

An Emperical Evidence on Customers' Perception of Bank Services' Quality in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This study purport to investigate the perception of service delivery quality from banks customers in Cameroon. Specifically, the study examined customers' perception of service quality dimensions (tangibility, reliability, competence, and convenience) within some selected banks. In order to achieve these objectives a sample of 500 bank customers were chosen from the Littoral and South West Region by making use of a mixture of cluster, stratified, simple random and convenient sampling techniques. Data was collected with the help of a well-structured questionnaire, the resultant data were subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistics, Independent T-test and One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results among others indicated that the perception of bank services' quality by customers was positive for the tangibility, reliability and convenience dimensions but negative for the competence dimension. In addition, it was found that customers of Afriland First Bank, SGBC, BICEC, ECOBANK, UBA, Citi Bank and SCB had a more positive perception of bank services' quality in terms of tangibility and reliability than customers in CBC, UBC, NFCB and Atlantic Bank. Further, age and monthly income level greatly influence customer's perception of service quality, meanwhile gender had no significant influence on customers' perception of service quality. Policy-wise, banks should ameliorate on the competence dimension by making in-service training and refresher courses for employees. They should equally make banking more convenient for female customers, use age as a strategic tool and should train their employees effectively if they must succeed in this era of stiff competition.

Keywords: Customers' perception, Service quality, Banking sector, Tangibility, Reliability, Competence and convenience.

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Highlights of this paper

- It is relevant to investigate the the perception of service delivery quality from banks customers in the recent context of stiff competition in the Cameroon banking sector.
- A sample of 500 bank customers were chosen from the Littoral and South West Region by making use of a mixture of cluster, stratified, simple random and convenient sampling techniques.
- The resultant data were subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistics, Independent T-test and One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

1. INTRODUCTION

The role played by the banking sector in stimulating growth in both developing and developed economies has been stressed in early and recent literature. Schumpeter (1911) identified the importance of banks in facilitating technological innovation and development. According to Schumpeter (1911) this is possible through their intermediary role of allocating savings for investment purpose. Banks can quickly increase the productive capacity of any economy through their activities Schumpeter. (1934). Goldsmith (1955); Cameron (1967); McKinnon (1973) and Shaw (1973) demonstrated that banks could be a catalyst for economic growth if they are well developed and in healthy state. More recently, Malhotra (2004) notes that banks play an important and active role in the financial and economic development of any country. Following the study of Malhotra (2004), Chipalkatti and Rishi (2007) held that efficient banking system could significantly influence the growth of a country by stimulating other sectors of the economy. For these banks to continue to act as growth drivers, the role of bank customers and especially clients' satisfaction related issues must be considered primordial.

Customers play a vital role in the functioning and growth of Banks. This is because Banks cannot function without the savings of customers. For banks to give out loans, they need to receive deposits from customers. Until recently, banks could generate acceptable profits despite poor customer experiences, however, according to Chipalkatti and Rishi (2007) by 2020 this will become increasingly difficult (KPMG, 2016). Service quality offered by banks is the most important criteria for customers when choosing a bank (Ernst & Young, 2010). Since service quality is the priority of customers when selecting their banks, it is, therefore, necessary for banks to understand changing needs of their customers and adopt the latest strategy to be competitive in this era of globalization, Neeru and Avinandan (2004). Hence, as highlighted by Ernst and Young (2010) service quality is the most important criteria to be considered by banks.

Globalization has altered consumer behaviour in regards to banking services, and the operating environment for banking industry has become more dynamic and competitive (Mei, Cheung, Lam, & Chu, 2013). The introduction of banking services such as phone banking, automated teller machines (ATM), and Internet banking, accompanied with global competition, has accelerated the need for banks to consider customers and clients satisfaction-related issues in the center of their decisions. Bank customers all over the world have become more quality conscious; hence the demand for higher quality services has increased. Service operations worldwide are affected by this new wave of quality awareness and emphasis (Lee, 2004). For banks to be sustainable and have a competitive advantage in the current trend of globalization, they must provide excellent services to their customers.

Saravanan and Rao (2007) posit that service quality is crucial for banks since competition is very stiff in the marketplace. Banks compete among themselves with similar products. Therefore banks that want to be successful must use service quality as their primary competitive weapon (Stafford, 1996). When customers are satisfied with the services delivered to them, they are retained and they spread the news about the product, and it attracts new customers, and this enhances the image of the said services which is a guarantee for success, growth, and profitability, Negi (2009), Ladhari (2009). Bennett and Higgins (1988) holds that, banks that master service

quality can secure a greater portion of the market, since improved levels of service quality are related to higher income, increased cross-sell ratios and higher customer retention. Following this, banks should, therefore, focus on service quality as a core competitive strategy (Chaoprasert & Elsey, 2004).

Certain factors determine service quality. In management related literature, these factors are often referred to as dimensions of service quality. These aspects constitute the basis through which the customer sees the service quality. They represent how customer organize the information in their minds concerning service quality (Zeithaml, Mary, & Dwayne, 2010). Several scholars have conceptualized service quality and they all propose different dimensions to capture service quality depending on time and space. The study by Lewis and Bernard (1983) determined the importance of the outcomes and the process of defining the service quality. In this light, the consequences implies the core of the services and the beneficial value obtained, while the process concerns the procedures through which the service is offered to the customer. Grönroos (1984) affirms that the quality of a service is not a mono-dimension concept, it rather includes many dimensions related to the essence of the service and its supporting services. He distinguished between three dimensions of service quality which are: the technical quality, which concerns what the customer will receive, which is the essence of the service; the functional quality which is the manner in which the service is provided to customers; and the corporate image considered to be the fundamental dimension.

Anantharathan Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) conceptualized service quality as a ten-dimensional construct under the SERVQUAL model (Service quality). They identified these ten dimensions as “credibility, security, accessibility, communication, understanding the customer, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, competence, and courtesy” (Anantharathan Parasuraman et al., 1985). Thus clients’ perception of service quality is a function of the rating of all the ten components. Anantharayanan Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) later consolidated the ten dimensions into five as; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.” In this study, the factors identified by Kumar et al. (2009) in their “modified SERVQUAL model” are considered the critical factors to measuring service quality in the banking industry of Cameroon. This is because these factors best reflect the context of the Cameroon banking industry. These dimensions include “tangibility, reliability, competence, and convenience.”

As concern Cameroon, the context of our study, commercial banks also face stiff competition, first within themselves and secondly from non-banking financial institutions like ORANGE, MTN and are constantly seeking new ways to add value to their services. Following the importance of banks as drivers of economic growth and well-being of citizens, the government of Cameroon has employed a number of measures to facilitate their success. Among these measures was the creation of the National Credit Council (NCC) by Presidential Decree no 96/138 of 24 June 1996. The council was created to play an advisory role on all legal and regulatory activities concerning financial institutions, especially in the classification of the said establishments into different categories, their minimum capital requirement, their legal form and activities they are authorized to undertake. In addition, the NCC give the conditions for creating and closing of banks in Cameroon. The creation of the Professional Association of Credit Institutions of Cameroon (APECCAM) then followed which is an advisory body under the Ministry of Finance. Another major reform in the Cameroon banking sector was the Banking Ordinance of 1985 which saw the liquidation of Meridien Banque Internationale de l’Afrique de l’Ouest, the privatisation of some banks, the training staff of the judiciary sector so that they can be better placed to appreciate banking issues which are complicated and complex.

