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SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN UNITED BANK OF INDIA: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

In the new millennium the survival and success of a bank, like any other commercial organization of other industry, is largely contingent upon customer-centered philosophy of the management. Due to the increased degree of competition linked with the entry of new private sector banks including the foreign banks, service quality has, in fact, become a decisive benchmark for assessing the performance of the bank regarding customer satisfaction. 'Customer satisfaction' and 'service quality' are not isolated from any angle rather these are closely and positively inter-related. The higher the service quality, the higher is the customer satisfaction. The concept of 'Customer satisfaction' has gradually gaining momentum in the post reform period because customer is the monarch in any competitive market and satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customers particularly in a competitive service industry is directly linked with market share of business. The expansion and consolidation of business of a bank is also to a great extent dependent upon customer satisfaction if not in the very short run.

The present study makes an attempt not only to assess the level of satisfaction of customers about various service quality dimensions but also to analyse the influence of service quality dimensions on overall customer satisfaction in the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam. The study is based on primary data and the sample size for the study is 270 customers of selected branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam. The level of satisfaction of customers on select dimensions of service quality has been analysed using different statistical tools. Apart from many other observations, it has been found that customer satisfaction is the highest in case of 'Access' dimension while the same is the lowest in case of 'Availability' dimension.

KEYWORDS: Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibility, Empathy

INTRODUCTION

The banking sector occupies an important place in nation's economy. The banking industry in India has undergone sea changes since post independence. Banking sector reforms along with financial sector liberalisation and opening up of the economy have made the situation precarious to the banks [Mistry 2013]. The banking sector now faces stiff inter-bank competition in providing customer service, giving special facilities and ensuring customer satisfaction. In the intensified competitive banking environment, banks offering quality services are in an advantageous position to retain and attract the existing as well as potential customers. Service quality has been considered to be an important instrument of competitiveness in banking business in globalised regime. Banks that excel in quality service can have a distinct marketing edge [Verma, 2008].

The element of competition in small towns and rural areas has not been intensified like that of metropolitan cities and state capitals. But gradually private sector banks and foreign banks started functioning in small towns also and Cachar district is no exception. So, in order to survive in the competitive environment, it becomes imperative to re-emphasize the role of Indian Public Sector banks as a service provider even in small towns and rural areas of India so that quality of customer service is enriched, which in turn, will result in customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and long term profitability.

Concept of Service Quality:-

Service quality can be defined as the customers' perception of overall service quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives [Parasuraman et al., 1988]. Service quality is a form of attitude that results from the comparison of expectations with performance [Cronin and Taylor, 1992]. In other words, it is the difference between customers' expectations for service performance prior to the service encounter and their perceptions of the service receive. Service quality can be also defined as "a judgment about a service's overall excellence or superiority" [Schneider and White, 2004].

Concept of Customer Satisfaction:-

Customer Satisfaction is defined as a collective outcome of perception, evaluation and psychological reactions to the consumption experience with a product /service [Yi, 1990]. It is a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived outcome in relation to his/her expectation [Kotler, 2000]. It is the degree to which a customer perceives that a firm has effectively provided the service that meets his/her need in the context in

which he/she is aware of and/or using the service. Thus, it is the transaction specific effective response to the evaluation of discrepancy between the prior expectations and actual experience relating to banking services [Paul and Barman, 2010].

Satisfaction of the customer depends on the quality of services. The higher the (perceived) service quality, the more satisfied and loyal are the customers [Petruzzellis et al, 2006]. Thus 'Customer satisfaction' and 'service quality' are not isolated from any angle rather these are closely and positively inter-related and both play a convincing role for improving the overall performance of a bank.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Different studies conducted on customer satisfaction in the banking sector concluded that with the phenomenal increase in population and the increased demand for banking services, service quality and customer satisfaction are going to be key differentiators for each bank's success in future.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) suggested the SERVQUAL framework to assess the level of customer satisfaction. They further pointed out that when expected service is greater than perceived service, perceived quality is less than satisfactory and will tend towards totally unacceptable quality; when expected service equals perceived service, perceived quality is satisfactory; when expected service is less than perceived service, perceived quality is more than satisfactory and will tend towards ideal quality. The SERVQUAL model of Parasuraman et al. (1988) proposed a five dimensional construct of perceived service quality- tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy- with items reflecting both expectation and perceived performance. Parasuraman (2000) opined that superior customer service and marketing excellence are the two sides of the same coin. Johnston (1995) examined the link between service transactions and overall satisfaction and has found that the causes of dissatisfaction and satisfaction are not necessarily the same. Some service quality attributes may not be critical for consumer satisfaction but can significantly lead to dissatisfaction when they are performed poorly. Brahmabhatt and Panelia (2008) conducted a study to comparatively examine and measure service quality and customer satisfaction among select private, public and foreign banks by identifying the gap between customer expectation and perception about different dimensions of service quality. Dey (2009) performed a two dimensional study to establish the general importance of customer satisfaction in banking industry and service quality offered by SBI and other PSBs in particular. The study primarily appraised the satisfaction of

