



Short Paper

The Evaluation of Service Quality of the Internet Service Providers and its Effect on Customer Retention: Inputs to Enhanced Service Provisions

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated education's digitalization in the Philippines for faculty members who had the task of sustaining teaching, research, and administrative functions in remote settings, and found internet access indispensable. Many internet subscribers still experience unstable connections with inconsistent customer support. Service costs are also rising, even with this heightened reliance. In this kind of context, the study assessed the Internet Service Providers' (ISPs) service quality and investigated the effects upon customer retention, and notably, the teaching personnel of a State University. The research utilized a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design. The researcher employed a convenience sampling technique to recruit participants who were readily accessible and willing to take part in the study during the data collection period. Instruments were adapted from validated studies, and data were collected using structured questionnaires. Findings revealed that respondents perceived service quality to vary greatly depending on the ISP used, in addition to how many years they had subscribed. More importantly, a strong positive relationship existed between service quality and customer retention, which confirms that faculty perceive higher reliability, responsiveness, and fairness in service, so they likely remain loyal to providers. The respondents generally agreed that their providers delivered an acceptable quality level, but also that concerns emerged about consistent service during peak hours, along with



waiting times and personalized engagement. ISPs may prioritize responsiveness, empathy, and reliability to sustain competitiveness and improve customer loyalty. The implication of the study indicates that superior service quality serves as a key competitive advantage, driving customer retention and loyalty in the marketplace. By prioritizing service quality, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can boost customer satisfaction, resulting in improved retention rates and reduced customer turnover.

Keywords – service quality, customer retention, internet service providers, SERVQUAL, teaching personnel

INTRODUCTION

Service quality remains a cornerstone for achieving customer satisfaction and retention, especially in industries where services are intangible and performance-based. In the context of internet service provision, where competition is fierce and customer expectations are high, ensuring high service quality is imperative. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified reliance on internet connectivity for professional and academic purposes, emphasizing the need for stable and high-quality internet services.

While global studies have explored service quality metrics and customer loyalty, limited research has been conducted in the Philippine context, particularly focusing on university personnel as a customer group. This study addresses this gap by evaluating the service quality of ISPs and its effect on customer retention among teaching personnel at Don Honorio Ventura State University. Grounded in the SERVQUAL framework, this research investigates how dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility affect customer loyalty in the ISP sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding clients is one of the most important aspects of business success. Companies segment their consumers based on a variety of characteristics in order to give more specialized services and ensure that they are satisfied with the services they receive (Oosterom, 2007). The internet service provider industry is seen as a source of support for a wide range of organizations in a variety of countries throughout the world. In order to be more competitive, these companies must recognize that not all service quality criteria have the same value in the eyes of customers (Mahmood & Manzoor, 2021).

Any company that aims to attract and keep customers' needs to provide high-quality service. At the same time, it is a technique for assessing the quality of service offered to clients (Nguyen, 2014). Service quality also refers to how customers perceive it. It is a complicated idea that has been the subject of a number of research studies in the field of services marketing (Archakova, 2013). This also includes service delivery, service

product, service atmosphere, physical environment quality, and outcome quality, according to Karatepe (2013).

As the pandemic has changed our lives in many different aspects, including the ways we work and the ways we learn and interact, government restrictions and guidelines have led to a more virtual existence, both in personal and professional landscapes. One of the effects of the pandemic is the restriction on people's freedom to move, trade, or associate in any way (Onyema et al., 2020).

Similarly, the disruption caused by the pandemic pushed the Philippine government to abandon customary labor arrangements for organizations and businesses. President Rodrigo Duterte issued Proclamation No. 922, declaring a state of public health emergency across the country, advising all citizens, residents, tourists, and business owners to act within the law and follow official directives and issuances issued by government agencies to prevent the virus from spreading and ensure the safety and well-being of its constituents.

In order to comply with this premise, government agencies and business owners were faced with the task of remotely managing their staff who were on alternative work schedules. As a result, authorities, businesses, and academic institutions devised new plans and strategies to ensure that employees were not only secure at home but also productive and well-supported. Purwanto et al. (2020) found that the new working arrangements have an impact on teachers' involvement since they allow them to have more flexibility when they complete their jobs and do not have to adhere to strict working hours.

As a result of the aforementioned circumstances, the demand for internet services has increased rapidly, as many tasks are now completed and facilitated through a virtual setup, necessitating the need for internet access. According to the Department of Trade and Industry, internet-enabled products and services are seeing enormous jumps in demand around the world, notably from consumers in nations under COVID-19 lockdowns. According to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), digital technology can assist the Philippines to overcome the consequences of the pandemic, and digital transformation is becoming more crucial for Filipinos in dealing with the current crisis and moving toward economic recovery.

