

Measuring the Perceived Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Islamic Bank Windows in Libya Based on Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

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Abstract

The growth of the banking sector is vital for a country's economic development as it provides most of the financing sources for businesses. Customer satisfaction is one of the most important factors in determining the feasibility of a banking operation. Thus, this study aims to measure customer satisfaction in Libyan commercial banks, using the structural equation model (SEM). This study uses the dimensions from the modified SERVQUAL model, namely Tangibility, Assurance, Reliability, Responsiveness and Empathy for 366 cross-sectional samples that were taken from three commercial banks in Libya, namely Gumbouria Bank, Wahda Bank and Sahara Bank in year 2012. The study found that responsiveness was the strongest indicator of customer satisfaction using the dimensions of perceived quality, followed by reliability, empathy and assurance. The results of this study will be useful for policy-making by Libyan authorities responsible for the development of the banking sector.

Keywords: *Customer Satisfaction, Perceived Service Quality, Structural Equation modeling (SEM)*

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Introduction

Customers are the lifeblood of any organisation, because customer satisfaction is the key to the continued survival of an organisation. Service quality is the key to measuring user satisfaction. Satisfaction is particularly important in relation to organisations that deliver services, rather than goods (Nicholls *et al.*, 1998). The onset of competition from private players and foreign banks and the initiation of banking reforms since the early (1990s?) have led to an increased emphasis on the efficiency of customer service. Moreover, in the tough competitive arena in which these banks operate today, maintaining the quality of service is a pre-requisite for survival. Therefore, the measurement of service quality has increasingly created an interest among service providers (banks) and scholars (Sharma and Mehta, 2005). Hence, measuring the customer satisfaction and the quality of services provided to customers by banks is one of the topics that carry high importance in the field of management area, particularly in dealing with business organisations that value quality services.

While Islamic banks are considered to attract individual customers mainly due to their religious orientation, with the increasing number of Islamic banks and Islamic windows, other factors such as quality may play a role in determining customer patronage and satisfaction. For this reason, there is a growing volume of literature available in the case of Islamic banks as well (see: Abdullah and Kassim, 2009; Abdullrahim, 2010; Almossawi, 2001; Al-Tamimim *et al.*, 2003; Amin and Isa, 2008; Erol and El-Bdour, 1989; Gait and Worthington, 2008; Metawa and Almossawi, 1998; Al Zaabi, 2006; Othman and Owen, 2002a; Othman and Owen, 2002b).

As for the case study on Libya, as it was known until the revolution, Libya had not had any significant presence of Islamic banking and finance. The Central Bank of Libya started initiatives to develop Islamic banking practices in Libya with the publication of its guideline numbered A. R. N. M. No. (9) in 2009 that granted approval for commercial banks to start in the development and delivery of Islamic- banking products. Many commercial banks such as the Jamahiriya Bank as the biggest bank in Libya, the Wahda Bank, the North African Bank and Sahara Bank, established their Islamic-banking facilities. To guide the operations of the banks issuing Islamic banking products, the Central Bank of Libya issued the publication of A. R. N. M. No. (9/2010) that explained the controls and

foundations of Islamic banking operations in 2010. After the revolution, the new political elite decided to islamise the financial system. Thus, at the end of 2012, the General National Congress of Libya passed a law to stop the citizens of Libya from dealing with *riba* immediately. The government, however, is planning to abolish *riba* transactions between institutions and the banks starting in 2014. With these developments, this study, thus, aims to measure customer satisfaction through perceived service quality in Libyan Islamic windows. While it is true that Libya has recently opened its doors for Islamic finance, there are a growing number of institutions converting their operations to Islamic banking, which require studies on customer satisfaction for further service improvements.