customers across five service quality dimensions developed by Parasuraman and with an underscore of 'response time' as an additional dimension. Paul and Barman (2010) observed that in the age of competition, the banks have to concentrate on the customers' satisfaction levels through providing prompt, regular and quality service. The study made by Khalid et al (2011) showed that all the service quality attributes are positively associated with customer satisfaction. Islam & Ali (2011) conducted a study to examine and establish an interrelationship among service quality, satisfaction and customer loyalty by identifying and measuring nine variables –reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance, empathy, security, access to services, services offered and reputation. Mehta (2012) conducted a study to measure the service quality in retail banking sector by segmenting the bank customers on the basis of having high service quality perception & low service quality perception in order to investigate the relationships between these segments and select demographic variables. Ravi and Basavaraj (2013) conducted a comparative study to investigate the preference and satisfaction level of customers towards loans, deposits schemes, insurances and value added services rendered by private and public banks. Sabir et al (2014) carried out a study to examine the factors affecting customer satisfaction in banking sector of Pakistan and to find out the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

The entire exercise with respect to review of literature gains an insight into various aspects of customer satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ✧ To assess the status of customer satisfaction in United Bank of India within Cachar district of Assam.
- ✧ To compare the status of customer satisfaction across the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- ✧ The level of customer satisfaction about responsiveness dimension of service quality does not significantly vary across the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam.

- ✧ The level of customer satisfaction about tangibility dimension of service quality does not significantly vary across the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam.
- ✧ The level of customer satisfaction about competence dimension of service quality does not significantly vary across the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam.
- ✧ The level of customer satisfaction about access dimension of service quality does not significantly vary across the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam.
- ✧ The level of customer satisfaction about availability dimension of service quality does not significantly vary across the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam.

DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary data. The population of the study includes customers of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam. In order to attain the objective of the study, various service quality dimensions that are capable of influencing the satisfaction of bank customers have been identified through extensive review of literature and out of them five dimensions of service quality have been selected. Out of 25 branches of United Bank of India, 10 branches have been selected randomly for conducting the study. A sample size of 270 customers (taking 27 customers from each of the select branches) was drawn from the select branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam. A structured questionnaire with five point rating scale ranging from Highly Satisfied (5) to Highly Dissatisfied (1) was constructed for ten dimensions of service quality (Responsiveness, Tangibility, Competence, Access and Availability) for the purpose of the survey. The respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction/ dissatisfaction against each of the dimensions of service quality. For the purpose of analyzing the data, statistical tools like, mean and standard deviation have been used.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Male	175	64.8
Female	95	35.2
Age		
21-30	73	27.0
31-40	71	26.3
41-50	64	23.7
51-60	37	13.7
61-70	25	9.3
Average Monthly Income		
Upto Rs. 20,000	122	45.2
Rs. 20,001- Rs. 40,000	101	37.4
Rs. 40,001 and above	47	17.4

Source: Field Survey

Table 1 shows distribution of the respondents on the basis of their gender, age and average monthly income.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 2: Customer Satisfaction about Select Service Quality Dimensions

Service Quality Dimensions	Mean	SD
Responsiveness	3.13	.515
Tangibility	3.23	.586
Competence	3.30	.524
Access	3.56	.403
Availability	2.69	.563

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 illustrates that out of five dimensions of service quality, Access dimension has been ranked top with mean score of 3.56 which indicates that the customers are satisfied to a large extent with this dimension of service quality. However, the level of customer satisfaction is found to be moderate with Competence dimension (3.30), Tangibility dimension (3.23) and Responsiveness dimension (3.13) of service quality. On the contrary, the mean scores of Availability dimension of service quality is the lowest (2.69) among all other dimensions of service quality which implies that majority of the customers are not satisfied with Availability dimension of service quality.

The standard deviations for customer satisfaction about select dimensions of service quality have been computed to study the consistency / variation in the responses of the customers. The value of standard deviation with respect to customer satisfaction about Access dimension of service quality is the lowest (.403) among all other dimensions of service quality which imply that the opinion of the respondents is more concentrated about this dimension of service quality. On the other hand, since the value of standard deviation with respect to Tangibility dimension is the highest (.586) among all other dimensions of service quality, it denotes that the tilt of the views of the respondents is bent more towards this dimension of service quality

Table 3: Branch Wise Customer Satisfaction about Responsiveness Dimension of Service quality

Sample Branches	Mean	SD
Kalain	3.05	.6579
Bhangarpar	3.19	.7048
Udarbandh	3.07	.5700
Dalu	3.06	.5518
Shibbari Road	3.05	.5050
Hospital Road	3.19	.5076
Silchar	3.06	.4458
Dholai	3.25	.3467
Lakhipur	3.19	.3897
Itkhola	3.24	.3700
All sample branches	3.13	.5154
Chi-square for Kruskal Wallis Test=6.438, df=9 p value= 0.695		

Source: Field Survey

From Table 3, it has been observed that out of ten sample branches, Dholai has been ranked first with the highest mean score of 3.25 which indicates that customers of Dholai branch of UBI are satisfied to a large extent about Responsiveness dimension of service quality. On the other hand, the mean score of Kalain branch and Shibbari Road branch are the same and lowest (3.05) among all other branches which imply that customers of these two branches are satisfied to a low degree as compared to customers of other sample branches about the Responsiveness dimension of service quality.

