

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE BOOK: THE GAPS MODEL OF SERVICE QUALITY

CHAPTER TOPICS

- The Customer Gap
- The Provider Gaps
- Putting It All Together: Closing the Gaps
- Technology Spotlight: *Technology's Critical Impact on the Gaps Model of Service Quality*
- Global Feature: *An International Retailer Puts Customers in the Wish Mode to Begin Closing the Gaps*
- Strategy Insight: *Using the Gaps Model to Assess an Organization's Service Strategy*

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

1. Introduce a framework, called the gaps model of service quality, which is used to organize this textbook.
2. Demonstrate that the gaps model is a useful framework for understanding service quality in an organization.
3. Demonstrate that the most critical service quality gap to close is the customer gap, the difference between customer expectations and perceptions.
4. Show that four gaps that occur in companies, which we call provider gaps, are responsible for the customer gap.
5. Identify the factors responsible for each of the four provider gaps.

LECTURE TIPS & AIDS

1. One way to get the class more actively involved in the discussion of the Gaps model is to get them to discuss the various pieces of the model. There are two ways to split the class for such a discussion, depending on the size of the class. For relatively small classes, one way is to divide the class into five groups and have them discuss each of the five gaps presented in the chapter. For larger classes, the class could be split into 13 groups to cover each of the 13 chapters (Chapters 3 through 15) that are further breakdowns of the Gaps model. An outline of the chapters and topics is provided below.
 - *The Customer Gap*
 - Chapter 3 – Customer Expectations of Service
 - Chapter 4 – Customer Perceptions of Service
 - *Gap 1 – Not Knowing What Customers Expect (The Knowledge Gap)*
 - Chapter 5 – Listening to Customers through Research
 - Chapter 6 – Building Customer Relationships
 - Chapter 7 – Service Recovery

- **Gap 2 – Not Having the Right Service Quality Designs and Standards (*The Service Design and Standards Gap*)**
 - Chapter 8 – Service Innovation and Design
 - Chapter 9– Customer-Defined Service Standards
 - Chapter 10 – Physical Evidence and the Servicescape
- **Gap 3 – Not Delivering to Service Standards (*The Service Performance Gap*)**
 - Chapter 11 – Employees’ Roles in Service Delivery
 - Chapter 12 – Customers’ Roles in Service Delivery
 - Chapter 13 – Managing Demand and Capacity
- **Gap 4 – Not Matching Performance to Promises (*The Communication Gap*)**
 - Chapter 14 – Integrated Service marketing Communications
 - Chapter 15 – Pricing of Services

Each group would be given three to eight minutes (depending on the number of groups) and asked to discuss the following:

- Provide a review/summary of the topic assigned.
- Provide examples (ideally new ones) to illustrate the concepts/issues from the assigned topic.
- Discuss how the assigned topic relates to the Gaps model.
- Suggest ways (key strategies) that could be used to close a gap in the model.

QUESTIONS TO USE WITH CHAPTER OPENING VIGNETTE

Chapter 2: Service Quality at Trader Joe’s: The Specialty Store with Spirit

1. What are the service expectations of a new customer to Trader Joe’s? Of a returning (loyal) customer? Are there any differences in how these different customers might perceive the service quality at Trader Joe’s? If so, how might Trader Joe’s and its employees deal with this?
2. Discuss some of the specific ways in which Trader Joe’s works to close:
 - a. Provider Gap 1, The Listening Gap
 - b. Provider Gap 2, The Service Design and Standards Gap
 - c. Provider Gap 3, The Service Performance
 - d. Provider Gap 4, The Communication Gap

ACTIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Choose an organization to interview and use the integrated gaps model of service quality as a framework. Ask the manager whether the organization suffers from any of the factors listed in the figures in this chapter. Which factor in each Figure 2.2 through 2.5 does the manager consider the most troublesome? What does the company do to try to address these problems?
2. Use the Internet to locate the Website of Walt Disney, Marriott, Ritz Carlton, or any other well-known high quality service organization. Which of the provider gaps does it appear the company has closed? How can you tell?

3. Interview a nonprofit or public sector organization in your area (it could be some part of your school if it is a state school). Find out if the integrated gaps model of service quality framework makes sense in the context of their organizations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Think about a service you receive. Is there a gap between your expectations and perceptions of that service? What do you expect that you do not receive?*

If students understand the concept of the customer gap—that is, expectations of service not matching actual perceptions of the service received—then there should be no shortage of examples in discussing this question. The focus of the discussion in the student examples should be on what their actual expectations were in each case and how their perceptions of what occurred differed from those expectations. The instructor might consider beginning the discussion with a personal example. Once class discussion of this question begins it may be difficult to bring to a close, as students are likely to have many gaps to share.