However, as the demand for internet services grew, so did the problems and challenges that these situations presented. Various countries have seen and are experiencing an increase in internet traffic, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In the Philippines, internet providers' exorbitant prices and poor service quality have enraged Filipinos, especially when they require it for their work or study (Natividad, 2021). In light of this and other important internet-related challenges, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) has encouraged the

government to tighten its policies and infrastructure in order to increase internet access throughout the country.

Because people rely on internet connections to complete their tasks, it is critical to have a dependable and robust internet connection. If you simply have a bad internet connection or no internet connection at all, you won't be able to do anything online. Internet service providers must understand client expectations and adjust their solutions to fit consumer needs and wants to attract and keep the most clients possible. Analyzing online reviews submitted by consumers is one of the finest ways for internet service providers to determine what their users think about their services (Rajendan & Fennewald, 2015).

To retain customers, internet service providers should implement various strategies such as providing quality service, committing to customer satisfaction, integrating customer satisfaction into a firm's goal and vision, being responsive to customer complaints, maintaining a high and continuous level of interaction with customers, keeping a record of the company's loyal customers, and having an efficient and effective complaint handling (Siboe, 2006).

Also, customer retention is influenced by a variety of elements, which have been studied in many journals and research. As mentioned by Qadri & Khan (2014), different elements such as brand image, pricing perception, trust, and increased switching costs have a favorable effect on customer retention. However, this contradicts the findings of Tamuliene & Gabryte (2014), who found that customer satisfaction, along with other factors like switching cost and relationship quality, has a favorable impact on customer retention. As a result, firms must investigate a variety of aspects in order to assess client retention.

Correspondingly, Porter (2001) mentioned that a firm can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage by focusing on operational effectiveness and distinctive strategic positioning. Employee retention and satisfaction, better service, reduced costs, lower price sensitivity, positive word of mouth, higher market share, improved efficiency, and higher productivity are all advantages of customer retention.

There have been numerous studies on evaluating internet service providers' service quality, but there have been few studies on the impact on customer retention. In light of this, the researcher intends to investigate the impact of internet service provider service quality on customer retention. This research suggested client retention programs and strategies.

According to the researchers, the service quality theory is based on customer satisfaction and product quality literature (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Numerous service quality models are available in recent literature. One of the most often used approaches in measuring quality is the SERVQUAL model theory of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and

Leonard (1988). This theory aims to capture customer expectations and perceptions of the service provided. It proposes five dimensions that are believed to represent service quality, including reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness.

In light of the aforementioned theory, this study was closely guided. This theory also postulates five gaps that can arise between the customer's needs and the services that an organization offers. These five gaps include the knowledge gap, standard gap, delivery gap, communications gap, and satisfaction gap.

As this theory implicitly suggests, reliability is defined as a certain organization's ability to complete any guaranteed service independently, thoroughly, and accurately. There is a connotation from the assurance dimension principle of this theory that there is an ability to convey internal trust and confidence from its stakeholders, as well as the knowledge and courtesy that the service provider has in regard to its sphere of influence.

An organization's tangibles denote the physical appearances of equipment, instruments, communication resources, facilities, and personnel, either owned or hired by the service providers. These tangibles form a strategic part in gaining and building trust towards an organization, as this is the most visible feature that it has. These physical aspects are a weighty aspect in the decision-making of potential clients on whether an organization is capable of rendering the services it offers and the quality that it can deliver.

Empathy denotes the service providers' care and individualized attention to each customer. The responsiveness and the willingness of the employee to assist customers and to provide prompt service are characteristics that help build the organization-audience relationship. It is also this facet that decides whether a consumer will return for more business or simply move on to the next service provider. Each consumer has different needs and requirements, and it is noteworthy for businessmen and their employees to note that each customer must have tailor-made service assistance.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study is anchored on a conceptual framework that examines the direct relationship between service quality and customer retention. Service quality serves as the independent variable and is measured through four dimensions: internet services, prices, employees, and physical evidence. Customer retention, the dependent variable, is treated as a multi-dimensional construct composed of five key indicators: switching barriers, customer satisfaction, price perception, brand image, and trust. This structure provides a comprehensive view of how perceived service quality affects customers' intention to remain with their internet service provider. The framework emphasizes that customer retention is not a singular outcome but is reflected in multiple behavioral and attitudinal components, ensuring a more robust understanding of user loyalty.