Similarly, the value of standard deviation for the customer satisfaction about responsiveness dimension of service quality in Dholai branch of

UBI is the lowest (.3467) among all other sample branches which imply that the opinion of the respondents of this branch is more consistent. On the contrary, Bhangarpar branch records the highest value of standard deviation (.7048) for this dimension out of all the ten branches which indicates that the views of the respondents of this branch is more dispersed towards Responsiveness dimension of service quality.

However, the p – value for Kruskal Wallis H test is more than 0.05 which implies that there is no statistical evidence for significant difference in the satisfaction of customers about Responsiveness dimension of service quality across the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam at 5% level of significance.

Table 4: Branch Wise Customer Satisfaction about Tangibility Dimension of Service Quality

Sample Branches	Mean	SD
Kalain	2.61	.4897
Bhangarpar	2.93	.6842
Udarbandh	3.52	.4377
Dalu	2.95	.3167
Shibbari Road	3.41	.3800
Hospital Road	3.82	.3434
Silchar	2.79	.4222
Dholai	3.81	.3505
Lakhipur	3.03	.3989
Itkhola	3.47	.3282
All Sample Branches	3.23	.5856
Chi-square for Kruskal Wallis Test = 137.539, df=9 p value= 0.000		

Source: Field Survey

Table 4 exhibits that out of the ten sample branches, Hospital Road branch has been topped the list with the highest mean score of 3.82 which indicates that customers of this branch are satisfied to a large extent about the Tangibility dimension of service quality. On the contrary, the mean score of Kalain branch is the lowest (2.61) among all other branches of UBI operating in Cachar district which indicate that the customers of Kalain branch are not satisfied about the Tangibility dimension of service quality.

The value of standard deviation about the Tangibility dimension of service quality in Bhangarpar branch of UBI is the highest (.6842) among all other branches which show that there is a

variation among the responses of the customers about Tangibility dimension of service quality in Bhangarpar branch. On the other hand, Dalu branch records the lowest value of standard deviation (.3167) for this dimension out of the ten branches which indicate that the opinion of the respondents of this branch is more concentrated towards Tangibility dimension of service quality.

The p – value for Kruskal Wallis H test is less than 0.05 which implies that there is statistical evidence for significant difference in the satisfaction of customers about Tangibility dimension of service quality across the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam at 5% level of significance.

Table 5: Branch Wise Customer Satisfaction about Competence Dimension of Service Quality

Sample Branches	Mean	SD
Kalain	3.23	.6121
Bhangarpar	3.44	.7763
Udarbandh	3.35	.5515
Dalu	3.22	.5016
Shibbari Road	3.04	.5128
Hospital Road	3.56	.4682
Silchar	3.13	.4670
Dholai	3.39	.2625
Lakkipur	3.22	.4063
Itkhola	3.43	.3591
All Sample Branches	3.30	.5237
Chi-square for Kruskal Wallis Test =27.307, df=9 p value= 0.001		

Source: Field Survey

Table 5 reveals that out of the ten branches tabled above, Hospital Road branch has been ranked top in the order of ranking with the highest mean score 3.56 which indicates that majority of the customers of this branch are satisfied about the Competence dimension of service quality. Whereas, Shibbari Road holds the last rank with the lowest mean score of 3.04 among all other sample branches which implies that the customers of this branch are satisfied to a low degree about the Competence dimension of service quality.

The value of standard deviation for the customer satisfaction about Competence dimension of service quality in Dholai branch of UBI is the lowest (.2625) among all other sample branches

which imply that the opinion of the respondents of this branch is more consistent. On the contrary, Bhangarpar branch records the highest value of standard deviation (.7763) for this dimension out of all the ten branches which indicates that the tilt of the views of the respondents of this branch is bent more towards Competence dimension of service quality.

The p – value for Kruskal Wallis H test is less than 0.05 which implies that there is statistical evidence for significant difference in the satisfaction of customers about Competence dimension of service quality across the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam at 5% level of significance.

Table 6: Branch Wise Customer Satisfaction about Access Dimension of Service Quality

Sample Branches	Mean	SD
Kalain	3.67	.4679
Bhangarpar	3.70	.5004
Udarbandh	3.76	.4473
Dalu	3.36	.3924
Shibbari Road	3.60	.4297
Hospital Road	3.60	.4506
Silchar	3.42	.3523
Dholai	3.55	.2190
Lakkipur	3.44	.3004
Itkhola	3.53	.2353
All Sample Branches	3.56	.4032
Chi-square for Kruskal Wallis Test =26.143, df=9 p value= 0.002		

Source: Field Survey

It is evident from Table 6 that out of the ten branches tabled above, Udarbandh branch has been ranked top with the highest mean score of 3.76 which indicates that the customers of this branch are satisfied to a large extent about Access dimension of service quality. On the contrary, the mean score of Dalu branch is the lowest (3.36) among all the branches which imply that customers

of this branch are satisfied to a low degree as compared to customers of other select branches about the Access dimension of service quality.

The value of standard deviation for customer satisfaction about Access dimension of service quality in Bhangarpar branch of UBI is the highest (.5004) which reveals that although customers are satisfied with this dimension of

service quality but there exists a variation among the opinion of the respondents of this branch. On the other hand, Dholai branch has the lowest value of SD (.2190) among all other branches. This implies that the opinion of the respondents of this branch is more consistent.

