others. Since this is a booming industry at the moment, several entrepreneurs are also making an entry into this field to reap the benefits of an ever growing consumer segment. This is a very attractive industry for start-ups as the investment required is comparatively lower than other industries. Women are spending more and more on beauty products and services and this rise in demand has given a great impetus to the beauty sector. There are several factors for the success of this particular industry. With respect to beauty products variations of existing products, herbal concoctions, mineral based, precious metals based, pearl based creams and facial packs have invaded the market space. With respect to beauty services, much emphasis is given to innovative services, efficient customer service, ambience and hygiene.

When we study consumer behaviour of women towards beauty parlour services, an emphasis has to be placed on the service quality parameters of the beauty parlour. For a customer, these parameters are a dictating factor in deciding their loyalty towards a specific parlour.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry identified ten dimensions of Service Quality. In their 1988 work, they reduced the ten service determinants to five. Perceived Service Quality can be defined as the difference between what the customer's expectations are from the service and what are his perceptions after the service is delivered. (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1985). It is all about the dissonance a customer experiences after the delivery of the service – it may be positive or negative. It is this range of dissonance that dictates customer satisfaction leading to customer loyalty. The SERVQUAL model is universal and it can be applied to the services offered by any firm or organisation. SERVQUAL model was developed by few marketing researchers, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in 1985 and this particular questionnaire was a framework for measuring the service parameters for any service industry. They continued their pioneering efforts in the field of services and continued to conduct research and published various improvisations to their study with their various research papers in the subsequent years. In

this study, we are going to apply the same to find out as to what are the factors of a beauty salon / parlour that influences a customer's choice of a particular beauty parlour.

1. Tangibility: this includes physical facilities, equipment, and the physical appearance of an employee.
2. Reliability: this refers to the ability to provide the exact required service according to given specifications and conditions.
3. Responsiveness: the inclination and willingness of the employees to serve customers quickly and properly.
4. Assurance: feelings of trust and confidence in dealing with the organization. This reflects the workers' knowledge and experience and their ability to build self-confidence as well as confidence in the customers themselves.
5. Empathy: understanding the customers' personal needs, taking care of them individually and showing them all sorts of sympathy and affection, looking at them as close friends and distinguished clients.

As per study by Syeda Shaharbanu et al (2013) on their study on 482 male and female respondents to find out the importance of service quality dimensions to build successful relationship with customers, it was found out that customer gave the highest preferences to service quality over all other factors. It was also found that pricing of services at the beauty parlour was the least important factor in determining customer loyalty towards a Beauty Salon from the customers' perspective. Also, it was suggested through the study that the service provider has to increase services range, create customer responsive environment, maintaining state-of-the-art facilities, maintaining a convenient communicating and pricing system. Thus it was found the service quality dimensions were of utmost importance in determining customer loyalty towards a beauty parlour service. In continuation to these studies it is further required to find out as to which of the variables of service dimensions are extremely important for the selection criteria of a particular beauty parlour.

In a study conducted by Parisa Islam et al (2011) in Dhaka to find out regarding the service quality parameters and customer satisfaction level of high end womens parlors in Dhaka, four factors were identified to determine the success of services provided at beauty parlour - Support & Facility Factor, Employee Performance Factor, Customer Relation Factor and Communication Factor.

A study was conducted in Karachi city by Dr. Rukhsar Ahmed & Dr. Kamran Siddiqui (2013); to understand a woman's perception and attitude towards beauty parlour services and to find out as to what factors influence a woman's choice of a particular parlour chain. It was found out through the study that there were many opportunities for new entrants as well as affiliations with foreign brands for catering to women consumers but offering exemplary service would be of prime importance. It was found that quality of service provided was the main factor which dictated women's choice of a particular parlour. Also, another factor considered very important was the beautician's expertise with respect to service offered. Another major finding was that the mother or 'lady of the house' was the major influencer for women.

