

# Service-quality dimensions

[Literature](#)



Although there is general agreement that service quality has many dimensions (Groenroos, 1982, 1990; Berry et al., 1985; Parasuraman et al., 1985), there is no consensus on the exact nature and content of these dimensions (Brady and Cronin, 2001). Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982) defined service quality in terms of physical quality, interactive quality, and corporate (image) quality. Physical quality relates to the tangible aspects of a service. Interactive quality refers to the two-way interaction between a customer and a service provider (or the provider's representative), including both automated and animated interactions.

Corporate quality refers to the image attributed to a service provider by its current and potential customers. As noted above, Groenroos (1982) identified two service-quality dimensions – a technical aspect (“what” service is provided) and a functional aspect (“how” the service is provided). Technical (outcome) quality involves what a customer actually receives from a service or a service encounter. Functional (process) quality concerns the way a service is delivered to a consumer – that is, the customer's perception of the interaction that takes place during service delivery.

For some services, the “what” (or technical quality) might be difficult to evaluate. For example, in health care, it might be difficult for a patient to evaluate a service provider's technical competence and the immediate result of treatment. If they lack the ability to assess technical quality, consumers rely on other measures of quality – such as attributes associated with the process (“how”). In the case of health-care delivery, these attributes might include reliability and empathy. Lehtinen (1983) viewed service quality in terms of “process quality” and “output quality”.

Process quality is judged by a customer during a service, whereas output quality is judged by a customer after a service has been performed. For example, a barber's conversation and apparent skill during a haircut involve process quality; whereas the appearance of the hair after the haircut involves output quality. Berry et al. (1985) and Parasuraman et al. (1985) suggested that quality evaluations are not made solely on the outcome of service, but also involve evaluations of the service-delivery process. Although the dimensions of these evaluations are related, the difference depends upon when the evaluation occurs.

For process quality, the evaluation occurs while the service is being performed; whereas, for outcome quality, evaluation occurs after service performance, and focuses on "what" service has been delivered. Swartz and Brown (1989) attempted to synthesise the dimensions of service quality in the works of Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982), Gronroos (1982), and Berry et al. (1985). On the basis of this literature review, Swartz and Brown (1989) categorised the dimensions into "what" (evaluated after performance) and "how" (evaluated during performance).