The p – value for Kruskal Wallis H test is less than 0.05 which implies that there is statistical evidence for significant difference in the satisfaction of customers about Access dimension of service quality across the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam at 5% level of significance.

Table 7: Branch Wise Customer Satisfaction about Availability Dimension of Service Quality

Sample Branches	Mean	SD
Kalain	2.32	.4847
Bhangarpar	2.12	.6866
Udarbandh	2.58	.6893
Dalu	2.79	.4448
Shibbari Road	2.67	.4237
Hospital Road	3.25	.2710
Silchar	2.49	.5095
Dholai	2.96	.3247
Lakhipur	2.70	.3500
Itkhola	2.96	.3736
All Sample Branches	2.69	.5626
Chi-square for Kruskal Wallis Test =86.238, df=9 p value= 0.000		

Source: Field Survey

Table 7 shows that out of the ten sample branches, Hospital Road branch has been ranked top with the highest mean score of 3.25 which indicates that the customers of this branch are satisfied to a large extent about Availability dimension of service quality. On the other hand, the mean score of Bhangarpar branch is the lowest (2.12) among all other sample branches which imply that customers of this branch are not satisfied about this dimension of service quality.

Similarly, the value of standard deviation for the customer satisfaction about Availability dimension of service quality in Hospital Road branch of UBI is the lowest (.2710) among all other sample branches which imply that the opinion of

the respondents of this branch is more concentrated. On the contrary, Bhangarpar branch records the highest value of standard deviation (.6893) for this dimension out of all the ten branches which indicates that the tilt of the views of the respondents of this branch is bent more towards Availability dimension of service quality.

The p – value for Kruskal Wallis H test is less than 0.05 which implies that there is statistical evidence for significant difference in the satisfaction of customers about Availability dimension of service quality across the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam at 5% level of significance.

Table 8: Branch-wise Overall Customer Satisfaction of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam

Sample Branches	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bhangarpar	3.08	.4746
Dholai	3.39	.2211
Dalu	3.07	.2869
Hospital Road	3.48	.3211
Itkhola	3.33	.2160
Kalain	2.98	.3149
Lakhipur	3.12	.2463
Silchar	2.97	.2953
Shibbari Road	3.15	.3272
Udarbandh	3.26	.3651
All Sample Branches	3.18	.3513
Chi-square for Kruskal Wallis Test =64.482, df=9 p value= 0.000		

Source: Field Survey

Table 8 demonstrates that out of ten sample branches, Hospital Road branch has been ranked first with the highest mean score of 3.48 which indicates that the degree of overall customer satisfaction appears to be the highest in case of Hospital Road branch. Dholai and Itkhola branch hold the 2nd and 3rd position in the order of ranking with mean scores 3.39 and 3.33 respectively. On the other hand, the mean score of Kalain branch is the lowest (2.98) among all the branches which imply that the degree of overall satisfaction is the lowest in Kalain branch as compared to the other select branches of UBI operating in Cachar district. It has also been observed that apart from Kalain branch, the degree of overall customer satisfaction is also low in case of Silchar branch.

Similarly, the value of standard deviation for the customer satisfaction on all the select

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

- ↳ Based on the mean score, customer satisfaction about the select dimensions of service quality in UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam is by and large favourable except Availability dimension of service quality. Customer satisfaction is the highest in case of 'Access' dimension while the same is the lowest in case of 'Availability' dimension. Least variation with respect to customer satisfaction has been observed in case of 'Access' dimension while highest variation has been noticed in case of 'Tangibility' dimension of service quality.
- ↳ Based on the mean score, the degree of overall customer satisfaction is found to be the highest in Hospital Road branch while the same is lowest in Kalain branch.
- ↳ Except Responsiveness dimension, there is statistical evidence for significant difference in the satisfaction of customers about Tangibility, Competence, Access and Availability dimension of service quality across the branches selected for the study at 5% level of significance

CONCLUSION

Customer satisfaction with respect to service quality is an invaluable asset for the modern organizations in today's market of intensified competition. Enhancing the customers' experience is now a crucial component of attracting new customers and retaining the existing customers in order to grow and protect a profitable business. It is because of these factors, marketers are always interested in knowing about the satisfaction of their customers towards their offerings. Service quality dimensions are important predictors for judging the satisfaction level of bank customers. The study revealed that majority of the customers of UBI operating in Cachar district are satisfied with

dimensions of service quality taken together is the lowest (.2160) in case of Itkhola branch among all other sample branches which imply that the opinion of the respondents of this branch is more concentrated. On the contrary, Bhangarpar branch records the highest value of standard deviation (.4746) for overall customer satisfaction out of all the ten branches which indicates that the opinion of the respondents of Bhangarpar branch towards overall customer satisfaction is more dispersed.

The p – value for Kruskal Wallis H test is less than 0.05 which implies that there is statistical evidence for significant difference in the overall customer satisfaction across the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam at 5% level of significance.

Access dimension. On the other hand customers' status is complaining and they feel displeased about the Availability dimension of service quality. Further, the result of the study also indicates that the degree of overall customer satisfaction is maximum in Hospital Road branch and minimum in Kalain branch. Although the customers of UBI operating in Cachar district are by and large satisfied with all the select service quality dimensions. However, United Bank of India is expected to formulate necessary plans and policies to improve the various components of Availability dimensions of service quality.