Intriguingly, among the several measures that were taken by the government to enhance the growth of banks, service quality related issues seems to be negated. Nkeng, Ako, and Eyong (2009) writing on financial institutions

in Cameroon stated that the banks have not been doing enough to sensitize their customers and offer them high-quality services. Cameroon banks have focused more on lending which is the most profitable function of a commercial bank. As a result, less attention has been put on service quality (Ngu, 2007). Nowadays, to be able to survive the prevailing intense competition in the banking industry, service quality must be given great importance especially as banks offer similar products in a competitive environment. In the same light, COBAC which is the regulatory body for banks in Cameroon has no charter for service delivery. As such, each bank has standards and prescriptions on how service delivery should look like. Since most of these banks assume that the “customer is king,” much attention needs to be given to them so that banks can garner a competitive advantage. All banks in Cameroon have a Customer service department or unit. This department’s *de jure* responsibility is to enforce a better quality service for all the products offered by the bank and demonstrate a true practice of process and quality service. They are supposed to make sure that customer’s complaints are treated within the shortest time period. Despite this, the *de facto* observation suggest that most of these banks seem to neglect the aspect of service quality which is vital for surviving in this age of intense competition between banks. As such, it will become difficult for these firms to make profits by 2020 with poor service quality (KPMG, 2016) as customers are becoming more aware and lay more emphasis on service quality as a result of accrue globalisation.

In addition, despite the importance of service quality in the literature, banks in Cameroon seems, till date, not to consider it as a vital tool for their success. According to CIPA (2014) service quality in Cameroon banks does not meet the required standards and perceived quality of services provided by banks do not meet customer expectations. It has been observed that bank customers leave the banking halls either unhappy or dissatisfied. This could be due to a misunderstanding with the bank staff on certain issues, unresolved complaints, long waiting queues, failure of the bank staff to appropriately handle customers complaints, staff incompetence, failure of the network system, and delay of operations. ‘About 97 customers were on the waiting desks of a banking hall in Douala when suddenly a rich man entered and went directly to the cash desk for a service without a ticket; he was well received and served by a bank staff when another man from the waiting desk stood and complained about the issue. The bank staff serving the customer was the first person to shout at this man in the waiting queue and it made the bank hall to be tense that morning’, narrated a clients. This lack of competence is what destroys the image of an organization. In the midst of stiff competition, it becomes relevant to use the tool of service quality to defeat competitors. Customer acquisition and retention have become a matter of concern in the Cameroon banking industry and service quality have been identified as vital. It is, therefore, necessary to decipher what customers think of their banks’ service quality so that banks can better handle the issue of service quality.

Further, it is not clear from existing research which variables (tangibility, reliability, competence, and convenience) drives customer perceived service quality in the Cameroon banking sector which is a pre-requisite for customer satisfaction. This study, therefore, attempts to fill this gap by comparing the service quality dimensions between selected banks in the Littoral and South West Region of Cameroon. If the banks are to compete in providing quality service to customers, it is important to understand the customer perception of service quality.

Following the above background and problem statement, the main objective that arises is to examine customers’ perception of service quality in Cameroon banks. To achieve this major objective, the following specific objectives are set aside:

1. To examine customers’ perception of the tangibility dimension of bank services’ quality in selected banks in the South West and Littoral Regions.
2. To examine customers’ perception of the reliability dimension of bank services’ quality in selected banks in

the South West and Littoral Regions.

3. To evaluate customers' perception of the competence dimension of bank services' quality in selected banks in the South West and Littoral Regions.
4. To examine customers' perception of the convenience dimension of bank services' quality in selected banks in the South West and Littoral Regions.
5. To examine the effect of gender, age, and monthly income on customers' perception of service quality in the selected banks in the South West and Littoral Regions.

Policy-wise, the findings of such a study will help policy makers of the banking industry in Cameroon who are BEAC (Bank of Central African States), MINFI (ministry of finance) and COBAC (Commission Bancaire de l'Afrique Centrale) to formulate policies about service quality on the bases on informed and evidence based findings.

In addition, the study will provide internal Stakeholders of the banking industry such as management and directors of banks in Cameroon with empirical information on what customers expect in terms of service quality, as well as customers assessment of the quality of service they provide in terms of competence, tangibility, reliability, and convenience. It will also provide empirical information on the effect of customer background characteristics such as age, gender and monthly income on service quality. Thus management will be guided in their strategic decisions on customer acquisition, customer satisfaction and customer retention. Shareholders and directors of banks in Cameroon may also use such information as justification for their service quality decisions and policies.

To business professionals, the findings of this study will be a contribution to the existing literature, and the debates on service quality in the banking sector. It will extend the understanding and clarity of customers' perceptions of service quality in the banking industry of Cameroon. Professionals in other related service industries could, therefore, take clues from the findings, and make better understanding of the situation in their respective industries or firms. The major contribution of this study is that, it extends the usage of SERVQUAL model to another context which is that of Cameroon, by testing its applicability and also by providing an adjusted scale of measurement of the dimensions in question. The study is also one of the few that have attempted to compare service quality perceptions by bank customers based on banks making use of the SERVPERF and modified SERVQUAL model.

The study is limited to the Southwest and Littoral regions of the Country. This scope is chosen because the Littoral region is the economic capital and largest city in Cameroon. It has a population of over 3 million inhabitants coming from different areas of the country. In addition, there is a high concentration of banking activities in this area. In effect, more than 70% of banks have their headquarters in the Littoral region and many of banks clients are also residing in the city of Douala. The South West Region of Cameroon is amongst the business oriented Regions in Cameroon. It has an estimated population of about 1, 5 million inhabitants.

The rest of the study is structured as follows: The next Section is aimed at reviewing the literature and Section 3 presents the methodology while empirical results are presented in Section 4, Section 5 concludes the paper and section 6 highlight some limits to the study.

2. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

In this section we present the literature relative to customers' perception of service quality in Banks, literature relative to the effect of customers' background characteristics on their perception of service quality and then endeavoured to bridge the gaps found in the literature.

Ahmad, Saif, and Safwan (2010) conducted a study to examine customers' perception of service quality offered

by Islamic and conventional banks in Pakistan. They took service quality attributes such as tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy. A mixture of stratified random and convenient sampling was used and a well-structured questionnaire was administered to 720 customers. They made use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. It was found that service quality scores offered by Islamic banks were greater than that offered by conventional banks. In Ghana, [Hinson, Mohammed, and Mensah \(2006\)](#) conducted a study to know the service quality perceptions by customers in three different banks: Barclays bank, Standard Chartered bank and Ghana Commercial Bank. After thorough investigation, findings revealed that all the banks selected differ on the service quality dimensions. Their study also revealed that customers' expectations on all the service attributes used in their study were not met by the selected banks. Following [Hinson et al. \(2006\)](#), [Yonatan \(2010\)](#) in Ethiopia, carried out an exploratory study to assess customers perception of service quality using three banks too; Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE), Awash International Bank (AIB) and United Bank (UB). The findings revealed that customers' expectations were not met. Among the five dimensions of service quality Tangible and Responsiveness had higher gap scores at CBE and AIB. For all the three banks, the reliability dimension showed a negative gap which indicates that customers perceive the banks not to be consistent in service provision. Findings equally revealed that the empathy dimension has a higher negative in Awash International Bank (AIB) and United Bank (UB) implying that the banks need to train their staffs properly and introduce refresher courses. Reliability was rated by the clients of the 3 banks to be the most important dimension. The study also indicates that the banks need to become more responsive and assuring to their customers as well as increase their accessibility.

[Santhi \(2011\)](#) conducted a study to identify customer's perception on the service quality dimensions in commercial banks in Butterworth, Penang. In this study as in that of [Hinson et al. \(2006\)](#) and [Yonatan \(2010\)](#) three commercial banks were again, considered. These banks were Public Bank, CIMB Bank and Maybank. Among other findings, it was discovered that responsiveness is perceived by customers to be the most influential service quality dimension. In the same light, [Puja and Yukti \(2010\)](#) carried out a study to explore the dimensions of customer perceived service quality in the context of the Indian banks and to study the applicability of SERVQUAL model to private and public sector banks. 122 respondents were considered to generate data for the study. Tools like Mean, Standard deviation, student t-test were used. In line with the finding, it was revealed that Public sector banks needed to improve their service quality by improving their physical facility, infrastructure and giving proper training to their employees.