In a study conducted by Savla Swati (2014) on 220 women respondents in Mumbai city, considerable difference was found in the attitudes and preferences among women of different age groups. Very young respondents feel the need to visit beauty salons whereas the elderly women feel that beauty salon visits are not required. Preference for good ambience is directly related to qualification of respondents. Hygiene factor is very important for a majority of young women. Majority of unmarried women feel a greater need for visiting beauty salons.

## NEED OF THE STUDY

It is well known that women in general are very conscious about their beauty and appearance. Working women in particular pay a lot of attention to their personal styling and grooming. To meet this end, they avail the services of a beauty parlour/ salon. Women depend on the services of the salon for grooming their personalities. The success of any parlour depends upon the effectiveness of their service determinants. Previous studies related to service dimensions had been conducted in Pakistan and Dhaka. However, in India by Salva Swati Jayesh et al. (2014), where it was studied whether there is an association between demographic factors and parameters concerning a beauty parlour. However, factors were not derived related to service determinants such as Reliability, Accessibility, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness. It was therefore necessary –

- a. to derive major factors from variables related to service determinants.
- b. to find out the most influential source of information for women's selection of a particular parlour.
- c. to help the beauty care service industry to focus on the important parameters for the success of their businesses.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- a. To find out the source which influences women the most for selection of a particular parlour.
- b. To derive the factors of services considered important by women for selection of a particular parlour.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Mumbai city to understand the factors which determine women's selection of a particular parlour. The focus is on the services offered at the parlour. Respondents for the study were women with age ranging from 20 to 55 years. These respondents are independent working women with incomes of their own. A questionnaire was designed to know the variables important to them with respect to availing parlour services. The questionnaire was framed on the lines of SERVQUAL model for measuring the service aspects of a beauty salon. Questions pertaining to the five determinants – Reliability, Responsiveness, Accessibility, Empathy and Tangibility were used in the questionnaire. Also, it is very essential to know as to who are the most reliable sources or word of mouth sources which influences women the most for the selection of a particular parlour. In all, three questions pertaining to demographic variables and one question pertaining to the source of information women resorted to the most and twelve questions pertaining to the determinants of service quality were included in the questionnaire. Both primary data and secondary data were used for the research. Secondary data consisted of article reviews, research papers and newspaper articles.

Sampling method used was Convenience sampling as we required women belonging to a specific demographic group. Out of the 70 questionnaires distributed we recovered 66 questionnaires duly filled in by the respondents. The questionnaires were evaluated using descriptive statistics and SPSS package.

## FREQUENCY TABLE

AGE OF RESPONDENTS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20 - 29	19	28.8	28.8	28.8
	30 - 39	22	33.3	33.3	62.1
	40 - 49	24	36.4	36.4	98.5
	> 50	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	under graduate	3	4.5	4.5	4.5
	graduate	36	54.5	54.5	59.1
	post graduate	24	36.4	36.4	95.5
	doctorate	3	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	
ANNUAL INCOME					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	200,001 - 400,000	14	21.2	21.2	21.2
	400,001 - 600,000	20	30.3	30.3	51.5
	600,001 - 800,000	19	28.8	28.8	80.3
	800,001 - 1,000,000	9	13.6	13.6	93.9
	1,000,001 - 1,200,000	4	6.1	6.1	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	
SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR WORD OF MOUTH					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Friends	37	56.1	56.1	56.1
	Neighbours	6	9.1	9.1	65.2
	family members	21	31.8	31.8	97.0
	employees of parlour	2	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	
CASE PROCESSING SUMMARY					
Cases		N	%		
	Valid	66	100.0		
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0		
	Total	66	100.0		
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.					
RELIABILITY STATISTICS (Table 1)					
Cronbach's Alpha		Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items		N of Items	
.830		.834		12	

## FACTOR ANALYSIS

KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST (Table 2)		
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.652
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	391.230
	Df	66
	Sig.	.000