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**DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION:
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ABSTRACT

The paper makes an attempt to compare the level of customer satisfaction in the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam across the select demographic variables of customers. The paper entails in it the analysis and interpretation of data collected from customers and presentation of the concerned data, which is based on select service quality dimensions across four select demographic variables (Gender, Age, Income and Educational Qualification) considered in this study. The responses obtained from two hundred seventy (270) customers of ten (10) sample branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam have initially been categorized on the basis of four demographic variables and presented in the tabular form followed by the requisite analysis so as to arrive at the findings of the study.

Key Words: Customers, Diversity, Satisfaction, Service Quality, Workplace.

INTRODUCTION

The banking industry in India has experienced some major transformations in the post-independence era. The banking industry has been facing a rapidly changing market, new technologies, economic uncertainties, fierce competition and more demanding customers due to economic liberalization, globalization and financial sector reforms that have presented an unprecedented set of challenges to them (Mishra et. al., 2010). Increased levels of competition offered by private banks and foreign banks have posed real threat to the Indian Public Sector Banks for retaining and attracting customers, especially in the present millennium (Sheopuri and Sheopuri, 2014). Thus, in order to survive in the competitive environment, it becomes imperative to re-emphasize the role of Indian Public Sector banks as a service provider so that satisfaction of customers can be ensured.

The concept of 'Customer satisfaction' has gradually gaining momentum in today's highly competitive market because the best way under the prevailing situation is to keep customers' faith intact through rendering qualitative services and satisfying them. Customer satisfaction is not only the leading indicator to measure customer loyalty, identify unhappy customers, reduce churn and increase revenue; but also a key differentiator that helps to retain existing customer base and attract new customers in competitive business environments as well. It is also necessary to assess the degree of customer satisfaction in relation to their demographic background which, in turn, will help the management of the bank to understand the satisfaction level of different customer segments.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Singh and Malhotra (1992) made an effort to study the customer satisfaction among the account holders of different banks regarding the various services offered by them. By adopting convenient sampling method, 100 respondents from different socio-economic background covering age, income, sex, occupation were chosen. The result of the study revealed that most of the customers were not satisfied with the time taken for cheque clearance, grievance redressal, efficiency of the service, parking facility and lighting and air conditioning. *Sachdev (1997)* attempted to measure the customer perception about service quality in Indian and foreign banks of Delhi. Various demographic variables, namely, age, sex, marital status, occupation, income, school background and level of education were tested in the study to determine whether they affect customer perception of service quality. *Dey (2009)* performed a two dimensional study to establish the general importance of customer satisfaction in banking industry and service quality offered by SBI and other PSBs in particular. The study also compared the customer satisfaction for SBI and other PSBs in Meghalaya across their personal characteristics. Female customers were found to be more pleased and satisfied as compared to their male customers. *Mishra et. al. (2010)* conducted a study to make a comparative analysis of service quality perceptions of banks with service quality expectations of their respective customers to determine whether the banks were at above or below the perceptions of their customers. A structured questionnaire covering age, gender, education, occupation and income was constructed. The study revealed that less educated customers chose for public banks whereas, the post-graduates were more inclined to private banks. Again, the professionals and house-wives showed more preference for private banks, while, almost all the

businessmen had chosen to transact with public sector banks. *Ghost and Gnanadhas (2011)* attempted to identify the customers' perception on service quality factors in commercial banks and the customer satisfaction toward the bank by analyzing the impact of perception of service quality factors among different group of customers based on their demographics. A questionnaire covering age, gender, education, income and occupation was constructed for collecting data from bank customers. The analysis revealed that the degree of influence of the service quality factors on customer's satisfaction was higher among the male, higher income group and highly educated customers. *Hazra (2013)* carried out a study to examine the effect of demographic characteristics of customers on customer satisfaction, customer commitment, and customer trust. The results of the study revealed that highly educated customers and the business professionals were more satisfied and committed to their banks compared to other education level and occupational categories. *Reddy and Ramana (2013)* conducted a comparative study to assess the performance of the banks based on customer satisfaction, service quality, and other factors and also to identify the key factors which influence the performance of the banking sector other than customer satisfaction and service quality. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect the data from bank customers. The questionnaire includes few demographic variables like age, occupation, education, gender and monthly income. The study revealed that the private sector banks provided higher customer satisfaction when compared to the nationalized and public sector banks.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Customer Satisfaction

Several definitions have been offered for customer satisfaction over the past three decades. It can be defined as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment that results from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome with their expectations (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Customer satisfaction is defined as the result of a cognitive and affective evaluation, where some comparison standard is compared to the actually perceived performance. If the perceived performance is less than expected, customers will be dissatisfied. On the contrary, if the perceived performance exceeds expectations, customers will feel delight. Measuring customer satisfaction offers an immediate, meaningful and objective feedback about clients' preferences and expectations.

Gender and Customer Satisfaction

Gender has been considered as one of the important demographic variables in the studies conducted by researchers on customer satisfaction as gender has a great impact on the level of customer satisfaction (Mittal et. al., 2001 and Akinyele, 2010). It is considered to be one of the most common forms of segmentation used by marketers (Mokhlis, 2012). It is very important for banks to understand the potential gender effects on customers' satisfaction for the development of effective marketing strategies. Investigating such relationships is significant because without sound evidence and guidelines, managers may run the risk of making wrong decisions and such wrong decisions may affect the business and profit of the banks adversely in the long run (Aljasser and Sasidhar, 2013).