[Muyeed \(2012\)](#) in his study wanted to evaluate the service quality perception by customers in retail banking in the developing countries in general and Bangladesh in particular. Service quality dimensions like competence, reliability, tangible and empathy with 14 parameters were measured and demographic profile of the customers were considered for the study. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of the study of [Anantharathan Parasuraman et al. \(1985\)](#) and questionnaire were distributed to 250 customers chosen from private and public sector banks. The study made use of techniques as mean, percentage analysis, standard deviation and z test and the results indicated that customer's perception was high for reliability and competence and lowest in the tangibility dimension.

As concern studies on the effect of customers' background characteristics on their perception of service quality, [Arpita \(2011\)](#) using 198 respondents to generate data and employing the ANOVA tool, posthoc analysis and, multiple regression tests revealed that Indian customers' quality perceptions differ between genders and across age categories. The results indicated male and female customers perceive service quality differently, with a significant difference in terms of tangibility ($F = 7.2; p = 0.08$), reliability ($F = 10.02; p = 0.02$), competence ($F = 9.617; p =$

0.02) and, empathy ($F = 6.54$; $p = 0.01$). The findings showed that males and female customers' had different attitudes towards the service quality of multinational banks. The gender differences suggested that men had more exposure to the various services offered by the banks. In addition, finding revealed that young customers were more open and prefer flexible and modern facilities meanwhile the older generation were still accustomed to the traditional mode of transactions. Finally, Indian customers' quality perceptions do not differ between different occupations as revealed by the data collected.

An empirical study was carried out on the relationship between customers' demographic characteristics and the overall service quality and its dimensions in the commercial banks of Bahrain (Wathek, 2011). There was no significant relationship between customer's gender on their perception of the overall service quality. Lukmaan and Gertrude (2013) conducted a study to measure customers' expectation and perception of service quality in the banking industry of Ghana. The study used a sample size of 1000 customers of universal banks in Ashanti region. The findings of the study revealed that the gender, age, occupation and income level of customers of universal banks had a significant influence on customers' perception and expectation of service quality. Empathy was found to be the most important dimension of customers' perception in the universal banks of Ghana. Kumari and Rani (2011) in their study tried to identify the perception of customers of banks through the relationship of five factors. A total of 304 retail banking customers were considered for the study and convenience sampling method was used. Using ANOVA, the findings revealed that the gender, age and occupation of respondents had no significant impact on their perception towards service quality. However, a significant difference was observed between people of a different occupation.

Manasa (2012) aimed at assessing customers' perception of service quality in the banking industry of India while using a targeted population of the study made up of bank customers in the cities of Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata and Pune. While making use of the proportionate stratified random sampling in which 150 respondents were selected from each city making a total 600 respondents and employing the ANOVA technique, the result showed that female customers perceived service quality more positively than male customers. The ANOVA test confirmed that there was a significant relationship between occupation and customers' perception of service quality. The findings revealed that there is no much difference in the perception by customers across age groups.

As concern the gap found in the literature, to the best of our knowledge, this types of study had not been conducted in the chosen area indicated in the scope of study. In this light, it is not yet empirically clear, in the context of Cameroon, the drivers of customer's perception of service quality in the banking sector which is a prerequisite for customer satisfaction. Many studies have been conducted on customers' perception of service quality. However, only a handful of them compared service quality dimensions between the various banks. In addition, they only focussed on the general views of customers about the quality of banks' services without further segregating and making comparisons about their gender, age, and monthly income. None of the studies have also examined the dimensionality of the service quality of the banking industry of Cameroon. The weakness of these studies is the strengths and motivation of this study. In addition, the work employed a reasonable sample size of 500 bank customers from which meaningful recommendations and conclusions can be drawn from. The work does not only limits its analyses on descriptive statistics as other works seen in the literature, but went further to employ inferential statistics such as One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Independent T-test. Thus the current study is an attempt to bridge the gap in the literature by applying the critical factors of the modified SERVQUAL model and the SERVPERF performance-only measures to study the service quality perception in Cameroon banks.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The model used for this study is a figure relating service quality which is the dependent variable to the various banks and the different control variables as age, gender and monthly income. The various banks shall be compared against each service quality dimensions. The model is illustrated in Figure 1:

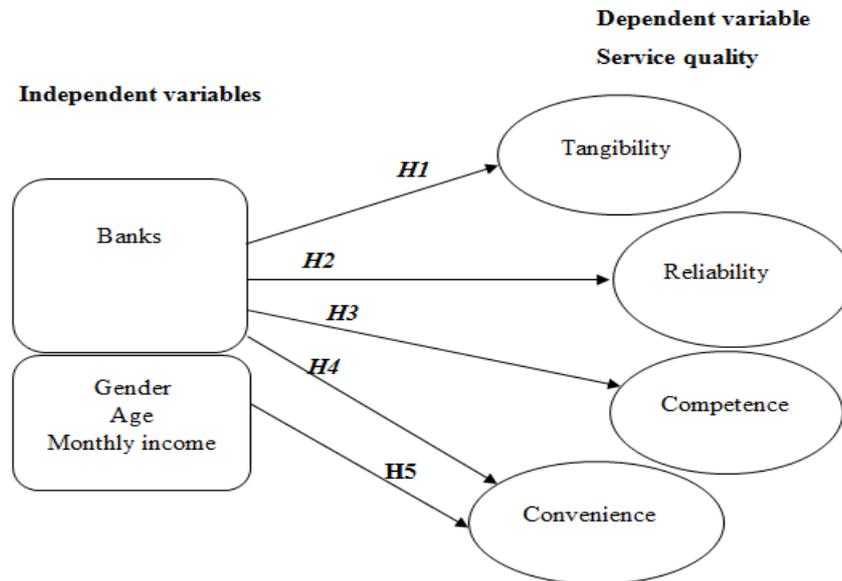


Figure-1. Model specification.

The dependent variable is service quality and it is captured by certain factors. These factors are usually referred to as dimensions of service quality. The factors identified by Kumar et al. (2009) in their “modified SERVQUAL model” are considered as the critical factors for measuring service quality in the banking industry of Cameroon. This is because these factors best reflect service delivery in Cameroon banks. These factors are: Tangibility, reliability, convenience and competence. They are all going to be assessed in the selected banks. Customers’ rating of service quality varies from one bank to another; hence the various service quality dimensions will serve as a benchmarking for service quality in Cameroon banks. Customers’ perception of service quality is the average of each of these dimensions and it is derived based on the SERVPERF model. This model takes into consideration, the perceived value of a service. Control variables such as gender, age, and monthly income of respondents will also be used.

As concern the research design, this study is descriptive in nature. The aim of this study is to describe customer perceived service quality in the banking industry of Cameroon. The study is also cross-sectional. A cross-sectional research studies a particular issue at a point in time by considering more cases (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003). It is a cross-sectional study because data were collected from a cross section of customers of the banking industry of Cameroon at a point in time. This study is a survey study because it seeks to obtain the opinion of a population about service quality through qualitative and quantitative techniques. The population of the study consists of bank customers in the southwest and littoral regions of Cameroon.

A sample size of five hundred (500) customers of Cameroonian banks which are registered with the Ministry of Finance in Cameroon and regulated by COBAC were chosen from some selected towns in the Littoral and South West Region. The study employed a mixture of the cluster, stratified, simple random and convenient sampling technique in selecting the sample size of the study. This was done by adopting a five step approach. Firstly the population under study was divided into clusters. The clusters represent the various divisions of the two regions.