Literature Review

The concept of customer satisfaction has been defined in various ways. Zeithaml *et al.*, (1993) suggested that customer satisfaction is a function of the customer's assessment of service quality, product quality and price. Meanwhile Rust and Oliver (1994) define customer satisfaction as a summary cognitive and affective reaction to a service mishap that results from the comparison of customers' perceptions of service quality with their expectations of service performance. In recent years, customer satisfaction has gained new attention within the context of the quantum leap from transaction marketing to relationship marketing (Martin, Adrian and David, 2002). Relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges (Yi and La, 2004). According to Kotler and Armstrong (2006), customer satisfaction depends on the service's perceived performance relative to the buyer's expectations. If the service's performance falls short of expectation, the customer is dissatisfied. If performance matches expectations, the customer will be satisfied. If performance exceeds expectations, the customer is highly satisfied. Consequently, highly satisfied customers make repeat purchases and tell others about their good experiences with the service. Smart banks aim to delight customers by promising only what they can deliver, then delivering more than they promise. For example, a dissatisfied customer will tell seven to 20 people about their negative experience while a satisfied customer will only tell three to five people about their positive experience. Therefore, in

this study, we will use customers to evaluate service quality by considering several important quality attributes in Libyan commercial banks, and we will suggest to bank managers some improvements on certain attributes that show a low satisfaction level.

Service quality has been shown as an elusive and abstract construct that is difficult to define and measure (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988; Brown and Swartz, 1989; Carman, 1990). This is because it is difficult to evaluate service performance due to its unique features: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). On the other hand, service quality is an important tool in the organisation's struggle to differentiate itself from its competitors (Ladhari, 2008). Due to this fact, the relevance of service quality to institutions is emphasised especially in the way that it offers a competitive advantage to institutions that strive to improve it and hence bring customer satisfaction.

The measurement of service quality was developed by many researchers who all provided different definitions. The most well-known and cited model is the model of Parasuraman *et al.* (1985). They identified ten determinants of service quality through focus group studies; reliability, communication, access, tangibles or tangibility, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, and understanding and knowledge of the customer. Later these ten dimensions were further codified into five dimensions: tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy in measuring service quality, known as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). The reliability dimension refers to the ability to perform the service dependably and accurately. The responsiveness dimension refers to the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. The tangibles dimension refers to the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel. On the other hand, assurance dimension refers to the employee's knowledge, courtesy and ability to convey trust and confidence. In addition, empathy dimension refers to the level of caring and individual attention provided to the customer. It is vital to measure customers' perceptions regarding service quality in order to improve the customers' satisfaction in the future.

Many studies have been conducted which have examined the effects of service quality on customer satisfaction, but relatively few studies examined the perceived service quality with the satisfaction formation model. One of the most widely used instruments for assessing customer

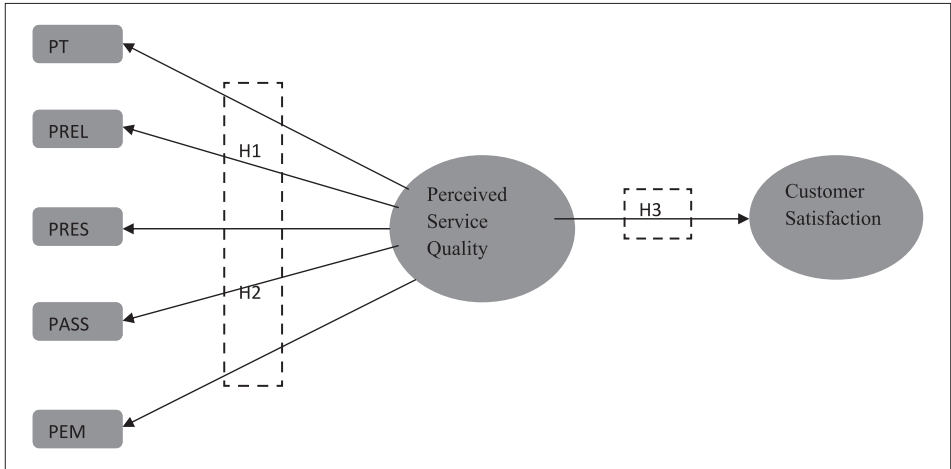
satisfaction is SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1988). Researchers have found a close relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985; 1988 and Bitner *et al.*, 1990). Anderson *et al.*, (1994) suggested that improved service quality will provide a significant impact on customer satisfaction. In addition, Angur *et al.*, (1999) suggested that the SERVQUAL scale is multidimensional and is able to provide more diagnostic information due to its greater variability across banks than the SERVPERF scale.

SERVQUAL dimensions were applied in many studies on customer service in Islamic banks in many environments where Islamic banking is practiced. Amin and Isa (2008) examined the relationship service quality perception and customers' satisfaction in Islamic banks in Malaysia using the SEM approach by studying the six dimensions of SERVQUAL measurements. They found that the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction was significant, with the majority of Islamic banking customers satisfied with the overall service quality of the full-fledged and dual-banking systems. In the Middle East, studies on customer service were conducted by researchers such as Metawa and Al-Mossawi (1998), Othman and Owen (2002) and Al-Zaabi (2006) using the established SERVQUAL criteria. Other studies conducted on customer satisfaction in the case of Islamic banks such as those by Abdullah and Kassim (2009), Abdullrahim (2010), Al-Tamimim *et al.*, (2003), Gait and Worthington (2008), Othman and Owen (2002a) and Othman and Owen (2002b). The methods adopted in these studies include factor analysis identification of customer service dimensions, examination of the relationship between service quality perception and customer service satisfaction as well as an examination of the factors influencing customer satisfaction taking the SERVQUAL dimensions as independent variables in the cases of various Muslim countries.

Theoretical Framework and Methods

We developed a theoretical framework on the basis of evidence available in the above-mentioned literature. The dependent variable is customer satisfaction and the independent variable is service quality, according to which the components of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are tested, as expressed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Research Framework



To test the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality variables, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between the sub-dimensions of perceived quality (PT, PREL, PRES, PASS and PEM) and the perceived quality- primary dimension.

H2: Customers vary in their perceptions of the importance of each of the sub-dimensions of perceived service quality.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.

Data Collection Method:

For this study, data was collected via a questionnaire, which consisted of three major sections. The first section contains five items, which are used to measure customer satisfaction, while the second section consists of the dimensions of the perceived quality as proposed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988). The third section contains questions on the general information of the respondents including: gender, age, qualifications, occupations, monthly income, marital status and the name of the bank. We studied 22 items for perceived quality on the five- point Likert scale of the range of attitude, from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree.

Sampling

A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed of which only 366 questionnaires were useable for analysis (61% response rate). Specifically,

questionnaires were distributed to every customer who came to the bank during the business hours (8.00-14.00) from Sunday to Thursday and Saturday morning (8.00-12.00). The study sample is decided to be any customer who has bank dealings in the form of owning a bank account, obtaining finance, or conducting money transfers between banks. The questionnaires were distributed in two ways. Firstly, the questionnaires were given to bank employees who were requested to distribute the questionnaires to their customers. Secondly, we met with potential respondents personally and distributed the questionnaires to customers outside the bank branches with help from friends in other cities. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic language to ensure clarity, owing to the fact that all respondents in this research are Libyans whose national language is Arabic.

Data Analysis

The statistical techniques employed in this study are as follows: descriptive and frequency analyses were conducted to represent the respondents' demographic variables. In addition, a reliability test to check for the "internal consistency" of the questionnaire by applying Cronbach's Alpha test. Normality distribution was tested for by checking for skewness and kurtosis through the application of structural equation modelling (SEM). The researcher then performed the confirmatory factor analysis to test the measurement model specifying the posited relations of the observed variables to the underlying construct. Both first-order confirmatory factor analysis models and the second-order confirmatory factor analysis model for perceived service quality were run. The second-order confirmatory analysis was designed to test the relationships between five sub-dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) and one primary dimension of perceived service quality. Finally, the researcher performed structural equation modeling (SEM) to determine the relationship between customers' satisfaction and the underlying construct of perceived service quality as indicated by the SERVQUAL model.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' Demographic Profile:

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents' characteristics are males (61.2%), aged between 26 to 40 years old (44.8%), with a high diploma or bachelor degree (45.6%) academic qualifications. The majority

of the respondents are government employees (60.4%) with 63.7% of respondents having an income of more than 801 L.D .58.7% of respondents are married.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile

No	Respondent Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	
1	Gender	Male	224	61.2
		Female	142	38.8
2	Age	Below 25 years	61	16.7
		26 to 40 years	164	44.8
		41 to 55 years	95	26
		Above 56 years	46	12.6
3	Qualifications	No academic qualification	41	11.2
		Secondary School	84	23
		High Diploma or Bachelor	167	45.6
		Master	60	16.4
		PhD	14	3.8
4	Occupations	Government Employees	221	60.4
		Private Sector Employees	85	23.2
		Working Independently	49	13.4
		Student	4	1.1
		Not working	7	1.9
5	Monthly income	Less than 350 L.D	5	1.4
		351 to 500 L.D	29	7.9
		501 to 800 L.D	99	27
		Above 801 L.D	233	63.7
6	Marital status	Single	125	34.2
		Married	215	58.7
		Widowed / divorced	26	7.1
7	Name of the bank	Gumhouria Bank	137	37.4
		Wahda Bank	119	32.5
		Sahara Bank	110	30.1

Normality Test

The results related to the normality test for the sample indicated that the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis were (-2.52 and 7.26) respectively. These values were less than the respective values of 3 for skewness and 8 for kurtosis as suggested by Kline (2005).

Measurement Model (First and Second Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

In order to achieve reliability and validity of the measurement model, first-order and second-order confirmatory factor analysis were conducted for the five-dimensional model of SERVQUAL.

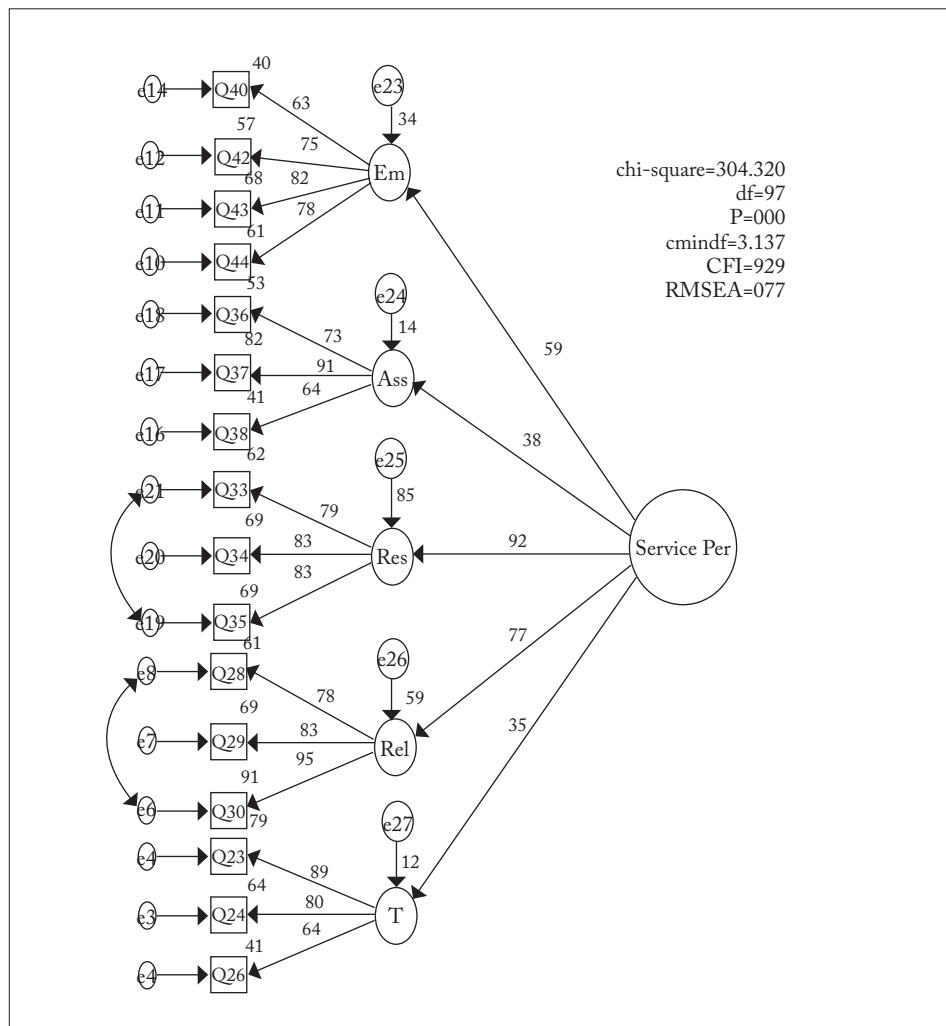
Table 2: Results of the First-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Variable Label	Factor loading	Construct reliability	AVE
Tangibility	-	0.808	0.607
P Tan1	0.86(12.258)***		
P Tan2	0.82(12.178)***		
P Tan3	0.64***		
Reliability	-	0.859	0.685
P Rel1	0.89(15.225)***		
P Rel2	0.70***		
P Rel3	0.88(21.175)***		
Responsiveness	-	0.837	0.642
P Res1	0.74(15.291)***		
P Res2	0.86***		
P Res3	0.80(16.825)***		
Assurance	-	0.800	0.583
P Ass1	0.75(11.904)***		
P Ass2	0.86(12.329)***		
P Ass3	0.67***		
Empathy	-	0.829	0.563
P Em1	0.64(11.781)***		
P Em2	0.75(14.154)***		
P Em3	0.82(15.265)***		
P Em4	0.78***		

Figure 2 and Table 2 illustrate the estimated parameters of the five-construct, first-order factor model. As shown, the indicator loadings of items to their respective constructs are weak. After deleting six indicators and recreating the covariance matrices as an entered matrix for the confirmatory factor analysis, the final results of the confirmatory factor analysis for the perceived service quality became stronger. This is reflected by the t-scores ranging from 11.78 to 21.17, indicating that all factor loadings are significant and providing evidence to support the convergent validity of the items measured (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The average variance extracted ranged from 0.563 to 0.685, which were above the recommended threshold of 0.50 as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), indicating that the measures for the five sub-dimensional factors had adequate convergent validity.

Table 2 contains the results of the first-order confirmatory factor analysis. The correlation coefficients of the five sub-dimensional factors ranged from 0.10 to 0.73, which were below the recommended threshold of 0.85 as suggested by Kline (2005), indicating that the measures of the five sub-dimensional factors had discriminant validity. All standardized factor loadings were statistically significant (t -values > 1.96), and ranged from 0.64 to 0.89, which were above the recommended threshold of 0.60 as suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), confirming adequate convergent validity. Figure 2 below provides the graphical illustration of first-order confirmatory analysis.

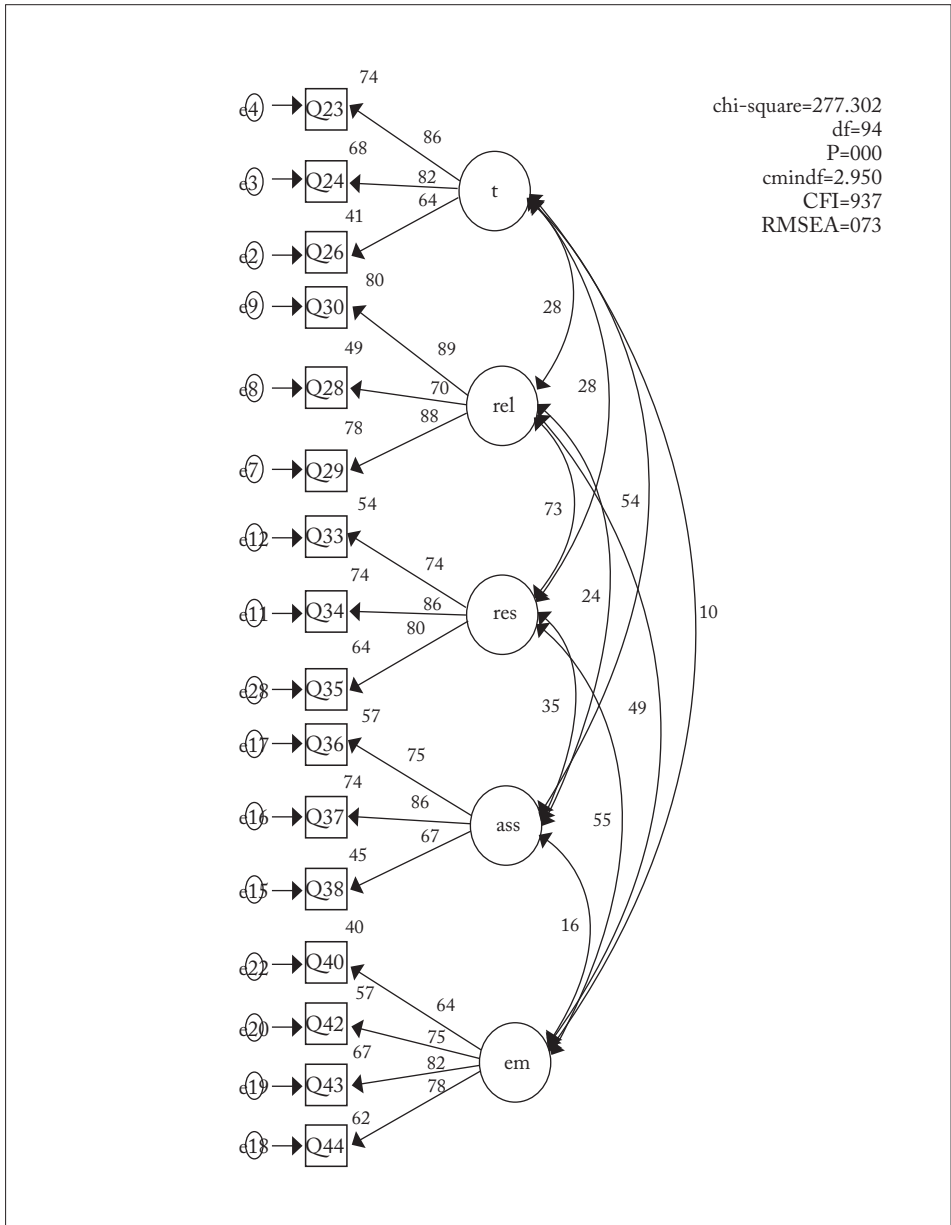
Figure 2: First-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis



Second-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The second-order confirmatory factor analysis model for perceived service quality was designed to test the relationships between five sub-dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) and one primary dimension of perceived service as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Second-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis



The standardized solutions of the second-order confirmatory factory analysis model for perceived service quality presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of the Second-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Variable Label	Factor loading	R
Tangibility	0.35(4.593)***	0.35
Reliability	0.77(8.650)***	0.77
Responsiveness	0.92(8.537)***	0.92
Assurance	0.38(5.044)***	0.38
Empathy	0.59***	0.59
P Tan1	0.89(11.786)***	
P Tan2	0.80(11.919)***	
P Tan3	0.64***	
P Rel1	0.78(15.315)***	
P Rel2	0.83(18.079)***	
P Rel3	0.95***	
P Res1	0.79(14.235)***	
P Res2	0.83(15.808)***	
P Res3	0.57***	
P Ass1	0.73(11.426)***	
P Ass2	0.91(11.091)***	
P Ass3	0.64***	
P Em1	0.63(11.558)***	
P Em2	0.75(13.843)***	
P Em3	0.82(15.689)***	
P Em4	0.78***	

The results proved to be both reasonable and statistically significant. These results supported the reliability and validity of the measures associated with the second-order confirmatory factor analysis model for perceived service quality. Specifically, the factor loading values associated with the five first-order factors indicated that responsiveness ($\lambda = 0.92$, t-value = 8.537, $p < 0.000$) was the strongest indicator of the second-order factor (perceived service quality), followed by reliability ($\lambda = 0.77$, t-value = 8.650 $p < 0.000$), empathy ($\lambda = 0.59$, $p < 0.000$), assurance ($\lambda = 0.38$, t-value = 5.044 $p < 0.000$), and tangibility ($\lambda = 0.35$, t-value = 4.593, $p < 0.000$).