Age and Customer Satisfaction

Age is one of the important demographic variables that not only determine an individual's physical and mental maturity but also depicts life experiences (Kalaichelvi, 2012). It plays an essential role in determining the satisfaction level of customers as the expectation and perception of service quality in an organization is different for different aged people (Anands, 2014). As the age increases, it has been observed that customer satisfaction and favourable behavioural intentions also increase. The old generation customers do not expect more services rendered by the banks, but the new generation customers, who live in a highly technology dominated environment expect more than the old generation customers (Sujatha, 2013)

Income and Customer Satisfaction

Income of the respondents should be given utmost importance as the customers make the choice of the banks based on their incomes for avoiding the minimum balance of high amount which has to be maintained in their accounts (Bhattacharya and Das, 2013). Studies have found that income and customer satisfaction are related (Gokilamani, 2014; Kailash, 2011; Mishra et. al., 2010). Zeithaml (1988) suggested that consumption related decisions bear large impact of income as

higher income allows more choices to the consumers as compared to consumers in lower income category.

Educational Qualification and Customer Satisfaction

Education of the respondents is one of the most important influencing factors of the study. It is acquiring or imparting skills, values and knowledge. Education also means preparing people to develop new ideas and to adjust to the changing environment (Bhattacharjee and Das, 2013). As education levels increase, so does customers' need for information related to their purchase decision, thereby increasing purchasing involvement (Slama and Tashchian 1985). In some studies, educational Qualification is identified as one of the demographic variables that have significant relationship with customer satisfaction in banking sector (Bhattacharjee and Das, 2013; Anand and Selvaraj, 2012; Sivesan and Karunanithy, 2013).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To compare the level of customer satisfaction in the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam across the gender of customers.
2. To compare the level of customer satisfaction in the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam across the age groups of customers.
3. To compare the level of customer satisfaction in the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam across the income groups of customers.
4. To compare the level of customer satisfaction in the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam across the educational qualification of customers.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. *The level of customer satisfaction /dissatisfaction in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam does not significantly vary across the gender of the customers.*
2. *The level of customer satisfaction /dissatisfaction in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam does not significantly vary across the age groups of the customers.*

3. *The level of customer satisfaction /dissatisfaction in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam does not significantly vary across the income groups of the customers.*
1. 4.: *The level of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam does not significantly vary across the educational qualification of the customers.*

DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

The study calls for collection of primary data. A structured schedule comprising of a numerical scale ranging from 'Highly Satisfied (=5)' to 'Highly Dissatisfied (=1)' has been used for the assessment of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of customers. The schedule prepared for the survey has been comprised of largely structured and a few open-ended questions after considering the result of pilot survey. In order to conduct the survey on customers of UBI in Cachar district of Assam, it has been decided to contact a sample of two hundred seventy (270) numbers of customers of United Bank of India in Cachar district of Assam. The said sample size of two seventy (270) has been decided by using sample size calculator (www.macorr.com) after accepting a sampling error of 6% with confidence level of 95%.

Before initiating the field survey, the researcher procured necessary information from the Regional Office of UBI located at Silchar, the district Head Quarter of Cachar district. It has been found that as on 31st March, 2014 there were twenty-five (25) numbers of branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam. Out of these twenty-five branches, ten branches of UBI have been selected randomly for the purpose of the survey which is 40% of the total number of branches of UBI operating in Cachar district.

After selecting the branches, equal numbers of customers from each of the ten (10) sample branches have been surveyed. Since the sample size decided for the study is 270, so the responses of twenty-seven (27) numbers of customers from each of the ten select branches have been considered. The survey was conducted by undertaking personal visit by the researcher in each of the ten (10) branches selected for the study. After the collection of data through field survey, the same have been fed into 'Microsoft Excel' and 'SPSS - version 16' for the purpose of analysis. The collected data have been suitably classified and tabulated. Statistical tools like, mean, standard

deviation have been used to analyze the data obtained through field survey. Apart from these, independent two sample t test and one-way ANOVA have been performed to arrive at the findings of the study.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the present study is confined to those customers who are having *atleast* one savings bank account for a period of *atleast* one year before the date of survey in any of the ten sample branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam. Customer in this study implies individuals only. Institutional customers like Govt departments, educational institutions, hospitals, charitable trust etc. have been kept outside the purview of the study.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The present study is confined to customers of United Bank of India in Cachar district of Assam only ignoring all other public sector and private sector banks even within the same district.
2. Each location or the area has its own demographic specificities. So, the findings of the study need to be interpreted with great caution while making any kind of generalization.
3. The study is subject to all the limitations that are inherent in any study based on perception of the respondents.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Male	175	64.8
Female	95	35.2
Age (In Completed Years)		
21-30	73	27.0
31-40	71	26.3
41-50	64	23.7

51 and above	62	23.0
Average Monthly Income		
Upto Rs. 20,000	122	45.2
Rs. 20,001- Rs. 40,000	101	37.4
Rs. 40,001 and above	47	17.4
Educational Qualification		
Upto HSLC	77	28.5
HS	79	29.3
Graduate & Above	114	42.2

Source: Field Survey

Gender Wise Customer Satisfaction

In this study, an attempt has been made to find out the difference between the satisfaction/dissatisfaction level of male and female respondents towards select dimensions of service quality. Out of 270 customers surveyed for this study, 175 are male customers while 95 are female customers.