COMMUNALITIES (Table 3)		
	Initial	Extraction
service delivered as promised	1.000	.700
professional attitude for service offered	1.000	.653
service offered was prompt	1.000	.687
complaints handled effectively	1.000	.815
employees possess relevant skills	1.000	.773
employees are courteous	1.000	.925
personal attention paid to customers	1.000	.701
physical space is well maintained	1.000	.668
physical space is hygienic	1.000	.828
equipments are clean	1.000	.827
employees are well dressed	1.000	.500
location of parlour is an important aspect	1.000	.673
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED (Table 4)						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.482	37.350	37.350	4.482	37.350	37.350
2	1.969	16.412	53.762	1.969	16.412	53.762
3	1.226	10.216	63.978	1.226	10.216	63.978
4	1.073	8.942	72.920	1.073	8.942	72.920
5	.838	6.986	79.906			
6	.626	5.217	85.123			
7	.554	4.613	89.736			
8	.471	3.924	93.660			
9	.289	2.408	96.068			
10	.233	1.942	98.009			
11	.135	1.124	99.134			
12	.104	.866	100.000			

COMPONENT MATRIX <sup>a</sup> (Table 5)				
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
service delivered as promised	.674	-.382	.093	-.302
professional attitude for service offered	.672	-.165	.004	-.417
service offered was prompt	.672	-.480	-.025	-.065
complaints handled effectively	.714	-.428	-.345	.059
employees possess relevant skills	.847	-.023	-.230	.044
employees are courteous	.650	-.145	-.153	.677
personal attention paid to customers	.426	.609	-.065	.381
physical space is well maintained	.726	.238	.255	.137
physical space is hygienic	.438	.715	-.228	-.270
equipments are clean	.583	.639	-.026	-.280
employees are well dressed	.374	-.087	.592	-.049
location of parlour is an important aspect	.308	.080	.741	.152

a. 4 components extracted.

ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX <sup>a</sup> (Table 6)				
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
service delivered as promised	.797	.052	-.006	.250
professional attitude for service offered	.736	.278	-.085	.163
service offered was prompt	.779	-.077	.225	.154
complaints handled effectively	.788	.002	.423	-.123
employees possess relevant skills	.649	.387	.448	.041
employees are courteous	.318	.011	.901	.105
personal attention paid to customers	-.158	.607	.540	.127
physical space is well maintained	.300	.450	.377	.484
physical space is hygienic	.068	.904	.010	-.077
equipments are clean	.184	.877	.018	.154
employees are well dressed	.236	.017	-.015	.666
location of parlour is an important aspect	-.006	.049	.104	.812

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

COMPONENT TRANSFORMATION MATRIX				
Component	1	2	3	4
1	.725	.451	.424	.303
2	-.547	.836	.017	.042
3	-.172	-.156	-.218	.948
4	-.382	-.272	.879	.088

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

## DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

(A) With respect to demographic data, the following was observed:

- In the age ranges between 20 to 49 years, the number of respondents were roughly the same.
- With respect to the educational qualification, the number of graduates and post graduates were 55% and 36% respectively. A small percentage were under graduates and doctorates.
- With respect to income, it was found that 21% were in the range 200,001 to 400,000, 30% were in the range 400,001 to 600,000, 29% were in the range 600,001 to 800,000, 14% were in the range 800,001 to 1,000,000 and 6% were in the range 1,000,001 to 1,200,000.

With respect to the specific question regarding source of influence regarding positive word of mouth with respect to beauty parlour services it was found that friends and family members were the most influential source for women for selection of a beauty parlour.

**(B) Reliability Test**

A higher Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of 0.834 (Table 1) suggests that the variables under study are highly correlated and that factor analysis can be applied to this data.