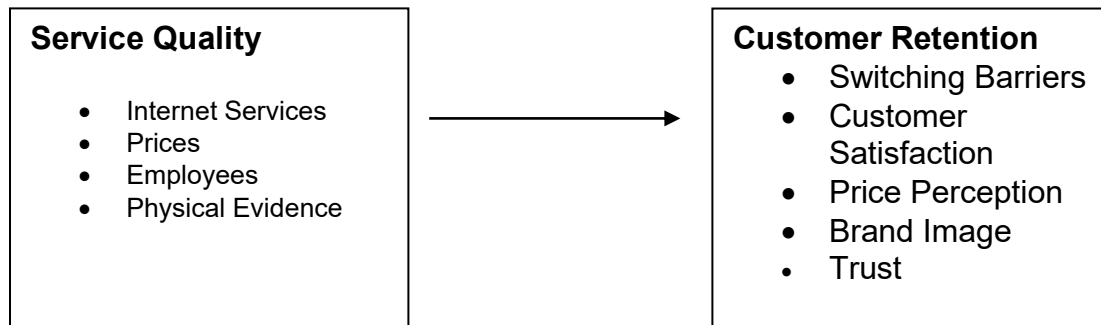


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component involved assessing service quality, while the correlational aspect analyzed the relationship between service quality and customer retention. According to Stangor (2011), descriptive research is intended to take a picture of the existing views, opinions, or conduct of individuals. This research method collects measurable data that can be used to make statistical inferences about target respondents through data analysis (Ariola, 2006). As a result, this research style employs closed-ended questions, limiting its ability to provide unique views. When applied correctly, however, it can help an institution improve and quantify the significance of a characteristic of a set of respondents. This technique of study entails not only acquiring and organizing data, but also thorough data analysis.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were the 263 teaching personnel of the Don Honorio Ventura State University who are internet subscribers and users. The respondents were from different colleges and campuses of the university. The Raosoft sample size calculator was employed to determine an adequate sample size, targeting internet subscribers among university faculty.

Sampling Technique

The researcher employed a convenience sampling technique to recruit participants who were readily accessible and willing to take part in the study during the data collection period. This method was chosen due to logistical considerations, including time constraints, geographical proximity, and the availability of teaching personnel across various campuses. As described by Dörnyei (2007), convenience sampling—also known as haphazard or accidental sampling—is a type of non-probability sampling where participants are selected based on practical factors rather than randomization.

A total of 263 teaching personnel from Don Honorio Ventura State University were selected, representing a broad range of colleges and campuses. This sample size was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator, ensuring sufficient power for statistical analysis while considering the total faculty population. The inclusion criteria were: (1) must be a member of the teaching personnel; and (2) must be a current user or subscriber of an internet service provider. These criteria ensured that respondents had relevant, firsthand experience with internet services, aligning with the study's objective of evaluating service quality and its impact on customer retention.

Instruments

The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire adapted from Joudeh & Dandis (2018) for service quality metrics and Qadri & Khan (2014) for customer retention indicators. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). A pilot test was conducted to ensure the reliability of the instrument, and Cronbach's alpha was used to confirm internal consistency.

Procedures

Foremost, this study started with drafting a letter to the authors of the adopted questionnaires. Next, the researcher surveyed an online form. In the dissemination of the survey forms, the proponent certified that the respondents received a detailed comprehension of responding relative to the definite matters in the survey form. All respondents were informed of the voluntary nature of involvement. The anonymity and confidentiality of all submitted data and the freedom to withdraw at any moment were also considered.

Data Analysis

To assess the agreement on the service quality and customer retention of internet service providers, the weighted mean computation was used. To describe the relationship of the group with the whole population, the percentages were calculated. To determine the description of service quality of internet service providers and customer retention by the internet subscribers and users, a Likert Scale was used (5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Undecided, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly Disagree). To determine if there is a significant relationship between the service quality of the internet service provider and customer retention, the Correlation coefficient was used. To test the significant difference in the assessment of service quality of internet service providers when grouped according to internet service provider and years of subscription, multiple regression was used since Internet Services, Prices, Employees, and Physical Evidence are numerical variables while the years of subscription are classified as a categorical variable.

To minimize biases, the questionnaire was anonymized, and no personally identifiable information was collected. The wording of items avoided leading language. This study is limited to teaching personnel within one state university, using non-probability sampling. Results may not generalize to all ISP users in the Philippines. Self-reported data may also introduce response bias.

Ethical Considerations

Following informed-consent guidelines was closely followed through the use of a consent form to ensure ethical research. Maintaining an individual's right to privacy and discretion is a fundamental element of all activity (Smith, 2003). Respondents are free to decide how much information about themselves they want to reveal and under what circumstances on the consent form. They were also informed about the study's overall objective. They were assured of the confidentiality of the information acquired on them, as well as their freedom to decline participation.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of respondents according to their internet service provider. As presented in the table, 48.67% of the respondents' internet service provider is Converge. While 36.50% or 96 respondents have PLDT as their internet service provider, 6.84% or 18 out of 263 respondents have Globe as their internet service provider, and 15 respondents or 5.70% answered other internet service providers such as RTDS with PLDT wifi fiber, Satellite Cable Network Inc., Broadcable, Sattlink Cable, Data, and Planet internet service provider. This shows that every respondent in the study has an internet connection at home.