Table 2 depicts gender-wise customer satisfaction of UBI in Cachar district of Assam. It has been found in the table 2 that the mean value (3.32) for satisfaction of male customers is more as compared to the mean value (3.30) for satisfaction of female customers.

Table 2: Gender-wise Customer Satisfaction

Gender	Mean	SD	t value	p value
Male	3.32	0.3517	0.477	0.634
Female	3.30	0.3225		

Source: Field Survey

This implies that in terms of customer satisfaction, male customers are more satisfied as compared to their female counterparts.

Table 2 also discloses that the value of Standard deviation (0.3225) for female customers' satisfaction is lower as compared to the value of Standard deviation (0.3517) for male customers' satisfaction. This implies that the responses of female customers are more concentrated in terms of customer satisfaction as compared to their male counterparts.

Following hypothesis has been formulated to test the difference in the customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction of UBI in Cachar district of Assam across the gender of customers.

H₁: The level of customer satisfaction /dissatisfaction in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam does not significantly vary across the gender of the customers.

Independent two samples t test has been performed to test the hypothesis. The t value has been calculated for customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction across their gender. The calculated t value is 0.477 and the corresponding p value is greater than 0.05 as is evident from table 2. Thus, it implies that there is no statistical evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis because there is no significant difference in customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction across the gender of customers at 5% level of significance.

Age Wise Customer Satisfaction

In the present study, the age of respondents is segmented into four categories, namely,

- a) 21-30 years
- b) 31-40 years
- c) 41-50 years and
- d) 51 years and above.

Table 3: Age-wise Customer Satisfaction

Age of the Respondents (in completed years)	Mean	SD	F value	p value
21-30	3.25	0.3548	1.224	0.301
31-40	3.30	0.3658		
41-50	3.35	0.2823		
51 and above	3.34	0.3495		

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 portrays the customer satisfaction of different age groups in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam. It has been found from table 3 that out of the four groups of customers as classified based on their age (in completed years), the mean value (3.35) in terms of customer satisfaction is the highest for the third age group (41-50 years). On the other hand, the mean value (3.25) for the customer satisfaction for the first group (21-30 years) is the lowest. This implies that the highest degree of customer satisfaction has been noticed for the customers who belong to the age group of 41-50 years. On the contrary, the lowest degree of customer satisfaction has been observed for the customers who are in the age group of 21-30 years across the four age groups under consideration.

Table 3 also discloses that the value of Standard deviation (0.2823) for the customer satisfaction is the lowest for the third age group (41-50 years) while the same is the highest (0.3658) for the second age group (31-40 years). This implies that in terms of customer satisfaction, the responses of customers who belong to the age group of 41-50 years are more concentrated across the four age groups of customers under study.

Following hypothesis has been formulated to test the difference in the customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction of UBI in Cachar district of Assam across the age groups of customers.

H₂: The level of customer satisfaction /dissatisfaction in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam does not significantly vary across the age groups of the customers.

One way ANOVA has been performed to test the hypothesis. F value has been calculated for satisfaction/dissatisfaction of customers across their age groups. The calculated value of F is 1.224 and the corresponding p value is greater than 0.05 as is evident from table 3. Thus, it implies that there is no statistical evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis because there is no significant difference in customer satisfaction across the four age groups of customers under consideration.

Income Wise Customer Satisfaction

For the purpose of the study, respondents have been classified into three income groups based on their average monthly income, namely,

- a) Upto Rs 20000
- b) Rs 20001-40000 and
- c) Rs 40001and above.

Table 4 portrays the customer satisfaction of different income groups in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam. It has been found from table 4 that out of the three groups of customers as classified based on their average monthly incomes, the mean value (3.38) in terms of customer satisfaction is the highest for the higher income group (Rs. 40001 and above). On the other hand, the mean value (3.29) for the customer satisfaction for the lower income group (upto Rs 20000) is the lowest.

Table 4: Income -wise Customer Satisfaction

Average Monthly Income of the Respondents	Mean	SD	F value	p value
Upto Rs 20000	3.29	0.3516	1.182	0.308
Rs 20001-40000	3.30	0.3458		
Rs 40001and Above	3.38	0.3000		

Source: Field Survey

This implies that the highest degree of customer satisfaction has been noticed for the higher income group (Rs. 40001 and above). On the contrary, the lowest degree of customer satisfaction has been

observed for the lower income group (upto Rs. 20000) among all the three groups under consideration.

Table 4 also discloses that the value of Standard deviation (0.3000) for the customer satisfaction is the lowest for the higher income group (Rs 40001 and above) while the value of standard deviation (0.3516) is the highest for the lower income group (upto Rs 20000). This implies that in terms of customer satisfaction, the responses of customers of higher income group (Rs 40001 and above) are more concentrated among the three income groups under study.