**(C) KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Table 2 shows two tests that indicate the suitability of your data for structure detection. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is a statistic that indicates the proportion of variance in the variables that might be caused by underlying factors. In this study, the result of Bartlett's test of Sphericity (0.00) was found to be significant and KMO of 0.652 indicates that the data is appropriate for factor analysis.

**(D) Factor Analysis Results**

As evident from the Table 4, we find the three factors extracted together accounts for 72.920 % of the total variance. (information contained in the original 12 variables).

Hence we have reduced the number of variables from 12 to 4 underlying factors.

From the Rotated Component Matrix (Table 6), we can see the loadings of the variables on a particular factor. A cut-off of  $> 0.7$  was taken for selecting variables for constructing factors. Factor 1 was named '**Exemplary Service Delivery**' and the variables contributing to this factor were : service delivered as promised (0.797), professional attitude for service offered (0.736), service offered was prompt (0.779) & complaints handled effectively (0.788). Factor 2 was named '**Cleanliness and Hygiene**' and the variables contributing to this factor were, physical space is hygienic (0.904), equipments are clean (0.877). Factor 3 was named '**Courteous Employee**' and the variable contributing to this factor was 'employees are courteous' (0.901). Factor 4 was named '**Convenient Location**' and the variable contributing to this factor was 'Location of the parlour is important' (0.812).

**CONCLUSION**

The beauty industry and beauty care service industry is gaining a lot of importance in India due to changing demographics, people becoming more conscious about their personality and appearance and growing economic prosperity. People possess more dispensable income and spend it on beauty products and services. Women in general are very much conscious about their appearance and personality and working women in particular have to be presentable and well-dressed at their work places too. These women therefore rely on beauty products and beauty care industry such as beauty salons / parlours for grooming themselves. This is a very competitive market and parlours / salons have to provide the best of services and products in order to gain a competitive edge as well as garner Customer loyalty. Service dimensions are very important for the success of a parlour and this study helped us to find out the source women rely upon the most for the selection of a beauty parlour. It was found that women rely upon the opinion of their friends and family members for selecting a beauty parlour.

From the various variables determining services at a parlour, we could derive four factors which are extremely important for criteria for women's selection of a particular parlour. customer satisfaction. They are 'Exemplary Service Delivery', 'Cleanliness and Hygiene', 'Courteous Employees' and 'Convenient Location'. Therefore, it is evident through this study that the service providers in the beauty care industry have to be focussed on these four derived factors. For the success of their service station they would have to provide excellent services coupled with cleanliness, hygiene and dedicated employees. Location of the service station will also play an important role in its success. In India, with the changing demographics wherein women have become powerful consumers due to education and economic prosperity, grooming and personality enhancement has taken a front seat. Also, since the beauty care industry is not capital intensive, new entrants can, new entrants can easily enter this industry and succeed if they focus on the four factors derived through this study.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

1. This study has been conducted on women belonging to a specific age group. Older women and non-working women also visit beauty parlours but they were not included in this study.
2. The study has been limited to Mumbai region where the women have an urban mind-set and therefore the results of this study would not apply to women of rural areas and also Tier 2 or Tier 3 towns/cities.
3. We have used Convenience sampling method for this study and therefore a certain amount of bias would be experienced through this study.
4. The sample size being small (66), and therefore is not an accurate representation of women population belonging to the age group 20 to 55 years.

**SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

1. Studies could be conducted on some other aspects of the beauty care service industry.
2. In-depth studies could be conducted upon each of the service determinants such as Reliability, Accessibility, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness.
3. Other segments of women such as teenagers, older women or non-working women could be studied or women belonging to Tier 2, Tier 3 cities or rural areas could be studied with respect to their consumer behaviour.
4. The beauty care industry consists of several sectors such as skin care, hair care, pedicure, manicure etc. Individually these aspects could be studied in detail.
5. The seven P's of services marketing could be individually studied with respect to women consumers.
6. A comparative study could be conducted on rural vs. urban women with respect to their consumer behaviour regarding beauty care services.

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