This result was contrary to the discussion in the study of Salac and Kim (2016), wherein PLDT is the most widely used ISP in the entire country and is referred to as an Internet Access Provider (IAP) and is considered the country's national backbone.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents According to Internet Service Provider

Internet Service Provider	Frequency	Percentage
Converge	128	48.67
DITO	6	2.28
Globe	18	6.84
PLDT	96	36.50
Others (RTDS with PLDT wifi fiber as backbone, Satellite Cable Network Inc., Broadcable, Sattlink cable, Data Connection, PLANET, Pocket wifi,	15	5.70
Total	263	100.00

Table 2 shows the respondents' demographic profile in terms of years of subscription. It can be observed in the table that 50.19% or 132 respondents' years of subscription range from 1 to 2 years. Around 13.69% of the respondents answered below 1 year as their subscription to their internet service provider; while 21.67% or 57 of the respondents' internet service subscription ranges from 3-5 years; 13 respondents and 25 respondents have their internet service providers for 5-7 years and more than 7 years respectively. Generally, the majority of the respondents' years of subscription range from 1 to 2 years, which is the time when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country.

This result was supported by the discussion of Magdirila & Almenteros (2020). As a result, during the coronavirus pandemic, internet service providers in the Philippines saw an increase in fixed broadband subscriptions and revenues, with a 14.30 percent quarter-over-quarter increase in total broadband subscribers.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents According to Years of Subscription

Years of Subscription	Frequency	Percentage
below 1 year	36	13.69
1-2 years	132	50.19
3-5 years	57	21.67
5-7 years	13	4.94
7 years and above	25	9.51
Total	263	100.00

Table 3 features the respondents' assessment of the service quality of internet service providers in terms of internet services. As reflected in the table, the general weighted mean is 3.84, which means the respondents agreed that the internet services of their internet service providers are good. Almost all statement indicators in this section have the descriptive interpretation of "agree" with the following specifications of weighted mean responses: 3.93, 4.00, 3.83, 4.11, 4.04, 3.70, 3.45, 3.69. However, the item "*maintain speed of the service during busy times*" received a 3.45 weighted mean with "undecided" as its interpretation. Nevertheless, respondents still agreed that this indicator of service quality of internet service providers is manifested. This shows that the providers are exhibiting a quality service in terms of internet services.

This was supported by the study of Bosede & Awolaye (2020). Accordingly, their research found that the quality-of-service delivery of internet service providers in the selected institutions in their study area is quite reliable. When customers are sensitive to price and product attributes such as the quality of service, the hesitation of switching service providers reduces price sensitivity, and customers act like they are loyal to the brand (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008).

Table 3. Respondents' assessment of the service quality of internet service providers in terms of internet services

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Quick communication service	3.93	Agree
Wide geographic coverage	4.00	Agree
Provide strong and high-quality network signals	3.83	Agree
Easy access	4.11	Agree
Follow the innovative and advanced technology	4.04	Agree
Provides prompt and quick service	3.70	Agree
Maintain the speed of the service during busy times	3.45	Undecided
Service is competent and efficient	3.69	Agree
General Weighted Mean	3.84	Agree

Table 4 presents the respondents' assessment of the service quality of internet service providers in terms of prices. Reflected on the table are the indicators to assess the prices of the internet service providers. It can be manifested in the data that internet service providers offer quality internet service and keep records and bills accurate, as it garnered the highest weighted mean of 4.11. Likewise, the respondents agreed that the internet service providers offer reasonable and competitive prices and that they offer various offers for their services, with weighted means of 3.84, 3.83, and 4.00, respectively. In general, the respondents described that they have accepted the pricing programs their providers have.

He & Walrand (2003) proposed a model suitable for users who prefer predictable service quality and are not overly sensitive to price fluctuations. Furthermore, non-cooperative pricing is unfair and may discourage future network upgrades. Switching starts as a result of service providers' high prices (Gerrard and Cunningham, 2004).

The assessment of the service quality of internet service providers in terms of employees is shown in Table 5. It is reflected in the data that respondents agreed with the indicators to assess service quality in terms of "employees including employees have the knowledge to do their job", "employees perform the service right", "employees are dependable", "employees give me a personal attention", "employees deliver the service according to my needs", and "employees are ready to solve my problems" with weighted means of 4.00, 3.98, 3.83, 3.77, 3.85, and 3.76 respectively. In general, the respondents described the internet service providers' employees as the representatives who provide quality service.