Following hypothesis has been formulated to test the difference in the customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction of UBI in Cachar district of Assam across the income groups of customers.

H₃: The level of customer satisfaction /dissatisfaction in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam does not significantly vary across the income groups of the customers.

One-way ANOVA has been performed to test the hypothesis. The F value has been calculated for satisfaction/dissatisfaction of customers across their income groups. The calculated value of F is 1.182 and the corresponding p value is greater than 0.05 as is evident from table 4. Thus, it implies that there is no statistical evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis because there is no significant difference in customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction across the three income groups of customers under consideration.

Educational Qualification Wise Customer Satisfaction

For the purpose of the study, educational qualification of the respondents has been categorized into three groups, namely,

- a) Upto HSLC
- b) HS
- c) Graduate & Above

Table 5 portrays the customer satisfaction of the three groups classified on the basis of their different educational qualification in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam. It is evident from table 5 that out of the three groups of customers as classified based on their educational qualification, the mean value (3.33) in terms of customer satisfaction is the highest for

the second group (Having educational qualification upto HS). On the other hand, the mean value (3.29) for the customer satisfaction for the first group (Having educational qualification upto HSLC) is the lowest. This implies that the highest degree of customer satisfaction has been noticed for the customers having HS qualification. On the contrary, the lowest degree of customer satisfaction has been observed for the customers who have got HSLC qualification among all the three groups under consideration.

Table 5: Educational Qualification-wise Customer Satisfaction

Educational Qualification	Mean	SD	F value	p value
Upto HSLC	3.29	0.3443	0.297	0.744
HS	3.33	0.3534		
Graduate & Above	3.31	0.3327		

Source: Field Survey

Table 5 also discloses that the value of Standard deviation (0.3327) for the customer satisfaction is the lowest for the third group (Having educational qualification graduation and above) while the value of standard deviation (0.3534) is the highest for the second group (Having educational qualification upto HS). This implies that in terms of customer satisfaction, the responses of customers having graduation and above qualification are more concentrated among the three groups under study.

Following hypothesis has been formulated to test the difference in the customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction of UBI in Cachar district of Assam across the educational qualification of customers.

H₄: The level of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the branches of UBI operating in Cachar district of Assam does not significantly vary across the educational qualification of the customers.

One-way ANOVA has been performed to test the hypothesis. The F value has been calculated for satisfaction/dissatisfaction of customers across the three groups. The calculated value of F is 0.297 and the corresponding p value is greater than 0.05 as is evident from table 5. Thus, it implies that

there is no statistical evidence for significant difference in customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction across the three groups of customers classified on the basis of their educational qualification.

Thus, from the foregoing analysis it is crystal clear that the level of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the branches of United Bank of India operating in Cachar district of Assam does not significantly vary across the gender, age, average monthly income and educational qualification of the respondents considered in the study.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

1. It has been found that in terms of customer satisfaction, male customers are more satisfied as compared to their female counterparts. But it has been found that the p – value for two independent samples t test is greater than 0.05. Thus, there is no statistical evidence for significant difference in customer satisfaction across the gender of customers at 5% level of significance.
2. In terms of customer satisfaction, it has been found that among the four groups of customers as classified on the basis of their age, customers who are in the age group of 41-50 years are the most satisfied group and customers who belong to the age group of 21-30 years are the least satisfied group of customers. But the p – value for one-way ANOVA is greater than 0.05. Thus, at 5% level of significance there is no statistical evidence for significant difference in customer satisfaction across the four age groups.
3. In terms of customer satisfaction, it has been found that among the three groups of customers as classified on the basis of their average monthly income, customers whose average monthly income is Rs 40001 and above are the most satisfied group and customers whose average monthly income is upto Rs 20000 are the least satisfied group of customers. But the p – value for one-way ANOVA is greater than 0.05. Thus, at 5% level of significance there is no statistical evidence for significant difference in customer satisfaction across the three groups of customers as classified on the basis of their average monthly income.
4. In terms of customer satisfaction, it has been found that among the three groups of customers as classified on the basis of their educational qualification, customers having educational qualification upto HS are the most satisfied group and customers who have

educational qualification upto HSLC are the least satisfied group of customers. But the p – value for one-way ANOVA is greater than 0.05. Thus, there is no statistical evidence for significant difference in customer satisfaction across the educational qualification of customers at 5% level of significance.

CONCLUSION

In a competitive regime, it is not easy to satisfy the customers as they are now more aware, price conscious, demanding and can easily be approached by many competitors with better offers. Customer satisfaction with respect to service quality is an invaluable asset for the banking organizations, providing unmatched competitive edge. Enhancing the customers' experience is now a crucial component of attracting new customers as well as retaining the existing customers in order to grow and protect a profitable business. In other words, the success of a business unit is basically based upon the satisfaction of the wants of the customers. The findings of the study reveal that demographic variables like gender, age, income and educational qualification affect customer satisfaction in UBI. It is suggested that UBI should consider the demographic variables of each customer while providing services, as each customer has individual needs and preferences according to his/her demographic status. UBI should redesign their policies and plans according to the needs and preferences of the customers. In order to survive in the competitive environment, the bank management is expected to continually improve the quality of service so that they can create and retain their customers and deliver customer value and satisfaction on an ongoing basis.

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