

## Service Quality Beyond Satisfaction: Strategic Marketing Interventions and Consumer Engagement in Haryana's Evolving Retail Ecosystem

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### Abstract

Retail in India is undergoing a major transition. In Haryana, one of India's most economically vibrant states, organized retail, traditional kirana stores, and quickly increasing e-commerce platforms compete for consumer attention and loyalty. This study investigates service quality as a strategic motivator for consumer engagement, loyalty, and long-term retail connections, beyond customer satisfaction. Using primary data from 480 retail consumers in four Haryana cities (Gurugram, Faridabad, Ambala, and Hisar) and secondary data from national retail reports and academic literature, the paper uses a structured questionnaire based on SERVQUAL and Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) frameworks. Physical elements and quality of personal interaction are the most essential factors affecting consumer engagement in Haryana's organized retail industry. Repurchase and word-of-mouth intent depend on policy and problem-solving excellence. Further, happiness alone does not predict consumer engagement; pleased consumers without emotional or sensory participation are more likely to transfer shops. Strategic marketing interventions like tailored loyalty programs, omnichannel integration, immersive store design, and staff empowerment are the best ways to turn satisfied customers into engaged ones. Research-based recommendations for Haryana's retail customers' demographics and economics conclude the study.

**Keywords:** Service quality, consumer engagement, retail marketing, Haryana, SERVQUAL, RSQS, customer loyalty, omnichannel retail, strategic marketing.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

India's retail sector is one of the fastest-growing in the world, at USD 836 billion and expected to reach USD 2 trillion by 2032. This expansion hides a complex reality where classic and modern formats coexist, digital adoption is unequal, and customer expectations are rising rapidly. Haryana is vital to this landscape. Near the NCR and in Gurugram are high-end, digitally savvy retailers, while Faridabad, Ambala, Panipat, and Hisar are more price-sensitive and conventional. Haryana's diversity makes it excellent for retail behavior research. This paper claims that service quality directly affects consumer involvement, which is more lasting than contentment. Engagement fosters emotional connection, repeat visits, and loyalty, while satisfaction indicates appropriate service. In competitive marketplaces like Gurugram, where consumers select between Reliance Smart, Amazon, Flipkart, Blinkit, and Zepto, this differentiation is crucial. This study analyzes how strategic marketing actions help merchants change from satisfaction to engagement in this climate.

### 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

**Service Quality: From SERVQUAL to Retail-Specific Models:** Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985, 1988) defined service quality as the difference between customer expectations and actual service, creating the SERVQUAL model with five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Although widely used, retail-specific difficulties led Dabholkar, Thorpe, and Rentz (1996) to develop the RSQS model, incorporating physical and policy variables. RSQS is recognized in Haryana, India. The SERVPERF paradigm by Cronin and Taylor (1992) emphasizes performance-based measurement. Comprehensive analysis is done with both paradigms.

**Conceptual shift from satisfaction to engagement:** Traditional customer satisfaction surveys cannot predict deeper consumer actions, according to current studies. Consumer engagement—involving emotional, cognitive, and behavioral commitment—is more meaningful, according

to Pansari and Kumar (2017) and Van Doorn et al. (2010). Engagement, advocacy, and competition resistance distinguish engaged customers from satisfied ones. Service quality fosters engagement beyond pleasure (Singh et al., 2024) according to empirical research. Personal interaction, physical environment, and problem-solving increase retail engagement in Haryana.

**Retail Marketing Strategies:** Retail strategic marketing interventions strive to boost engagement and retention beyond basic service delivery. They include retail design, loyalty programs, staff training, CRM, and channel integration. Experiential marketing creates emotionally engaging experiences; personalization uses data to tailor communication; advanced loyalty programs strengthen customer attachment; and omnichannel integration ensures a seamless experience across physical and digital platforms, according to the literature.

### 3. HARYANA'S RETAIL ECOSYSTEM: CONTEXT AND EVOLUTION

**Table 1: Key Economic and Retail Profile of Haryana (2023–24)**

Indicator	Value / Data	Source / Year
State GDP (GSDP) at Current Prices	₹ 9.7 lakh crore (approx.)	MOSPI / Haryana Govt. 2024
Per Capita Income	₹ 2,98,000 (~USD 3,580)	Haryana Economic Survey 2024
Urban Population (% of total)	~34.8% (rapidly rising)	Census 2011 / Planning Commission
Major Retail Cities	Gurugram, Faridabad, Ambala, Hisar, Panipat, Karnal	Field survey / ANAROCK 2024
Organised Retail Market Share (Haryana)	~28–32% of total retail	RAI / BCG-RAI 2024 (estimated)
E-Commerce Users in NCR+Haryana	~35 million (2024 est.)	Bessemer / IAMAI 2024
Active Kirana Stores (Haryana)	~4.8 lakh (estimated)	NRAI / MSME Ministry 2023
Mall Space (Gurugram alone, 2024)	>12 million sq. ft.	ANAROCK 2024

Source: Compiled from Haryana Economic Survey 2024; BCG-RAI 2024; ANAROCK 2024; IAMAI 2024; MOSPI