According to the study of Pirnar, et. al (2010), employee behaviors and attitudes are important factors in gaining new customers and retaining existing and loyal ones. This

study found that empathetic skills and interpersonal attitudes of service industry employees should be prioritized in order to increase satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 4. Respondents' assessment of the service quality of internet service providers in terms of prices

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
The company provides reasonable prices	3.84	Agree
The company provides competitive prices	3.83	Agree
The company provides various price offers	4.00	Agree
My provider keeps records and bills accurate	4.11	Agree
General Weighted Mean	3.95	Agree

Table 5. Respondents' assessment of the service quality of internet service providers in terms of employees

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Employees have the knowledge to do their job	4.00	Agree
Employees perform the service correctly	3.98	Agree
Employees are dependable	3.83	Agree
Employees give me personal attention	3.77	Agree
Employees deliver the service according to my needs	3.85	Agree
Employees are ready to solve my problems	3.76	Agree
General Weighted Mean	3.87	Agree

Table 6 shows the respondents' assessment of the service quality of internet service providers in terms of physical evidence. As reflected in the table, the respondents described the physical evidence of internet service providers in general as having physical facilities that are visually appealing, with a weighted mean of 3.95. They also agreed that "branches of internet service providers have an attractive design and decoration, lighting, ventilation, cleanliness and parking", "a sufficient number of branches available", "easy to reach the company's branches", "branches are located in suitable places", with weighted means of 3.80, 3.77, 3.69, and 3.84, respectively. Two (2) among seven (7) indicators of physical evidence, "operating hours are convenient" and "short waiting time," were rated "undecided" with weighted means of 3.32 and 3.41, respectively.

Overall, the data shows that respondents are content with the internet service providers' tangible efforts to support the provision of their services.

The result of the present study is different from the study of Mahmood & Manzoor (2021). According to the study, visually appealing facilities (VAF) have less influence on customer attitude, and businesses should consider that customers are not overly interested in visually appealing facilities. Mahmood and Manzoor proposed focusing on specific service attributes that would increase customer satisfaction while reducing costs.

Table 6. Respondents' assessment of the service quality of internet service providers in terms of physical evidence

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Physical facilities are visually appealing	3.95	Agree
Branches have an attractive design and decoration, lighting, ventilation, cleanliness, and parking	3.80	Agree
A sufficient number of branches are available	3.77	Agree
It is easy to reach the company's branches	3.69	Agree
Branches are located in suitable places	3.84	Agree
Operating hours are convenient	3.32	Undecided
Short waiting time	3.41	Undecided
General Weighted Mean	3.68	Agree

Table 7 presents the respondents' assessment of customer retention in terms of switching barriers – interpersonal relationships. All statement indicators have weighted mean scores between 2.99 and 3.44 with an interpretation of "undecided". The respondents rated the statement indicator "my internet service provider cares about its customers" as the highest, while the statement indicator "I will lose a friendly and comfortable relationship with the internet service provider employees if I change" was rated as the lowest. This entails that the respondents acknowledge the emotional concern of their providers, but not enough to build a friendly and comfortable relationship with them.

This result was in support of the discussion on the study done by Victor (2020). The interpersonal relationship, which is formed through repeated interactions between a provider and a user, will sustain their connection and eventually result in a long-term

connection. Many customers want such a relationship with their service providers, and these relationships would reduce switching barriers.

Table 7. Respondents' assessment on customer retention in terms of switching barriers – interpersonal relationship

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I feel there is a bond between the internet service provider and me.	3.36	Undecided
I have developed a personal friendship with the internet service provider employees.	3.10	Undecided
I would be more comfortable interacting with the people working for my internet service provider than I would be if I switched my internet service provider.	3.40	Undecided
I would miss the internet service provider employees if I switched providers.	3.07	Undecided
I will lose a friendly and comfortable relationship with the internet service provider employees if I change	2.98	Undecided
I like the public image of my internet service provider.	3.37	Undecided
My internet service provider cares about its customers.	3.44	Undecided
General Weighted Mean	3.25	Undecided

The assessment of customer retention in terms of switching barrier-switching costs is shown in Table 8. It is reflected in the table that respondents agreed with all these statement indicators to assess customer retention with weighted means between 3.58 and 3.92. The statement indicator "it would cost me a lot of time to switch from my internet service provider to another internet service provider" garnered the highest weighted mean of 3.92, while the statement indicator "prices of other internet service providers are higher" had a weighted mean of 3.58. This indicates that respondents are concerned with how the prices would cost them if they switch internet service providers.