In the Littoral region the clusters were (Wouri, Nkam, Sanaga Maritime and Mungo) while in the South West region the clusters were (Fako, Meme, Lebiale, Kupe Manenguba, Ndian and Manyu). Secondly, simple random sampling was used to select the commercial banks in the South West and Littoral regions since each commercial bank had an equal chance of being selected in the sample. Thirdly, each of the selected banks within the target population was considered as a stratum. Fourthly, the total sample size was obtained from each stratum based on the number of branches of that bank found in the clusters as shown in Table 1. Finally, the branches of the target banks in the Littoral Region and South West were selected because of convenience. Further, the Littoral and South west regions were selected out of the ten regions of Cameroon because of convenience.

After obtaining the number of customers to be selected from each bank, customers were met at the various banks and requested to complete the questionnaire.

Table-1. Stratified sampling of cameroon banks.

No.	Bank name	No of branches	Estimated Percentage of Total sample size	Expected Sample Size for Strata
1	BICEC	18	19%	94
2	SGBC	16	17%	83
3	SCB	16	17%	83
4	AFB	10	10%	52
5	Eco bank	10	10%	52
6	NFCB	6	6%	31
7	Atlantic Bank	5	5%	26
8	UBC	5	5%	26
9	UBA	4	4%	21
10	CBC	3	3%	15
11	BGFI	2	2%	12
12	Citibank	1	1%	5
	Total	96	100%	500

As concern the data collection and procedures, the main source of data use is the primary source through the use of a well-structured questionnaire that was administered to the respondents. All the 500 questionnaire that were administered returned, 372 were administered in the Littoral and 128 in the South West. These numbers were administered considering the ratio of banks in both regions. One of the most interesting characteristics of banking halls in Cameroon is long queues of customers waiting for services especially in Douala. We took advantage of this situation to collect data from the customers. Data was collected in the banking halls during working hours. In all cases, permission was sort from the bank authorities to administer the questionnaire. With this procedure we approached many customers as possible to meet the quota for a given bank.

The entire questionnaire was made up of two sections. The first section of the questionnaire was used to collect data on the demographic profile of respondents. The second section contained 26 items on customers' perceptions of service quality performance of the banks organized under tangibility, reliability, competence and convenience dimensions.

As concern the analytical approach, overall service quality which is the dependent variable in this study is derived by measuring the weighted mean for each of the dimensions of service quality. In order to achieve the intended objective, the current study uses a mixture of statistical techniques. The study makes use of frequency distribution tables and bar charts to present the results. The mean is used to derive the way customers of various banks perceive service quality. The higher the mean score the more satisfied a customer is, which implies a positive perception in the service quality. The lesser the mean score, the less satisfied a bank customer is which implies a

negative perception of service quality. Banks with higher mean scores for any service quality dimension indicate that their customers perceive service quality more positively than banks with lower mean scores.

Inferential statistics is made used of in this study. Inferential statistics allows researchers to infer from the data through analysis the relationship between two variables; differences in a variable amongst different subgroups. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) has been used to test the hypothesis of existing significant difference in customers' perception of bank services' quality between the various banks.

In order to test for statistical significance between gender and service quality perception, an independent sample T-test was conducted. Statistical significance was determined by looking at the t-values and the p-values at 5% level of significance. The smaller the p-values, the more significant the results obtained. Higher t-values imply that there is 95% confidence that the results obtained is statistically significant. Data analysis was conducted with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version, 20 statistical software .

As concern the Validity and reliability of instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed and and a pilot test conducted at Ecobank and BICEC Buea and any arising misunderstandings were corrected to ease respondents filling. The reliability of the data used for this study was tested using the Alpha Croncbach's method of reliability as indicated in [Table 2](#). Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the level of reliability of the scale items. A scale item is reliable if the Cronbach alpha value is 0.7 or more than. [Table 2](#), shows that all the reliability scores of the scale measures were adequate since the Cronbach's alpha value for each scale item was significantly greater than the prescribed 0.7 threshold.

Table-2. Cronbach's alpha test values.

Indicator	No of items	Croncbach's alpha
Tangibility	4	0,761
Reliability	5	0,757
Competence	14	0,754
Convenience	3	0,789
Total	26	0.759

We considered ethical issues as well. In the process of data collection, there was a problem of persuading participants to co-operate with us. The rights of participants to their privacy and voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were respected. In some cases, the researcher took permission from the banks before administering their questionnaire and it was promised that customers' information will not be disclosed.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Information about the background characteristics of the respondents are analyse and presented on tables.

According to [Table 3](#) above, 65% of the respondents were males, while 35% were females. This shows that respondents were mainly males. Some banks had more male than female customers. They include Afriland, SGBC, SCB, UBA, Atlantic Bank, BICEC, ECOBANK and Citi Bank. UBC had an equal number of male and female customers' meanwhile banks like BGFI, CBC, and NFC had more female than male customers. This concern those to which questionnaire were administered to.

According to [Table 4](#), 41% and 33.4% of the respondents were of age 20-29 years and 30 -39 years respectively, implying that most of the bank customers were adults. 10% of the respondents were in the age group 40-49 years and 5.6% were above 50 years old.

Table-3. Gender of respondents.

	Male	Female	Total
Afriland first Bank	39	13	52
SGBC	55	28	83
SCB	48	35	83
UBA	16	5	21
UBC	13	13	26
Atlantic Bank	20	6	26
BICEC	71	23	94
NFCB	8	23	31
ECOBANK	41	11	52
CBC	5	10	15
Citi Bank	4	1	5
BGFI	5	7	12
Total N	325	175	500
Total %	65%	35%	100%

Table-4. Age of respondents.

	Below 20 yrs	20-29 yrs	30-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	Above 50 yrs	Total
Afriland Bank	2	25	15	5	5	52
SGBC	0	33	31	10	9	83
SCB	13	6	52	10	2	83
UBA	8	9	4	0	0	21
UBC	0	9	10	4	3	26
Atlantic Bank	0	10	12	3	1	26
BICEC	3	67	24	0	0	94
NFCB	7	14	5	3	2	31
ECOBANK	15	17	10	8	2	52
CBC	1	10	0	4	0	15
Citi Bank	0	2	1	1	1	5
BGFI	1	3	3	2	3	12
Total	50	205	167	50	28	500
Total	10%	41%	33.4%	10%	5.6%	100%

Table-5. Occupation of respondents.

	Student	Business man	Civil servant	Professional	Retired	Unemployed	Total
Afriland Bank	2	10	5	29	5	1	52
SGBC	2	39	27	13	2	0	83
SCB	6	28	27	14	5	3	83
UBA	5	2	9	3	2	0	21
UBC	4	4	10	6	0	2	26
Atlantic Bank	2	0	18	0	0	6	26
BICEC	5	20	31	27	4	7	94
NFCB	0	0	8	0	23	0	31
ECOBANK	5	2	19	26	0	0	52
CBC	0	3	5	5	0	2	15
Citi Bank	0	5	0	0	0	0	5
BGFI	0	4	8	0	0	0	12
Total	31	117	167	123	41	21	500
Total	6.2%	23.4%	33.4%	24.6%	8.2%	4.2%	100%

Table 5 shows that 33.4 % and 24.6% of the respondents were civil servants and professional respectively and they constitute a larger proportion of the bank customers. 8.2% were retired and 4.2% were unemployed.

Table-6. Monthly income of respondents.