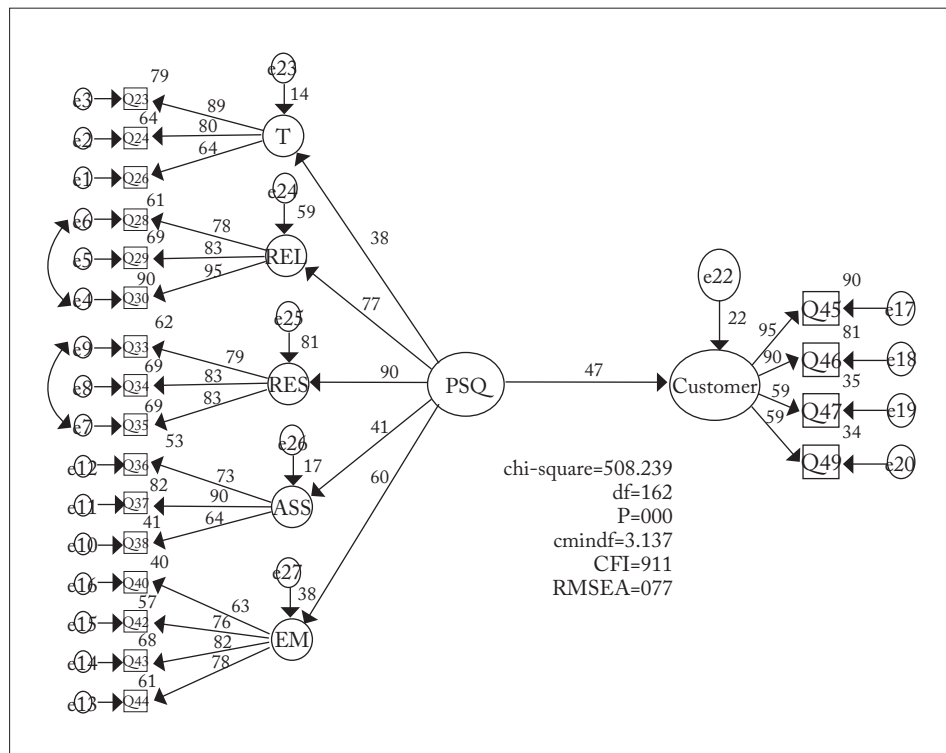
These results supported Hypotheses H1 and H2.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

To test the research hypotheses and investigate the relationships between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction, we conducted covariance structure analysis by using AMOS18. The final structural model

of perceived banking service was tested. Figure 4 shows that service quality has positive impact on customer satisfaction ($P= 000$ while $C.R= 4.916$ and $S.E= 0.419$). Therefore, a research hypothesis 3 was supported with strong statistical significance.

Figure 4: Structured Model for Perceived Service Quality



Results in Figure 4 shows that the goodness-of-fit results for the structural equation model indicated a good model fit to the sample data. All model fit indices were sufficiently satisfied with their relative recommended thresholds. The goodness of-fit results of the structural equation model are $RMSEA= 0.077$, is below the 0.08 cut-off value as recommended in the literature (e.g. Browne and Cudeck, 1993). The $CFI=0.911$, $p=0.000$. All other indices showed that the data successfully fit the model with a Chi-square of 508.239 with 162 degrees of freedom, clearly meeting the requirements recommended in the literature (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Baumgartner and Homburg, 1996). Model modification was not necessary, as the structural equation model had model fit indices that were more than satisfactory.

Conclusion

The study has revealed that service quality factors will significantly exert an effect on customer satisfaction. We introduced the modified version of the SERVQUAL instrument for service banking from the confirmatory factor analysis. Our study suggested a five-factor model of SERVQUAL including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Furthermore, we explored the relationships between customer satisfaction and perceived service quality. We also examined the dimensions of the perceived quality of customer service in the commercial banks, and established which one has the highest loading in primary variable (perceived service quality). This study revealed that SERVQUAL is an appropriate instrument for measuring the quality of banking services. The results of this study found the responsiveness variable was the strongest indicator of the second-order factor (perceived service quality), followed by reliability, empathy, assurance and tangibility respectively. We also found that there exists a positive and significant relationship between customers' satisfaction and constructs of perceived service quality represented by the five dimensions. The results of this study will be useful for policy-making by authorities in Libya that are responsible for the development of the banking sector.

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