This result was consistent with the result of the study done by the Federal Communications Commission (2010), consumers may be discouraged from switching services due to financial and non-financial factors, such as installation fees or the hassle of obtaining new services. According to the commission's customer survey, fifty percent of

respondents said paying set-up or installation fees was a major factor in retaining their service.

Table 8. Respondents' assessment of customer retention in terms of switching barriers – switching cost

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
In general, switching to a new internet service provider would be a hassle.	3.85	Agree
It would cost me a lot of money to switch from my current internet service provider to another one.	3.76	Agree
It would cost me a lot of time to switch from my current internet service provider to another one.	3.92	Agree
It would cost me a lot of effort to switch from my current internet service provider to another one.	3.91	Agree
Prices of other internet service providers are higher.	3.58	Agree
General Weighted Mean	3.80	Agree

Table 9 features respondents' assessment of customer retention in terms of the switching barriers – attractiveness of alternatives. The respondents' assessment falls under the descriptive interpretation of agreement with a 3.54 general weighted mean. All of the statement indicators have the interpretation of "agree" except for the statements "I do not care about the brand/company name of my internet service provider" and "I'm very likely to switch to another internet service provider," which garnered weighted means of 3.35 and 3.16, respectively. In general, internet service providers' customers consider switching providers but despise undergoing various procedures when changing providers.

The study conducted by Jacob (2018) concluded that the market's switching barrier must be reduced urgently so that customers can use alternatives effectively. The government must intervene to assess market conditions and relieve consumer congestion.

Table 9. Respondents' assessment of customer retention in terms of the switching barriers – attractiveness of alternatives

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I do not care about the brand/company name of my internet service provider.	3.35	Undecided
I believe in my internet service provider more than other internet service providers.	3.63	Agree
I'm very likely to switch to another internet service provider.	3.16	Undecided
I would feel uncertain if I had to choose a new internet service provider.	3.52	Agree
I hate spending time finding a new internet service provider.	3.64	Agree
I hate re-registering with another internet service provider.	3.70	Agree
I'm not certain about the quality of services that other internet service providers will be providing; there is a risk that the new internet service provider won't be as good as my existing internet service provider.	3.75	Agree
General Weighted Mean	3.54	Agree

Table 10. Respondents' assessment of customer retention in terms of customer satisfaction

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I am satisfied with the overall service quality offered by this internet service provider.	3.79	Agree
I am satisfied with the professional competence of this internet service provider.	3.72	Agree
I am satisfied with the performance of the frontline employees of this internet service provider.	3.73	Agree
I am comfortable with my relationship with this internet service provider.	3.70	Agree
General Weighted Mean	3.74	Agree

Table 10 shows the respondents' assessment of customer retention in terms of customer satisfaction. The items "I am satisfied with the overall service quality offered by this internet service provider" got a weighted mean of 3.79, "I am satisfied with the professional competence of this internet service provider" garnered a weighted mean of 3.72, "I am satisfied with the performance of the frontline employees of this internet service provider" and "I am comfortable with my relationship with this internet service provider" have a weighted means of 3.73 and 3.70 respectively. As revealed in the table, the general weighted mean is 3.74 with an interpretation of "agree," which means that the respondents, in general, are satisfied with their current internet service providers.

Joudeh and Dandis (2018) support the results of the present study relative to the results on customer satisfaction. Joudeh & Dandis (2018) mentioned that customer satisfaction can be influenced by the level of service provided to them, both in terms of attracting them to the service and satisfying them with the level of service that they expect.

The assessment of customer retention in terms of price perception is shown in Table 11. It is reflected in the data that respondents agreed with all the statement indicators to assess price perception, having 3.79 as a general weighted mean. The statement indicator "I will continue to stay with this internet service provider unless the price is significantly higher for the same service" has the highest weighted mean of 3.88, while the statement indicator "This internet service provider is offering flexible pricing for various services that meet my needs" garnered the lowest weighted mean of 3.75. In general, the respondents described that the pricing policies of their providers are flexible and reasonable, which may make them stay with their respective providers.

Table 11. Respondents' assessment of customer retention in terms of price perception

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
This internet service provider took effective ways to help us know its pricing policies for products and services.	3.81	Agree
The pricing policies of products and services from this internet service provider are attractive.	3.76	Agree
The service rates offered by this internet service provider are reasonable.	3.77	Agree
This internet service provider is offering flexible pricing for various services that meet my needs.	3.75	Agree
I will continue to stay with this internet service provider unless the price is significantly higher for the same service	3.88	Agree
General Weighted Mean	3.79	Agree

The finding presented in Table 11 was consistent with the results of Nerjaku and Braimllari (2021). According to Nerjaku and Braimllari's research, price perception was positively related to customer satisfaction and retention, implying that customers who paid a high price for internet service were more likely to be satisfied with the service.

Table 12 shows the respondents' assessment of the customer retention in terms of brand image. As reflected in the table, all statement indicators are rated "Agree" with weighted means of 3.82, 3.73, and 3.76. It is interesting to note that the respondents agreed that the brand image and reputation of their internet service providers are high. The result of the present study is supported by the results of the study of Jones et. al (2000). Given the distinguished image of the available alternatives, the likelihood of a customer switching service providers is low.

Table 12. Respondents' assessment of customer retention in terms of brand image

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
I consider that this internet service provider's reputation is high	3.82	Agree
I have a good feeling about the internet service provider's social responsibility.	3.73	Agree
The internet service provider delivered a good brand image to its customers.	3.76	Agree
General Weighted Mean	3.77	Agree

The assessment of customer retention in terms of trust is presented in Table 11. It is reflected in the data that respondents agreed with the statement indicators to assess trust with weighted means between 3.74 and 3.97. The statement indicator "The billing system of this internet service provider is trustworthy" has the highest weighted mean of 3.97, while the statements "The reputation of this internet service provider is trustworthy" and "The policies and practices of this internet service provider are trustworthy" have the lowest weighted mean of 3.83. This indicates that respondents in general trust their providers' practices and systems at present.

This result is in connection with the result of the study of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Trust generates relationship exchanges that customers highly value, which leads to commitment. While trust develops as a result of preceding interaction and previous experience (Agustin & Singh, 2005), organizations must focus on retaining these customers who have placed their trust in them.

Table 14 shows that there is a significant difference in the assessment of service quality of internet service providers when grouped according to internet service provider and years of subscription, with the p-value of 0.1381. This result was in contrast with the result of the study done by Waiba et. al (2021). The ISP's gap score was also evaluated,

and it was discovered that there is little difference in the quality of services provided between the two internet service providers. The mean difference is 0.097, which is not statistically significant.

Table 13. Respondents' assessment of customer retention in terms of trust

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
This internet service provider is reliable because it is mainly concerned with the consumers' interests.	3.74	Agree
The billing system of this internet service provider is trustworthy.	3.97	Agree
The reputation of this internet service provider is trustworthy.	3.83	Agree
The policies and practices of this internet service provider are trustworthy.	3.83	Agree
The service process provided by this internet service provider is secure.	3.86	Agree
General Weighted Mean	3.85	Agree

Table 14. Significant difference in the assessment of service quality of internet service providers when grouped according to internet service provider and years of subscription

Value	Indicators				
	Internet Services	Prices	Employees	Physical Evidence	Years of Subscription
Coefficient	0.2124	0.6370	0.1137	0.2297	0.1338
P-value	0.1887	0.1154	0.1334	0.1674	0.0857
P-value			0.1381		

Table 15 presents that the respondents' assessment of service quality and customer retention has a high positive correlation with the computed p-value of 0.7505. This means that improving service quality will lead to increased customer retention and vice versa. This research paper's findings confirmed the literature's theory regarding the relationship between service quality dimensions and customer retention.

The study by Richard and Mensah (2020) backs up the study's findings. According to the findings of a study on the effect of service quality on customer retention in the banking industry, there is a significant positive relationship between service quality and customer retention.

Table 15. Significant relationship between the respondents' assessment of service quality and customer retention

Indicators	Value
Degree of Freedom	262
P-value	0.7505

DISCUSSION

The result of the study was contrary to the discussion in the study of Salac and Kim (2016), wherein PLDT is the most widely used ISP in the entire country and is referred to as an Internet Access Provider (IAP) and is considered the country's national backbone. According to Magdirila and Almenteros (2020), during the coronavirus pandemic, internet service providers in the Philippines saw an increase in fixed broadband subscriptions and revenues, with a 14.30 percent quarter-over-quarter increase in total broadband subscribers.

Bosede and Awolaye (2020) found that the quality-of-service delivery of internet service providers in the selected institutions in their study area is quite reliable. When customers are sensitive to price and product attributes such as the quality of service, the hesitation of switching service providers reduces price sensitivity, and customers act like they are loyal to the brand (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008).

In relevance to the study of He and Walrand (2003), a proposed model suitable for users who prefer predictable service quality is not overly sensitive to price fluctuations. Furthermore, non-cooperative pricing is unfair and may discourage future network upgrades. Switching starts as a result of service providers' high prices (Gerrard and Cunningham, 2004).

According to the study of Pirnar, et. al (2010), employee behaviors and attitudes are important factors in gaining new customers and retaining existing and loyal ones. This study found that empathetic skills and interpersonal attitudes of service industry employees should be prioritized in order to increase satisfaction and loyalty.