	Below 50000 FCFA	50 001 - 100 000 FCFA	100 001 - 200 000 FCFA	200 001 - 300 000 FCFA	Above 300 000 FCFA	Total
Afriland F Bank	9	7	24	11	1	52
SGBC	0	5	4	44	30	83
SCB	7	29	10	12	25	83
UBA	0	13	6	2	0	21
UBC	1	3	7	7	8	26
Atlantic Bank	6	0	20	0	0	26
BICEC	87	7	0	0	0	94
NFCB	1	26	1	2	1	31
ECOBANK	0	0	42	8	2	52
CBC	0	15	0	0	0	15
Citi Bank	0	0	0	0	5	5
BGFI	0	4	1	5	2	12
	111	109	115	91	74	500
Total	22.2%	21.8%	23%	18.2%	14.8%	100%

Table 6 shows that 22.2% of the bank customers had monthly income below 50.000 FCFA, 14.8% had a monthly income that exceeds 300.000 Fcfa and the majority of respondents were in between these two categories.

Table-7. Academic qualification of respondents.

	Certificate	BSc degree	MSc degree	Technical	Phd degree	Total
Afriland Bank	14	19	13	4	2	52
SGBC	5	32	30	16	0	83
SCB	22	41	9	1	10	83
UBA	0	10	4	0	7	21
UBC	6	12	4	2	0	26
Atlantic Bank	0	14	6	0	0	26
BICEC	60	21	12	0	2	94
NFCB	7	14	5	2	0	28
ECOBANK	2	9	11	0	0	22
CBC	1	14	5	8	7	35
Citi Bank	5	0	0	0	0	19
BGFI	0	4	5	3	0	12
	122	204	103	36	28	500
	24.4%	40.8%	20.6%	7.2%	5.6%	100%

Table 7 indicates that 40.8% of the respondents were BSc holders thereby constituting a large proportion of bank customers in this study.

4.2. Customers' Perception of Bank Service Quality in the Cameroon Banking Sector

The following analysis explains the overall service quality rating across focal banks for the various variables: tangibility, reliability, competence, and convenience.

The main research question is answered by making use of descriptive statistics. The mean is used to determine the level of customers' perception of service quality dimensions in the different banks. The variables of service quality are tangibility, reliability, convenience, and competence. All the statements were coded in such a way that a positive mean response is equal to or more than 2.5 which implies that customers had a positive perception of bank service quality meanwhile a mean response, less than 2.5 reveals that customers had a negative perception of bank service quality. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used for comparing the mean score of the service quality dimensions in the different banks and test for statistical significance.

4.3. What is Customers' Perception of the Tangibility Dimension of Bank Service Quality?

Tangibility variables here include “modern looking equipment at the banks”, “Visually appealing physical facilities like buildings”, “Neatness of staff” and “visually appealing materials such as booklets, furniture, bank documents etc as indicated in Table 8.”

Table-8. Tangibility dimension.

Focal Banks	N	Modern Equipment	Nice Building	Neatness	Furnishing	Average
Afriland first Bank	73	4.92	4.93	4.56	4.94	4.84
SGBC	77	4.85	4.95	4.35	4.71	4.72
SCB	11	4.22	4.25	3.64	4.73	4.21
UBA	28	3.68	4.25	4.79	4.61	4.33
UBC	33	3.15	3.17	3.45	4.24	3.50
Atlantic Bank	28	3.61	3.96	4.57	3.67	3.95
BICEC	101	4.78	4.87	4.59	4.84	4.77
NFCB	45	3.00	3.24	3.82	4.40	3.62
ECOBANK	52	4.63	4.33	4.69	4.73	4.60
CBC	30	3.11	3.50	3.93	4.77	3.83
Citi Bank	11	4.89	4.84	4.65	4.91	4.82
BGFI	11	4.88	4.74	4.27	4.23	4.53
Total	500	4.14	4.25	4.28	4.57	4.31

The customers in Cameroon banks, in general, have a positive perception of service quality in terms of tangibility. This is indicated by very high mean responses. Customers acknowledge that their banks have modern looking equipment as indicated by the mean score of 4.14. They equally attest that their banks have visually appealing physical facilities with a mean score of 4.25. Therefore we can conclude that customer perception of bank service quality is positive with respect to tangibility. In terms of tangibility, customers of Afriland first bank had a more positive perception than any other bank as indicated by mean of 4.84, Citi Bank was second with 4.82, BICEC was third with 4.77, SGBC was fourth with 4.72. Customers in all the banks have a positive perception in terms of tangibility but UBC was ranked last with 3.5. In this category was also NFCB with 3.62, CBC with 3.82 and Atlantic Bank with 3.92. Overall, customers of Cameroon banks have a positive perception of service quality in terms of tangibility. ANOVA will be used to test whether the differences in tangibility between the different bank customers is statistically significant.

Table-9. ANOVA- Bank customers' perception of tangibility.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Modern looking equipment	Between Groups	18.733	11	10.703	7.999	0.000
	Within Groups	831.817	488	1.705		
	Total	850.550	499			
Visually appealing physical facilities	Between Groups	27.780	11	2.525	2.229	0.012
	Within Groups	553.020	488	1.133		
	Total	580.800	499			
Neat appearance of staff	Between Groups	102.983	11	9.362	7.143	0.000
	Within Groups	639.567	488	1.311		
	Total	742.550	499			
Visually appealing materials	Between Groups	37.244	11	3.386	5.949	0.000
	Within Groups	277.756	488	0.569		
	Total	315.000	499			

4.4. Testing Hypothesis 1

H1 There is no significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of tangibility.

The result in Table 9 reveals that there is a significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of neatness (F = 7.143, p=0.00); furnishing (F=5.949, p=0.000); and building, (F= 2.229, p=0.012) and equipment (F=7.999, p=0.00). This implies that there is a significant difference between the banks in terms of tangibility. Therefore H1 is rejected for neatness, furnishing and building and equipment. There is a significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of tangibility.

4.5. What is Customers' Perception of the Reliability Dimension of Bank Service Quality?

Reliability variables include "Staff keeping promise", "Sincere interest in solving customers' problems", "Staff performing service right the first time", "Provide services at the time they promise to do so", "Insists on error free records." The selected banks of the study are compared based on these items and an ANOVA test run to test the hypothesis.

Table-10. Reliability dimension.

Bank of respondents	Staff keeping promise	Sincere interest in solving customers' problems	Staff performing service right the first time	Provide services at the time they promise to do so	Error free records	
Afriland F Bank	4.95	4.22	4.31	4.65	3.85	4.40
SGBC	4.91	4.84	4.24	4.88	4.39	4.65
SCB	4.89	4.00	3.18	3.45	3.73	3.85
UBA	4.91	4.04	3.18	4.91	4.82	4.37
UBC	4.68	3.91	4.61	3.64	3.88	4.14
Atlantic Bank	4.67	4.46	3.74	3.32	3.05	3.85
BICEC	4.93	4.94	4.19	4.26	3.16	4.30
NFCB	4.12	4.24	3.24	2.55	2.89	3.41
ECOBANK	4.95	4.48	4.00	3.37	3.13	3.99
CBC	4.82	4.23	3.00	3.55	2.67	3.65
Citi Bank	4.97	4.73	4.52	4.10	3.46	4.36
BGFI	4.86	4.64	3.87	3.81	4,18	3.75
Total	4.81	4.39	3.84	3.87	3,60	4.09

Table-11. ANOVA- Bank customers' perception of Reliability.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Staff keeping promise * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	20.746	11	17.886	12.050	0.000
	Within Groups	449.054	488	0.920		
	Total	469.800	499			
Sincere interest in solving customers' problems * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	22.714	11	8.065	7.125	0.000
	Within Groups	474.286	488	0.972		
	Total	497.000	499			
Staff performing service right the first time * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	100.465	11	9.133	5.710	0.000
	Within Groups	780.535	488	1.599		
	Total	881.000	499			
Provide services at the time they promise to do so * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	75.684	11	6.880	5.268	0.000
	Within Groups	637.316	488	1.306		
	Total	713.000	499			
Insists on error free records * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	220.418	11	20.038	16.989	0.000
	Within Groups	575.582	488	1.179		
	Total	796,000	499			

As shown in Table 10, customers in Cameroon banks have a positive perception of service quality in terms of reliability as shown by the average of 4.09. Customers of SGBC are more positive in reliability than any other bank

as indicated by the mean score of 4.65, followed by customers of Afriland, UBA, Citi Bank and ECOBANK. Customers accepted that bank staff keep to their promises with a high mean score of 4.81. Also, the staff are sincere in solving customers' problems and insist on error-free records. This means that customers rely on bank services easily. The average mean score for the reliability dimension is 4.09 thereby implying that customers perceive service quality in Cameroon banks to be positive.