2. *Consider the “wish mode” discussion about IKEA. Think about a service that you receive regularly and put yourself in the wish mode. How would you change the service and the way it is provided?*

This question is likely to be more challenging than the previous one. Students may have a difficult time putting themselves in “wish mode” and articulating such thoughts. Some ideas that might be useful in stimulating discussion include:

- I wish my *oil change service* could be done at my home, or where I work, so that I would not have to drive to a specific location and wait in line.
 - I wish my *dry cleaning service* would pick up clothes from my home and deliver them to my home.
 - I wish my *bank* would allow me to make additional mortgage payments (or, student loan payments) online rather than having to physically go into the bank and execute a teller-assisted transaction.
 - I wish my *gas station* would check under the hood of my car like they used to do many years ago.
3. *If you were the manager of a service organization and wanted to apply the gaps model to improve service, which gap would you start with? Why? In what order would you proceed to close the gaps?*

The most efficient way to use the gaps model is to begin with provider gap 1, determining what customer expectations are. This approach allows the company to concentrate on the factors that will have the greatest impact on improving service quality. Following the gap 1 with gap 2, then gap 3 is the best progression. Gap 2 ideally would result in service design and service standards that are based on gap 1’s findings about customer expectations. Then gap 3, the most complicated gap to close, would be informed by what is found in the first two gaps.

4. *Can provider gap 4, the communication gap, be closed prior to closing any of the other three provider gaps? How?*

Gap 4, which deals with lowering customer expectations, can be closed at any time. While the first three gaps are concerned with raising company performance to meet expectations, gap 4 aims to lower customer expectations to meet perceptions. The two approaches to closing the customer gap

operate on different principles and therefore can occur independently. Incidentally, closing gap 4 can be more economical than closing the other gaps.

5. *Which of the four provider gaps do you believe is hardest to close? Why?*

Gap 3 is the hardest to close because it requires coordination of all of the human resources issues in a company—training, incentives, communication, hiring, teamwork, and empowerment. Changing any one of these is difficult but changing them all, and getting them coordinated with each other, is extremely challenging. In addition to the employee factors that must be considered in closing gap 3, the customer must be managed.

POTENTIAL VIDEO CLIPS TO USE IN ILLUSTRATING CHAPTER 2 CONCEPTS

- “Clerks” – In a short clip from this movie, a female customer enters a small video store and asks clerk what he has heard about two movies she has picked up in the store. The clerk, who is sitting on the counter reading a newspaper, does not pay any attention to customer, and then is fairly rude to her. A “customer gap” is clearly evident in this scene.
- “Meet the Parents” – Throughout this movie there are several clips where the main character (Ben Stiller) has a series of interactions with an airline, including not allowing him to take his bag on the plane, losing his bag, being placed on hold several times when he called in to check on the status of his bag, waiting several days to deliver his bag, delivering the wrong bag, charging an extreme amount when he wished to change his return date, making him wait for his row to be called at the gate to board the plane (even though no one else was boarding), having a discussion on the plane about stowing his bag, and finally getting thrown off the plane (literally). This clip could be used to discuss several aspects of the Gaps model, and thus could also be used to illustrate points made in several chapters.

POSSIBLE WEB SITES FOR CHAPTER 2

Company	Location
IKEA	www.ikea.com
Island Hotel (Cedar Key, FL)	www.islandhotel-cedarkey.com
Marriott International	www.marriott.com
The Oaks at Ojai	http://www.oakspa.com
Ritz-Carlton	www.ritzcarlton.com
United Parcel Service	www.ups.com
The Walt Disney Company	www.disney.com

APPROPRIATE CASES FOR CHAPTER 2

From previous Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler *Services Marketing* texts:

- Zappos.com 2009: Clothing, Customer Service, and Company Culture [included in the sixth edition of this text: Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2013) *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies]
- Michelin Fleet Solutions: From Selling Tires to Selling Kilometers [included in the sixth edition of this text: Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2013) *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies]
- People, Service, and Profit at Jyske Bank [included in the sixth edition of this text: Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2013) *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies]
- Using Services Marketing to Develop and Deliver Integrated Solutions at Caterpillar in Latin America [included in the sixth edition of this text: Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2013) *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies]
- [easyCar.com](http://www.easycar.com) [included in the fourth edition of this text: Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2006) *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies]
- Virgin Atlantic Airways [included in the third edition of this text: Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies]
- EuroDisney: The First 100 Days [included in the second edition of this text: Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) *Services Marketing: Integrating Customer Focus Across the Firm*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies]