

The Relationship Between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Commercial Banks: A Case Study of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Xixia District Branch in Yinchuan City

1. Ma Chenqi, Master student in Business Administration *

2. Kemmarin Chupradist, D.P.A.

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Abstract

As a vital sector of the service industry, the banking industry's primary mission is to provide relevant financial services to society, playing a pivotal role in both economic activities and social life. This research aimed to investigate the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction based on relevant theories. The study had three main objectives: (1) to examine the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction within Chinese commercial banks; (2) to identify the factors influencing customer satisfaction and service quality in Chinese commercial banks; and (3) To provide guidance on improving service quality and customer satisfaction within Chinese commercial banks, ultimately enhancing the industry's competitiveness and facilitating the vigorous development of commercial banks. The study utilized a sample of customers from Yinchuan Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and conducted an empirical study on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction using a random systematic sampling method. Specifically, the primary bank outlets and branches of commercial banks in Xixia District of Yinchuan city were randomly selected through a drawing lots process. The Pearson correlation coefficients calculated between technical quality and functional quality, technical quality and service recovery quality, and functional quality and service recovery quality were found to be 0.517, 0.432, and 0.598, respectively. Based on the results of the empirical analysis, this paper proposes practical countermeasures and suggestions to enhance service quality and customer satisfaction, serving as a valuable reference for commercial banks. Data was collected through formal questionnaires, and statistical software SPSS 17.0 was employed to analyze and process the data. The hypotheses were tested through regression analysis,

ultimately confirming that service quality positively influences customer satisfaction. Additionally, the study found that the three dimensions of service quality, namely technical quality, functional quality, and service recovery quality, also exert a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction. Interestingly, while service quality, functional quality, and service recovery quality all positively affect customer satisfaction, technical quality does not significantly influence it.

Keywords: Commercial banks, Customer satisfaction, Service quality, Technical quality, Functional quality, Service recovery quality

1. Master student in Business Administration, Southeast Bangkok University, Thailand.

E-mail: machenqi0315@163.com

2. Department of Management, Faculty of Accounting and Management Science, Southeast Bangkok University, Thailand.

E-mail: kemmarin12@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Banking is a service industry that provides financial services for the society and plays a key role in the development and progress of society and economy. At present, China's state-owned commercial banks have completed the joint-stock reform, and a large number of small and medium-sized joint-stock banks have sprung up and developed like bamboo shoots. As well as the introduction of the policy that private capital is allowed to enter the financial industry, the competition among banks has become increasingly fierce (Wang, 2013)

Nowadays, there are constantly new competitors entering the financial market like international banks, and the competition between each other is gradually intense. In such a severe living environment, high-quality service has become the key to the survival of commercial banks, which is related to their own economic benefits and comprehensive competitiveness. In recent years, commercial banks have made a lot of efforts to improve the service quality, and have achieved remarkable results. However, customers' financial needs are constantly changing with the increasingly fierce competition environment. Therefore, China's commercial banks need to further improve the service quality (Li, 2011)

On the other hand, consumers are becoming the main body of economic activity. They are no longer simply accept a product or service, but become its decision maker. In addition to accepting the products or services offered by commercial banks, most customers also want equality and respect, as well as some psychological needs. It also makes it harder for banks to improve their service. In the face of changes in the development environment and the status of service objects, how to improve the service quality of commercial banks and improve customer satisfaction has become an important way for Chinese commercial banks to gain competitive advantages. Moreover, China's commercial banks need to further improve the service quality because the level of satisfaction and service quality is at the moderate level. Consumers wanted more service quality from the banks to fulfil customer satisfaction (Chen & Wu, 2008)

Therefore, according to these problems researcher wanted to investigate factors affecting customer satisfaction in terms of quality of Chinese commercial banks. This research will take Yinchuan Industrial and Commercial Bank as an example to study the relationship between Chinese commercial bank service quality and customer satisfaction. Moreover, researcher will also provide guidelines to improve service quality and customer satisfaction of Chinese commercial banks.

2. Objective

2.1 Research Purposes

For commercial banks, providing customers with diversified and high-level services can fundamentally attract more customers, enable them to have the strength and ability to compete with competitors, win higher reputation and recognition, and improve economic benefits. This paper studies how to improve the service quality of commercial banks as soon as possible, try our best to meet the financial needs of customers, and make them satisfied with the service of banks.