4.6. Testing Hypothesis 2

H2: There is no significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of reliability.

The result in Table 11, reveals that there is a significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of staff keeping to promise (F = 12.050, p=0.00); Interest in problem solving (F=7.125, p=0.000); staff performing right service (F= 5.71, p=0.00); timeliness in service offering (F= 5.268, p=0.00) and error free records (F= 16.989, p=0.00). Therefore H2 is rejected. There is a significant difference between bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of reliability.

4.7. What is Customers' Perception of the Competence Dimension of Bank Service Quality?

Competence variables include "Staff telling customers exactly when services will be performed (accuracy)", "Staff willingness to help", "Prompt response from staff", "Friendliness and courtesy of staff", "Staff having knowledge to answer customers' questions", "Personal attention given" and "Understand the specific needs of customers".

Table-12. Competence dimension.

Bank of respondents	Accuracy	Staff willingness to help	Prompt response	Friendliness and courtesy of staff	knowledgeable staff	Personal attention given	Understand the specific needs of customers	Average
Afriland B	3.41	3.62	2.94	2.62	3.12	3.62	3.45	3.25
SGBC	2.43	3.85	2.61	2.85	2.86	3.44	3.16	3.03
SCB	2.41	3.51	1.23	2.51	2.64	3.51	2.64	2.63
UBA	2.61	3.47	2.86	2.47	2.79	3.25	2.86	2.90
UBC	2.17	2.91	2.88	1.26	1.88	2.91	2.14	2.31
Atlantic B	2.22	3.14	1.74	1.33	2.31	3.14	1.30	2.17
BICEC	3.22	4.18	2.56	3.18	3.36	4.18	2.86	3.36
NFCB	1.36	2.84	1.87	2.84	1.87	2.84	1.37	2.14
ECOBANK	2.75	3.13	3.00	3.97	2.81	3.84	2.49	3.14
CBC	1.25	2.83	1.80	1.97	1.80	2.83	1.80	2.04
Citi Bank	2.87	1.95	2.57	1.95	2.73	1.95	2.73	2.39
BGFI	2.46	2.44	2.11	2.44	2.74	2.44	2.72	2.48
Total	2.43	2.18	2.34	2.45	2.57	3.16	2.46	2.46

Table 12, shows that customers in Cameroon banks have a negative perception of service quality in terms of competence. CBC was the lowest with 2.04, followed by NFCB with 2.14, then Atlantic Bank with 2.14 and UBC with 2.31. However some banks had a positive perception in terms of competence, the highest being that of BICEC with 3.36, second by Afriland Bank with 3.25 then ECOBANK with 3.14. Prompt service scored a mean of 2.34 which means that customers are generally not satisfied when bank staff as they take long to offer services. Also, staff willingness to help customers had a score of 2.18. Employee courtesy and friendliness towards customers had a mean of 2.45 indicating a slight satisfaction. Customers said they were not able to make transactions in a short waiting time, this is generally due to long waiting queues in bank halls. The average mean score for the competence dimension was 2.46, indicating that customers perceive bank service quality to be low for the competence dimension.

Table-13. ANOVA- Bank customers' perception of Competence.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Staff telling customers exactly when services will be performed * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	2.748	11	16.250	12.526	0.000
	Within Groups	48.252	488	0.099		
	Total	51.000	499			
Staff willingness to help * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	158.564	11	14.415	20.189	0.000
	Within Groups	348.436	488	0.714		
	Total	507.000	499			
Prompt response from staff * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	69.935	11	6.358	5.736	0.000
	Within Groups	540.865	488	1.108		
	Total	610.800	499			
Friendliness and courtesy of staff * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	24.597	11	9.236	8.340	0.000
	Within Groups	466.353	488	0.956		
	Total	490.950	499			
Staff having the knowledge to answer customers' questions * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	126.394	11	11.490	9.658	0.000
	Within Groups	580.606	488	1.190		
	Total	707.000	499			
Personal attention is given * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	47.271	11	4.297	3.503	0.000
	Within Groups	598.729	488	1.227		
	Total	646.000	499			
Understand the specific needs of customers * Bank of respondents	Between Groups	123.834	11	11.258	9.928	0.000
	Within Groups	553.366	488	1.134		
	Total	677.200	499			

4.8. Testing Hypothesis 3

H3: There is no significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of competence.

The result in Table 13 reveals that there is a significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of accuracy (F = 12.526, p=0.00). Staff willingness to help (F=7.125, p=0.000); prompt response (F= 5.736, p=0.00); friendliness and courtesy of staff (F= 8.340, p=0.00) knowledge of staff (F= 9.658, p=0.00); personal attention given (F=3.503, P=0.00); Understanding customers' needs (F= 9.928, p=0.00) Therefore H3 is rejected. There is a significant difference between bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of competence.

Table-14. Convenience dimension.

Bank of respondents	ATM conveniently located	special services for the elderly	Clear guidance and information signs on how to use the bank's services	Average
Afriland first Bank	3.62	4.82	3.67	4.04
SGBC	3.85	4.26	3.25	3.79
SCB	3.24	4.91	2.64	3.60
UBA	3.17	2.51	2.86	2.85
UBC	2.91	3.39	2.88	3.06
Atlantic Bank	3.14	2.68	3.07	2.96
BICEC	4.08	2.27	2.86	3.07
NFCB	2.84	2.04	2.91	2.60
ECOBANK	3.79	1.85	3.00	2.88
CBC	2.83	1.93	1.80	2.19
Citi Bank	1.95	1.91	2.73	2.20
BGFI	1.87	1.55	3.64	2.35
Total	3.11	2.84	2.94	2.96

4.9. What is Customers' Perception of the Convenience Dimension of Bank Service Quality?

The convenience dimension was captured by elements such as "ATM is conveniently located", "there are special services for the elderly" and "there is clear guidance on how to use the banks' services".

As shown by Table 14, customers in Cameroon banks have a positive perception of service quality in terms of convenience. Customers accepted that ATM machines are conveniently located with a mean score of 3.11. Also, the customers also approve that there are clear guidance and information signs on how to use the bank's services with a mean of 2.9. The average mean score for the reliability dimension is 2.96 thereby implying that customers perceive service quality in Cameroon banks to be positive. However, customers of CBC Bank scored a mean of 2.19, Citi Bank 2.2 and BGFI 2.35 indicating negative perception in terms of convenience. The bank customers with the most positive perception in terms of convenience was Afriland First Bank.

Table-15. ANOVA- Bank customers' perception of convenience.

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ATM conveniently located * Bank of respondents	Between Groups		487.729	11	44.339	49.146	0.000
	Within Groups		440.271	488	0.902		
	Total		928.000	499			
special services for the elderly * Bank of respondents	Between Groups		495.981	11	45.089	32.168	0.000
	Within Groups		684.019	488	1.402		
	Total		1180.000	499			
Clear guidance and information signs on how to use the bank's services * Bank of respondents	Between Groups		54.220	11	18.929	22.624	0.003
	Within Groups		916.780	488	1.879		
	Total		971.000	499			

4.10. Testing Hypothesis 4:

H4: There is no significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of convenience.