The results of this study were consistent with the discussions in Victor (2020). The interpersonal relationship, which is formed through repeated interactions between a provider and a user, will sustain their connection and eventually result in a long-term connection. Many customers want such a relationship with their service providers, and these relationships would reduce switching barriers.

Furthermore, according to the Federal Communications Commission (2010), consumers may be discouraged from switching services due to financial and non-financial factors such as installation fees or the hassle of obtaining new services. According to the commission's customer survey, fifty percent of respondents said paying set-up or installation fees was a major factor in keeping service.

Additionally, Jacob (2018) concluded that the market's switching barrier must be reduced urgently so that customers can use alternatives effectively. The government must intervene to assess market conditions and relieve consumer congestion.

Joudeh & Dandis (2018) support the results of the present study relative to the results on customer satisfaction. Joudeh & Dandis (2018) mentioned that customer satisfaction can be influenced by the level of service provided to them, both in terms of attracting them to the service and satisfying them with the level of service that they expect.

Further, the findings of the study are related to the results of Nerjaku & Braimllari (2021). According to Nerjaku and Braimllari's research, price perception was positively related to customer satisfaction and retention, implying that customers who paid a high price for internet service were more likely to be satisfied with the service.

Similarly, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) mentioned that trust generates relationship exchanges that customers highly value, which leads to commitment. While trust develops as a result of preceding interaction and previous experience (Agustin & Singh, 2005), organizations must focus on retaining these customers who have placed their trust in them.

However, the results of the study done by Waiba et. al (2021) were inconsistent with the current study's results. The ISP's gap score was also evaluated, and it was discovered that there is little difference in the quality of services provided between the two internet service providers. The mean difference is 0.097, which is not statistically significant.

Finally, the study by Richard and Mensah (2020) backs up the study's findings. According to the findings of a study on the effect of service quality on customer retention in the banking industry, there is a significant positive relationship between service quality and customer retention.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The majority of the respondents' internet service provider is Converge, and most of them only subscribed with their internet service providers just recently, ranging from 1-2 years or during the start of online classes. All factors to assess service quality of internet service providers garnered a descriptive interpretation of agreement, which means respondents approved their internet service providers' current service quality. Only the indicator switching barrier – interpersonal relationship among the factors assessing customer retention got a descriptive interpretation of undecided, which indicates that respondents are not sure if they have developed a personal bond and friendship between their internet service provider and themselves. For the hypothesis, there is a significant

difference in the respondents' assessment of service quality when grouped according to internet service provider and years of subscription, and there is a significant relationship between the respondents' assessment of service quality and customer retention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The service quality of internet service providers may be further improved by implementing flexible and extended working hours to serve customers who may have jobs during the regular business hours of the day. It is suggested that internet service providers establish a shifting schedule for their personnel so that they can respond to client problems outside of normal business hours and on weekends. As a result, customers may raise their questions and concerns at their most convenient time of day, and they will be less likely to transfer internet service providers.

The internet service providers may want to consider adopting the practice of showing empathy by listening to their pain points and showing genuine concern, particularly when customers are experiencing problems with their internet connectivity, which may cause interruptions to their work. Through this, customers may feel a more genuine connection than merely informing them about the actions taken in response to their concerns.

It is also recommended that internet service providers deliver a consistent internet experience to their customers and provide the additional services expected from them, as customers value consistency and will not tolerate rudeness, neglect, or failure to deliver on promises. They will remember all the times that the company failed to deliver what was expected from them. They may consider developing a goal-oriented team that will be in charge of improving client experience from enquiries to installation to after-sales services as a method to become consistent in every business endeavor.

Another recommendation is for the internet service providers to continue their current strategies, but give more focus on maintaining or improving the speed of their internet service during busy times, and to shorten waiting time for customers. They may consider making better internet support a priority. Customers can become frustrated when customer service representatives do not fix issues for them for a variety of reasons. It is recommended that internet service providers create their own application where users can self-diagnose and troubleshoot problems. This self-service application has to be accessible and available throughout the day to lessen customer frustrations and waiting times. The company may save more resources if customers can fix the problem themselves.

Customer loyalty programs, such as point programs that allow customers to accumulate points that they can later redeem and use for free products or services, or

paid VIP programs that allow customers to pay a monthly or annual fee to join a VIP member club with access to special services, discounts, or unique opportunities, and other loyalty programs, are also recommended for internet service providers.

IMPLICATIONS

This study indicates that superior service quality serves as a key competitive advantage, driving customer retention and loyalty in the marketplace. By prioritizing service quality, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can boost customer satisfaction, resulting in improved retention rates and reduced customer turnover. Also, ISPs can stand out in a competitive market, attracting prospective customers and encouraging them to switch to their internet service provider. Furthermore, the results of this study may be utilized by the ISPs to drive revenue growth, expand market share, and sustain business success.

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