The main contribution of this study is to put forward corresponding suggestions for improving the service quality of commercial banks, including building the bank's own brand, overall planning and layout of the business network system, strengthening the construction of business hall environment and facilities, deepening the customer-centered service concept, attaching importance to staff training and quality improvement, and innovating financial products. Improve customer feedback mechanism, establish customer information system, etc. It also studies the service quality and customer satisfaction of Chinese commercial banks, determines the relationship among the three, and makes clear which dimensions of customer satisfaction is affected by service quality, so as to provide a reliable basis for improving targeted service quality and improving customer satisfaction. From the perspective of customers, the improvement of service quality can enable customers to enjoy better service and achieve higher cost performance. From the bank's point of view, the improvement of service quality is beneficial for Chinese commercial banks to maintain existing customers and develop potential customers, thus improving the industry competitiveness.

2.2 Research Objectives

Researcher provided three objectives of this research as follows:

2.2.1 To study relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction of Chinese commercial banks

2.2.2 To study factors affecting customer satisfaction and service quality of Chinese commercial banks

2.2.3 To guide the factors to improve service quality and customer satisfaction of Chinese commercial banks

3. Research Framework

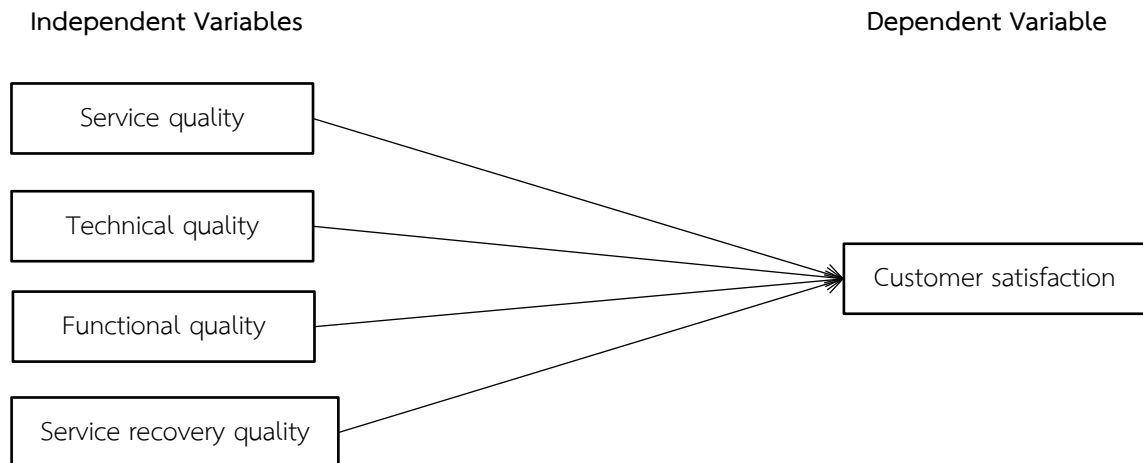


Figure 1 : Research Framework

4. Research Hypotheses

Researcher provided four hypotheses of this research as follows:

- 4.1 Service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.
- 4.2 Technical quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction
- 4.3 Functional quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.
- 4.4 Service recovery quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Service Quality

The concept of service reveals the essence and characteristics of service from different perspectives, which all have their own unique features. In 1960, the American Marketing Institute (AMA) first defined service as "an activity, benefit or satisfaction that is used to sell or is sold in conjunction with a product." In 1990, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defined service from the perspective of quality management. IOS8402:1994 "Quality management and Quality Assurance terminology" defines the service as: in order to meet the needs of customers, the activities between the supplier and the customer contact and the results of the internal activities of the supplier.

Although there is no unified and universally accepted definition of service, marketing scholars believe that the characteristics of service can be discussed from other perspectives. In order to distinguish service from tangible products or commodities and highlight the particularity of service, many scholars began to explore the essential characteristics of service from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. Some scholars believe that service has the following four essential characteristics that are different from products (Kotler & Keller, 2013)

1) Intangibility: Service is a kind of performance or action. It is intangible, so it cannot be perceived as a physical product before purchase. Due to this feature, service is not easy to display or communicate, nor is it easy to accurately measure its quality, nor is it easy to price. Therefore, for customers, service purchase is a high perceived risk consumption behavior.

2) Indivisibility: Services are different from tangible products. In most cases, the production and consumption of services cannot be separated. Because of the indivisibility of services, service providers and customers must have a lot of interaction at the same time and place, and customers participate in and influence service transactions.

3) Heterogeneity: Services are basically a series of behaviors shown by people, and service quality depends on many uncontrollable factors, so services have a high degree of heterogeneity. The services provided by different service providers at different times are different. Even if the quality of services provided by the same service provider at different times is different, it is impossible to know whether the services provided are consistent with the plan or publicity.

4) Perishability: The service cannot be stored, resold or returned. Normal physical products can be stored for sale after production, but services cannot be. Although some services can be booked in advance, service providers generally require customers to pay in advance. This is because the value of the service exists only when the customer shows up, and once it is lost, it cannot be recovered.

Gronroos (2000) a famous marketing scholar from Finland, first put forward the concept of perceived service quality. He believed that service quality is within the scope of customers' subjective perception, that is, perceived service quality, which is basically the gap between customers' comparison of expected service and perceived service. If the customer's actual perception of the enterprise's service exceeds the expectation of the enterprise's service,

then the customer's perceived service quality is generally good, otherwise it is not good. According to Gronroos, customers' perceived service quality is divided into two levels according to different stages of service process: in the whole service process, customers get the technical quality level of service, which has objective evaluation criteria; At the end of the service process, what customers get is the functional quality of the service, which is measured by their own subjective feelings. This division makes people focus on the process of enjoying the service, not only the result of consumption, which lays the foundation of the theory of service quality (Zhai, 2013); (Zhang & Han, 2011); (Yuan, 2015)

5.2 Customer Satisfaction

The theory of Customer Satisfaction (CS) originates from the development and change of enterprise management concept. According to the different focus of output value, sales, profit, market, customer and customer satisfaction, it has roughly gone through six stages. Philip Kotler, known as the father of modern marketing, believed that customer satisfaction is the state of feeling satisfied or disappointed after comparing the actual perception of experiencing a product or service with the expectation of the product or service before consumption.

According to the existing research, we divide customer satisfaction into three levels: product satisfaction level, service satisfaction level and social satisfaction level. The level of product satisfaction refers to the overall satisfaction of the product, including the internal quality of the product, the price of the product, the design and external packaging of the product, the timeliness of the use of the product and other aspects of satisfaction, among which the internal quality of the product plays a key role in the overall satisfaction of the customer. Service satisfaction refers to the service measures taken before, during and after the sale of the product and at different stages of the product life cycle to make the customer satisfied, that is, in each link of the service process can be considered for the customer. The level of social satisfaction refers to the responsibility and maintenance of social economy and interests felt by customers in the process of purchasing or experiencing products and services. Therefore, only when the production and operation activities of enterprises are conducive to the development and progress of the whole social civilization can customers feel social satisfaction (Zhang, 2015); (Hu, 2015); (Tse & Wilton, 1998)

In 1996, Fomell et al. further refined the previous research results and added a new endogenous variable, perceived value, on the basis of the Swedish customer satisfaction index model, forming a new American customer satisfaction evaluation model. Among them, the perceived value mainly evaluates whether the products or services provided by the enterprise can meet the needs of customers and the reliability of the enterprise's ability to provide products and services.

5.3 Relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction

Service quality and customer satisfaction are two similar but different concepts, and scholars have not agreed on the relationship between them. However, in recent years, more scholars have considered the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction from different aspects of consumption, and believe that the most important difference between service quality and customer satisfaction is that service quality only focuses on the factors that affect service, while customer satisfaction is affected by many factors, such as internal quality of products and price factors, service quality factors and some personal factors. In the final analysis, it is believed that the category of customer satisfaction is greater than that of service quality, and service quality is an important factor to evaluate customer satisfaction. Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1991) proposed that although service quality and customer satisfaction are two different concepts, there is an inseparable relationship between them. They believed that service quality is a prerequisite for customer satisfaction, and the quality of service determines the level of customer satisfaction. Zeithaml & Bitner (1996) believed that there are many factors that affect customer satisfaction, and customer perception of service quality is only one of them. Gronroos (2000) determined the order of service quality and customer satisfaction, and believed that customers would measure their satisfaction according to the results after they perceived the service quality, rather than the opposite direction (Li, 2013)

6. Research Methodology

According to the research purposes, the paper selects the Questionnaire on Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction to investigate the existing problems in the Xixia District Branch of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China in Yinchuan.

6.1 Population and Sample

The research sample of this study are 320 retail customers of commercial banks over 18 years old in Xixia District of Yinchuan City, which mainly adopts random systematic sampling method to conduct sampling survey.

Random sampling refers to the method of sampling samples in accordance with the random principle. Every unit in the population has an equal opportunity to be sampled, completely excluding the subjective and intentional selection of investigators. In this study, the main branches and branches of commercial banks in Xixia District of Yinchuan City were randomly selected by lottery. An anonymous questionnaire was adopted after the consent of the bank manager.

6.2 Research Instruments

Service quality and customer satisfaction questionnaire

Questionnaire method is a method that researcher use controlled measurement to measure the problem under study so as to collect reliable data. According to the research purposes, this study selects the Questionnaire of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction to find the methods to improve service quality and customer satisfaction. Questionnaire consists of 3 parts. Part 1 is basic information of the respondents. Researcher uses 5-point Likert scale to measure all items, and each question will be given a quantitative score of 1-5, with 1 representing strongly disagree, 2 representing somewhat disagree, 3 representing generally agree, 4 representing somewhat agree, and 5 representing strongly agree. Part 2 is level of service quality, with a total of 17 questions. Part 3 is level of customer satisfaction, with a total of 3 questions, with 1 representing completely disagree, 2 representing somewhat disagree, 3 representing generally agree, 4 representing somewhat agree, and 5 representing strongly agree.

The questionnaire was checked about content validity by 3 experts, calculated Index of Item - Objective Congruency (IOC) and found that IOC of all items are more than 0.5. In addition, the questionnaire was checked about reliability by using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The reliability was 0.92.

6.3 Data Analysis

Questionnaire: all statistics are carried out by SPSS26.0 statistical software, the survey data input, collation and statistical analysis of the basis. This research describes the basic information through the method of descriptive statistics. The Pearson correlation analysis method is used to complete the data correlation analysis. This research also uses the method of multiple regression analysis to examine causal relationship between variables.

7. Analysis and Findings

From February 20, 2023 to March 14, 2023, a field questionnaire survey was conducted on the business outlets of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China in Xixia District, Yinchuan City for 23 days. The survey sample is the customer who comes to the bank for business.

In a random manner, every customer surveyed filled out a questionnaire on the spot. A total of 320 questionnaires were sent out in this survey, and 320 questionnaires were recovered, among which 303 were valid, with an effective confidence rate of 94.7%. In terms of the gender distribution of the sample, there are 147 males and 156 females, and the ratio of male to female is 0.94:1. The proportion of female customers is 3% higher than that of male customers. The number of male customers is slightly less than that of female customers, and the samples are mainly distributed between 18 and 40 years old, accounting for 78.5% of the total.

The score of customer satisfaction obtained in this survey is 3.78, which is between average and satisfied, that is, customers are not very satisfied with the service quality of commercial banks. Among them, the score of staff response service quality, bank service reliability and service recovery quality is low, which reduces the score of perceived bank service quality.

This study found that long waiting time of customers and low service efficiency; Poor service attitude of staff; The quality of handling customer complaints is not high. The scores of bank service quality value and customer satisfaction reflect that customers believe that the cost paid is inconsistent with the bank service they get, and the service provided by the bank does not reach the level of customers' expected service and ideal banking service. In other words, under the environment of fierce competition in the industry, customers' expectation of bank service increases. To improve the service quality of commercial banks, we need to start from these four aspects.

Table 1 Standard deviation of explicit indicators of bank service quality

Recessive indicator	Dominant index	Standard deviation
Bank service quality	Banking service facilities and environment	0.178
	Employees respond to quality of service	0.232
	Banking service reliability	0.196
	Bank service assurance	0.204
	Quality of service recovery	0.190

Table 2 The average of each index and the standardized weight table

Hidden figures		Dominant index	Mean value	Standardized weight
Bank reputation quality		Overall bank image	4.57	0.431
		Bank creditworthiness	4.36	0.263
		Bank awareness	4.49	0.306
Bank service quality	Banking service facilities and environment	Convenience of distribution of business outlets	4.64	0.312
		The rich diversity of service facilities	4.58	0.253
		The business environment is comfortable and clean	4.77	0.208
	Employees respond to quality of service	The safety of the business environment	4.31	0.227
		Employee appearance	4.43	0.202
		Employee expertise in providing services	3.93	0.217
	Banking service reliability	Employee service attitude	3.70	0.258
		Staff service efficiency and accuracy	2.68	0.323
		Ease of handling business procedures	3.56	0.213
	Bank service guarantee	The time a customer waits to be served	2.8	0.322
		Provide personalized service to customers	4.46	0.237
		Timely remedy the problems arising in the service process	3.65	0.228
	Quality of service recovery	Confidentiality and security of customer data	4.18	0.363
		The timeliness of information delivery	4.52	0.317
		Performance of undertakings and warranties	4.48	0.320
		Attitude towards customer complaint handling	4.60	0.309
		Efficiency in handling customer complaints	3.48	0.354
		Accuracy and appropriateness in handling customer complaints	3.54	0.337

Table 2 The average of each index and the standardized weight table (continue)

Hidden figures	Dominant index	Mean value	Standardized weight
Perceptual banking services	An evaluation of the quality of a bank's service in terms of the cost paid	3.58	0.517
Quality value	An evaluation of the cost of the banking services received	4.09	0.483
Customer satisfaction	Overall satisfaction with the quality of banking services	3.95	0.374
	The level of satisfaction compared to the desired quality of service	3.63	0.315
	The level of satisfaction compared to the ideal quality of banking service	3.74	0.311

Table 3 Satisfaction score of each index

Index	Score
Bank reputation quality	4.49
Banking service facilities and environmental quality	4.58
Employees respond to quality of service	3.57
Banking service reliability	3.55
Bank service assurance	4.38
Quality of service recovery	3.85
Perceive the value of banking service quality	3.83
Customer satisfaction	3.78

These results verify hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2, hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 4 which are service quality, technical quality, functional quality and service recovery quality all have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction.

7.1 Summary of the Investigation

7.1.1 Customers wait too long in line for service

The professional quality of bank employees affects the service efficiency and accuracy to a certain extent. The professional quality of bank employees is uneven. Although many new employees have received bank work training, the efficiency and accuracy of service provided by employees are affected by their incomplete business knowledge and unfamiliar skills, which prolong the time of handling business.

7.1.2 Poor service attitude of employees

The poor service attitude of bank employees is caused by many reasons, including personal reasons, inadequate organizational communication and mechanism, and the influence of social environment. All these have affected the service efficiency of employees and the service experience of customers.

7.1.3 Poor quality of handling service problems and complaints

Customers are satisfied with the attitude of commercial banks in handling complaints, but their evaluation of the efficiency, accuracy and appropriateness of handling complaints has not reached the standard of customer satisfaction, which inevitably leads to customer complaints. Customer complaints belong to the after-sales phase of the service, but this does not mean the end of the service. Banks' handling of customer complaints has become an important measurement index to evaluate service quality in the service industry.

7.1.4 Fierce competition in the industry leads to increased customer expectations

The financial products provided by each bank are almost the same, and there is almost no essential difference. Therefore, one after another focuses on the service quality in order to improve competitiveness and form distinctive services that are different from other banks. After customers experience better banking services, they will have higher expectations for the service quality of the whole banking industry, and the standard of satisfaction will also be raised accordingly.

7.2 Cause Analysis

7.2.1 Properly handle customer complaints

First of all, bank employees accept customer complaints with generosity and express welcome and recognition. They should not be emotional about customer complaints. They should listen to customer complaints carefully and accept customer complaints with a good attitude. Secondly, the bank staff should stand in the customer's position, think about the customer's thoughts, study and analyze the causes of customer dissatisfaction, and maintain an objective position, and properly solve the service complaints within their own authority. If the problem exceeds the authority, we should explain it to customers to win their understanding, report it to the superior, and try to solve it as soon as possible. Meanwhile, we should analyze the cause of customer complaints, put forward sound suggestions and opinions, and prevent multiple complaints or problems from spreading.