The result in Table 15 reveals that there is a significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of location of ATM (F = 49.146, p=0.00). Special services for the elderly (F=32.168, p=0.000); prompt response (F= 22.624, p=0.00). Therefore H4 is rejected. There is a significant difference between bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of convenience.

4.11. What is the Effect of Gender, Age and Monthly Income on Customers' Perception of Service Quality in the Banking Industry of Cameroon?

In order to answer this research question, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation is run so as to see the effect of gender on perception of service quality. An independent sample T-test is conducted to examine if there is a significant difference between male and female perception of the different dimensions of service quality.

Table-16. Independent t-test analysis of the influence of gender on perception of service quality in Banks.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Tangibility	Male	325	18.06	1.54	0.564
	Female	175	17.98	1.53	
Reliability	Male	325	20.66	2.60	2.283
	Female	175	20.11	2.59	0.023
Competence	Male	325	47.68	5.09	2.634
	Female	175	46.45	4.86	0.009
Convenience	Male	325	9.80	2.70	1.115
	Female	175	9.51	2.80	0.265

Table 16 above clearly indicates that the mean score for tangibility between male and female are 18.06 and 17.98 respectively thereby showing that there exist no significant difference. Also, convenience for the male was 9.80 and that of the female was 9.51 thereby showing that they exist no significant difference. Competence dimension rating was equally similar between male and female with 47.68 and 46.45 respectively. This shows that there is no a significant difference between male and female with the perception of service quality in the banking sector of Cameroon. Reliability had a mean score of 20.66 for male and 20.11 for female which equally implies a no significant difference in service quality perception. An independent sample test was carried out to see whether the means are significantly different. The result in Table 4.16 reveals that there is a significant influence of gender of the respondents on the perception of service quality in banks in terms of reliability ($t=2.283, p=0.023$); competence ($t=2.634, p=0.009$). But there is no significant influence of gender of respondents on their perception of service quality in terms of tangibility ($t = 0.564, p=0.573$) and convenient ($t=1.115, p=0.265$).

Table-17. Descriptive - Age of respondents and service quality perception.

		N	Mean	Std. Dev
Tangibility	Below 20 yrs	50	18.1	1.5
	20-29 yrs	205	18.2	1.4
	30-39 yrs	167	18.0	1.6
	40-49 yrs	50	17.4	1.9
	Above 50 yrs	28	18.1	1.4
Reliability	Below 20 yrs	50	21.3	2.1
	20-29 yrs	205	21.3	2.4
	30-39 yrs	167	19.6	2.7
	40-49 yrs	50	19.7	2.6
	Above 50 yrs	28	19.5	1.9
Competence	Below 20 yrs	50	46.1	3.9
	20-29 yrs	205	49.2	4.6
	30-39 yrs	167	46.1	5.0
	40-49 yrs	50	45.1	4.7
	Above 50 yrs	28	45.8	5.8
Convenience	Below 20 yrs	50	7.8	2.5
	20-29 yrs	205	10.0	2.5
	30-39 yrs	167	10.8	2.4
	40-49 yrs	50	7.5	2.2
	Above 50 yrs	28	8.0	2.6

Table 17 above clearly indicates that the mean score for tangibility between different age groups which are 18.1, 18.2, 18.0, 17.4 and 18.1 for “below 20 years”, “20-29 years”, “30-39 years”, “40-49 years” and “above 50 years” respectively shows a significant difference in the perception of service quality for 17.4 and the rest. As concerns reliability, there is a significant difference between different age groups which are 21.3 for “below 20 years”, “20-29 years” and 19.6, 19.7, 19.5 for “30-39 years”, “40-49 years” and “above 50 years” respectively. This shows that the youth consider service quality to be more reliable than the aged in the banking sector of Cameroon. As concerns convenience, there is a significant difference between different age groups which are 7.8 for “below 20 years” and 10, 10.8 for “20-29 years” and “30-39 years” and “above 50 years” respectively. This shows that the aged consider service quality to be more convenient than the youth in the banking sector of Cameroon. However, no inferences can be made until it is determined whether the mean scores are significantly different. In order to verify this, a One-way ANOVA test was carried out to see whether the means are significantly different.

Table-18. ANOVA- Age of respondents and perception of service quality.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangibility	Between Groups	22.54	4	5.64	2.417	0.048
	Within Groups	1 154.01	495	2.33		
	Total	1 176.55	499			
Reliability	Between Groups	378.01	4	94.50	15.497	0.000
	Within Groups	3 018.54	495	6.10		
	Total	3 396.55	499			
Competence	Between Groups	1 386.60	4	346.65	15.205	0.000
	Within Groups	11 285.15	495	22.80		
	Total	12 671.75	499			
Convenience	Between Groups	740.61	4	185.15	30.669	0.000
	Within Groups	2 988.39	495	6.04		
	Total	3 729.00	499			

The result in Table 18, reveals that there is a significant influence of age of the respondents on the perception of service quality in banks in terms of tangibility (F = 2.42, p=0.048); reliability (F=15.49, p=0.000); competence (F=15.20, p=0.000), convenient (F=30.66, p=0.00).

Table-19. Descriptive - Monthly income of respondents and service quality perception.

		N	Mean	Std. D	Std. Error	min	max
Tangibility	Below 50000 F	111	18.05	1.35	0.13	15	20
	50 001 - 100 000 F	109	17.75	1.76	0.17	11	20
	100 001 - 200 000 F	115	18.16	1.64	0.15	13	20
	200 001 - 300 000 F	91	18.12	1.37	0.14	13	20
	Above 300 000 F	74	18.11	1.45	0.17	11	20
	Total	500	18.03	1.54	0.07	11	20
Reliability	Below 50000 F	111	21.33	2.21	0.21	15	25
	50 001 - 100 000 F	109	19.65	2.57	0.25	12	25
	100 001 - 200 000 F	115	20.77	2.76	0.26	14	25
	200 001 - 300 000 F	91	20.60	2.56	0.27	13	25
	Above 300 000 F	74	19.76	2.58	0.30	14	25
	Total	500	20.47	2.61	0.12	12	25
Competence	Below 50000 F	111	47.98	4.52	0.43	39	63
	50 001 - 100 000 F	109	45.90	4.97	0.48	33	58
	100 001 - 200 000 F	115	48.45	4.93	0.46	39	60
	200 001 - 300 000 F	91	46.80	5.21	0.55	34	58
	Above 300 000 F	74	46.82	5.34	0.62	36	56
	Total	500	47.25	5.04	0.23	33	63
Convenience	Below 50000 F	111	8.14	2.39	0.23	3	15
	50 001 - 100 000 F	109	8.61	2.71	0.26	3	15
	100 001 - 200 000 F	115	9.97	2.13	0.20	5	15
	200 001 - 300 000 F	91	11.36	2.58	0.27	4	15
	Above 300 000 F	74	11.16	2.26	0.26	5	15
	Total	500	9.70	2.73	0.12	3	15

Table 19, above clearly indicates that the mean score for reliability, competence, and convenience are significantly different from each other for the various categories of the monthly income of customers. This means that different income earners have varied perception of bank service quality in the banking sector of Cameroon. Higher income earners perceive bank service quality more positively than lower income earners in terms of convenience. Income earners “below 50 000 FCFA” and “50 001 – 100 000 FCFA” had a mean score of 8.14 and 8.61 respectively which is below average meanwhile higher income earners “above 300 000 FCFA” and “200 001 – 300 000 FCFA” had mean score of 11.36 and 11.16 which is above average. This implies that higher income earners

perceive service quality positively meanwhile lower income earners perceive service quality negatively in terms of convenience. However, there was no significant difference with tangibility.

Table-20. ANOVA- Monthly income of respondents and overall service quality.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangibility	Between Groups	11.475	4	2.869	1.219	0.302
	Within Groups	1165.075	495	2.354		
	Total	1176.550	499			
Reliability	Between Groups	205.090	4	51.273	7.952	0.000
	Within Groups	3191.460	495	6.447		
	Total	3396.550	499			
Competence	Between Groups	456.253	4	114.063	4.622	0.001
	Within Groups	12215.497	495	24.678		
	Total	12671.750	499			
Convenient	Between Groups	815.481	4	203.870	34.637	0.000
	Within Groups	2913.519	495	5.886		
	Total	3729.000	499			

4.12. Test of Hypothesis 5

H5: There is no significant influence of gender, age and of respondents on their perception of service quality in the Banking industry of Cameroon.

Gender: The result in Table 16, revealed that there is a significant influence of gender of the respondents on the perception of service quality in banks in terms of reliability ($t=2.283$, $p=0.023$); competence ($t=2.634$, $p=0.009$). But there is no significant influence of gender of respondents on their perception of service quality in terms of tangibility ($t = 0.564$, $p=0.573$) and convenient ($t=1.115$, $p=0.265$). This implies that gender of respondents significantly influence their perception of service quality in terms of reliability and competence but do not influence their perception in terms of tangibility and convenient. Therefore H5 is rejected for the reliability and competence dimensions but accepted for the tangibility and convenient dimensions.

Age: The result in Table 18 revealed that there is a significant influence of age of the respondents on the perception on service quality in banks in terms of tangibility ($F = 2.42$, $p=0.048$); reliability ($F=15.49$, $p=0.000$); competence ($F=15.20$, $p=0.000$), convenient ($F=30.66$, $p=0.00$). This implies that age of respondents significantly influences their perception of service quality in terms of tangibility, reliability, competence and convenience. Therefore H5 is rejected for all the dimensions of service quality.

Monthly income: The result in Table 20, revealed that there is a significant influence of income of the respondents on the perception of service quality in banks in terms of reliability ($F=7.95$, $p=0.000$); competence ($F=4.62$, $p=0.001$) and convenient ($F=34.63$, $p=0.000$). But there is no significant influence of income of respondents on their perception of service quality in terms of tangibility ($F = 1.219$, $p=0.812$). This implies that income of respondents significantly influence their perception of service quality in terms of reliability, competence, and convenient but do not influence their perception in terms of tangibility. Therefore H5 is accepted for tangibility dimension but rejected for the reliability, competence and convenient dimensions.

5. IMPLICATION OF RESULTS

The customers in Cameroon banks have a positive perception of service quality in terms of tangibility, reliability and convenience dimensions. However, they have a negative perception of the competence dimension.

For tangibility, customers of different banks perceived bank services' quality in different ways as confirmed by the test results. Customers of Afriland first bank had a more positive perception of bank services' quality than any

other bank as indicated by mean of 4.84, Citi Bank was second with 4.82, BICEC was third with 4.77, SGBC was fourth with 4.72. Customers in all the banks have a positive perception in terms of tangibility but UBC was ranked last with 3.5. In this category was also NFCB with 3.62, CBC with 3.82 and Atlantic Bank with 3.92. These findings imply that all bank customers have a positive perception of bank services in terms of the physical structure of the banks, modern looking equipment and furniture. However, some banks had higher positive perception than others.

As concerns reliability, the statistical test confirmed that there is a significant difference between the bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of reliability. Customers of SGBC were more positive in reliability than any other bank as indicated by the mean score of 4.65, followed by customers of Afriland, UBA, Citi Bank, BGFI and ECOBANK. Even though customers of all banks had a positive perception in terms of reliability, NFCB scored the lowest with 3.41 followed by CBC with 3.65 and Atlantic Bank with 3.85. These findings imply that bank staff are sincere in solving customers' problems and insist on error-free records. This means that customers rely on bank services easily. The average mean score for the reliability dimension is 4.09 thereby implying that customers perceive service quality in Cameroon banks to be positive.

Cameroon Bank customers have a negative perception of service quality in terms of competence as indicated by the average of 2.46 on a scale of 5. In this respect, CBC was the lowest with 2.04, followed by NFCB with 2.14, Atlantic Bank with 2.17, UBC with 2.31, Citi Bank with 2.39 and BGFI with 2.48. However some banks had a positive perception in terms of competence, the highest being BICEC with 3.36, and second by Afriland Bank with 3.25 then ECOBANK with 3.14. SGBC with 3.03 and UBA with 2.9. "Prompt response" scored a mean of 2.34 which means that customers are generally not satisfied when bank staff takes long to offer services and this usually leads to undesired long waiting queues at the bank halls. Also "staff willingness to help customers" had a score of 2.18. The average mean score for the competence dimension was 2.46, indicating that customers perceive bank service quality to be low for the competence dimension.

The One-way ANOVA test revealed that there is a significant difference between bank customers' perception of service quality in terms of convenience. The average mean score for the convenience dimension is 2.96 thereby implying that customers perceive service quality in Cameroon banks to be positive. However customers of the following banks had a negative perception in terms of convenience; with CBC Bank scoring a mean of 2.19, Citi Bank 2.2 and BGFI 2.35.

Statistical results derived from the current study revealed that customer background characteristics like gender significantly influences their perception of service quality in terms of reliability and competence but do not influence their perception in terms of tangibility and convenient. Male customers had a more positive perception of bank service quality in terms of reliability and competence. This finding is in tandem with those of [Arpita \(2011\)](#) who found that there exists a significant difference between male and female customers regarding service quality attributes on the bases of competence and reliability.

Also, the results revealed that age of respondents significantly influences their perception of service quality in terms of tangibility, reliability, competence, and convenience. It means that people of different ages have a different perception of service quality in the banking industry of Cameroon. It is in line with the findings of [Arpita \(2011\)](#) who found that the attitudes of customers' differ across the age categories for all service quality attributes. The youth consider service quality to be more reliable than the aged meanwhile the aged consider service quality to be more convenient than the youth in the banking sector of Cameroon.

The results also indicated that income of respondents significantly influences their perception of service quality in terms of reliability, competence and convenient but do not influence their perception in terms of tangibility. It means that respondents of different income levels perceive the physical environment of the banks to be as they

expected. However higher income earners perceive service quality in banks more positively than lower income earners for the convenience dimension. Convenience means easy access, good communication, customer understanding and individualized attention given to customers. It involves giving ears to their problems and effectively addressing their concerns and demands. Concerning the reliability dimension, higher income earners had a more negative perception than lower income earners. Reliability means the ability of a service provider to provide the committed services truthfully and consistently (Berry, Bennett, & Brown, 1994). Customers want trustable services on which they can rely.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Though the findings of the current study can provide great insights for the Cameroonian banking sector in general, the study still has a number of limitations that will still not minimize its contribution. The main limitation is the sample studied which is taken from the southwest region and Littoral regions, which means that the findings might likely not be generalisable to the whole country as well as to the banking sector in other countries. Nevertheless, this study can act as a guide in decision taking in the context where no contextualized study exist.

The second limitation is that the study focused only on the banking sector, as such other service sectors such as insurance, transport, and telecommunication are not represented in the results. Intriguingly, mixing all sectors in one study can err policy implication as sectors might be contextually specific.

Some banks did not provide the researcher with information about the number of its clients. As a result, the researcher could not assess the study population. However, a reasonable sample size of 500 customers was taken from the study area to mitigate this caveat.

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