7.2.2 Develop electronic channel services

Electronic channel service has been able to replace some functions of manual service, which represents the development stage and direction of modern finance. Customers do not need to go to the business hall. They can self-service deposit and withdrawal, transfer money, inquiry and other services at anytime and anywhere through ATM deposit and withdrawal machines, online banking, mobile banking and other electronic channels, and even investment business through electronic channels, saving time and effort, convenient and fast.

7.2.3 Improve the comprehensive service ability of employees

1) Strengthen employees' awareness of service. Strengthening the service consciousness of employees will form a strong cohesion and centripetal force, form a conscious atmosphere, and then transform into a strong service output ability, which is the premise of improving the service quality of employees.

2) Organize professional skills training. Only with first-class professional knowledge and skills can bank employees better meet customers' constantly diversified financial needs and effectively improve customers' satisfaction.

3) Norms of service etiquette. The service etiquette of the bank staff shows the service characteristics of the bank. First of all, in terms of language, the words and actions of bank employees represent the service and attitude of commercial banks. Therefore, employees should strictly comply with the requirements of the regulatory authorities and the bank and be careful in their words and actions. The fact is that customers are guaranteed to have the full right to know and do their duty.

4) Relieve customers of waiting in line. Customers waiting in line for service for a long time will be anxious and discontent will arise, so banks need to take appropriate measures to ease the anxiety of customers waiting in line. For example, you can put one across from the customer waiting area. Some televisions, product display cabinets, electronic publicity equipment, publicity rack and other equipment, can broadcast financial products, prices and risk and other businesses can also play scenery, music, fashion and other relaxed content or hot content to help turn shift customer attention, shorten customer psychological waiting time, avoid additional external factors to interfere with the essence of service allow, improve customer satisfaction.

5) Simplify business processes. In order to shorten the time of business processing, commercial banks should, on the basis of effectively controlling business risks, retain key control links and delegate appropriate power to links with less risk. In this way, the whole complex and tedious business processing process can become relatively simple, which not only shortens the time of business processing and the time of customers waiting for service. It also improves the service efficiency of commercial banks to a certain extent. The bank can optimize the business process in the following aspects: The lobby manager can guide the customers for simple withdrawal through ATM self-service deposit and withdrawal machines, and guide the customers for e-banking and other businesses to fill in the relevant forms first, so as to avoid unnecessary delay in filling in the forms at the counter.

6) Create an elastic window. We learned that there were many idle business Windows in the business halls of many banks that were not fully utilized. Even when there were many customers waiting for business, elastic Windows were not activated to relieve the pressure of normal business Windows. Banks should reasonably set up elastic Windows according to the number of customers and the structure of their own business, improve the service efficiency of banks, and temporarily solve the problem of a large number of customers waiting in line.

8. Conclusion and Discussion

Based on the evaluation model of China Customer Satisfaction Index, this study selects appropriate indicators, conducts an empirical study on the service satisfaction of a branch of three state-owned banks in Tangshan City, and proposes four problems and deficiencies in the service quality of commercial banks according to the analysis results. Customer waiting time is too long, staff service attitude is not good, the quality of dealing with service problems and complaints is poor, fierce competition in the industry leads to increased customer expectations. According to these four aspects of problems, the paper puts forward six suggestions and countermeasures for improving the service quality of the three state-owned commercial banks, which are respectively dealing with customer complaints properly, developing electronic channel services, improving staff's comprehensive service ability, relieving customers' queuing mood, simplifying business processes and establishing elastic Windows.

Due to my limited academic knowledge and research experience, there are still many imperfections in this paper, which needs further study.

1) The research industry is relatively narrow: Since this study is mainly aimed at retail consumers in the banking industry, the conclusion is relatively applicable to the banking industry, but whether it is applicable to other industries remains to be tested.

2) Limited research scope. This study only selects the retail customers of commercial banks in Yinchuan as the research object. The quality of banking services may vary from city to city, so the sample may not be representative of the overall banking services. Therefore, the universality of the research conclusions is worth exploring.

3) This study mainly discusses the direct or indirect impact of service quality, a major dimension, on customer satisfaction. In fact, there are more factors affecting customer satisfaction, such as switching costs, trust, customer relationship, etc. These factors may limit the explanatory power of the findings of this study.

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