The Haryana retail market is dualistic. Gurugram is a high-income, tech-savvy segment that wants immersive and omnichannel buying, whereas Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities like Hisar, Rohtak, and Ambala still practice traditional retail, where trust and personal relationships drive loyalty. This disparity necessitates adaptive service quality solutions for both sectors. In cities, the COVID-19 epidemic spurred digital adoption, increasing Blinkit and Swiggy Instamart use. While experiential formats have revived physical retail, Haryana's retail future lies in a balanced multichannel approach.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This mixed-methods study uses a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews and focus groups. Service quality in Haryana's retail sector is described and analysed using PLS-SEM to determine correlations between service quality, satisfaction, and consumer involvement (Hair

et al., 2022). Primary data were acquired from 480 consumers in Gurugram (150), Faridabad (130), Ambala (100), and Hisar (100), representing varying retail development levels. A stratified random sample strategy ensured age, income, and shop choice diversity. A 5-point Likert scale was used to collect demographics, a 28-item RSQS-based service quality scale, and a 12-item consumer engagement scale (Vivek et al., 2012). Between October 2023 and March 2024, Hindi and English surveys were conducted.

**Table 2: Sample Distribution across Study Cities and Consumer Profile**

City	Sample (n)	% Organised Retail Users	% Online/Hybrid Users	Avg. Monthly HH Income
Gurugram	150	78.7%	82.0%	₹ 95,000+
Faridabad	130	61.5%	64.6%	₹ 52,000
Ambala	100	48.0%	43.0%	₹ 38,500
Hisar	100	31.0%	28.0%	₹ 29,000
<b>Overall (N=480)</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>57.3%</b>	<b>58.5%</b>	<b>₹ 57,000 (avg.)</b>

Source: Researcher's primary fieldwork, October 2023 – March 2024

### 4.3 Hypotheses

H1: Service quality dimensions (Physical Aspects, Reliability, Personal Interaction, Problem Solving, and Policy) have a significant positive effect on consumer satisfaction in Haryana's retail sector.

H2: Consumer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between service quality and consumer engagement.

H3: Service quality directly and significantly predicts consumer engagement, over and above its indirect effect through satisfaction.

H4: Strategic marketing interventions (experiential marketing, personalisation, loyalty programmes, omnichannel integration) significantly moderate the service quality–engagement relationship.

H5: The relative importance of service quality dimensions for consumer engagement differs significantly between Tier-1 (Gurugram) and Tier-2/3 (Ambala, Hisar) retail consumers in Haryana.

## 5. KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Service Quality Perception across Retail Dimensions

The 480 people who answered the survey rated the service quality across the five RSQS dimensions and their sub-items. Table 3 shows the average ratings. The scores go from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher numbers meaning that people think the service is superior.

**Table 3: Mean Perceived Service Quality Scores Across RSQS Dimensions (N=480)**

RSQS Dimension	Sub-Dimension / Item	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
Physical Aspects	Store appearance and cleanliness	3.92	0.71	2
Physical Aspects	Store layout and ease of movement	3.78	0.84	4
Physical Aspects	Attractive visual merchandising	3.61	0.91	7
Reliability	Keeping promises (pricing, availability)	3.55	0.88	9

RSQS Dimension	Sub-Dimension / Item	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Rank
Reliability	Accuracy at billing and service delivery	3.70	0.82	5
Personal Interaction	Staff willingness to help	3.88	0.74	3
Personal Interaction	Staff knowledge and confidence	3.66	0.79	6
Personal Interaction	Personalised and courteous service	3.42	0.93	11
Problem Solving	Handling of complaints and returns	3.49	0.97	10
Problem Solving	Willingness to exchange defective goods	3.58	0.89	8
Policy	Credit card / digital payment acceptance	3.97	0.66	1
Policy	Parking availability and store hours	3.62	0.87	6
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>All dimensions combined</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>—</b>

Source: Researcher's primary survey data; N=480; Scale 1–5 (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree)

The results show that Policy (mean = 3.97, especially digital payments) and Physical Aspects (mean = 3.92) are the highest-rated service quality dimensions, reflecting post-pandemic consumer expectations for convenience and clean store environments in Haryana. In contrast, personalized service (mean = 3.42) and complaint handling (mean = 3.49) are the lowest-rated, highlighting key service gaps. The 0.55-point difference between the highest and lowest scores indicates a two-speed service quality pattern—strong in systems and infrastructure but weaker in human interaction, which is critical for deeper consumer engagement.

### 5.2 Consumer Satisfaction vs. Consumer Engagement — The Gap

One important thing this study found is that satisfaction scores and engagement scores were very different throughout the sample. The average satisfaction score was 3.71 out of 5, but the average consumer engagement score, which looked at cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, was only 3.28. This 0.43-point difference is not small. It suggests that, on average, people who shop in Haryana are happier than they are engaged. They are getting enough service, but not enough to make them feel deeply.

Gurugram — Satisfaction		76%
Gurugram — Engagement		68%
Faridabad — Satisfaction		73%
Faridabad — Engagement		61%
Ambala — Satisfaction		71%



Ambala — Engagement		58%
Hisar — Satisfaction		68%
Hisar — Engagement		53%

Figure 1: Satisfaction vs. Engagement Scores by City (% of maximum 5-point score). Source: Researcher's primary data (2024)

### Figure 1: Consumer Engagement vs. Satisfaction Scores by City (Mean, 5-Point Scale)

The satisfaction–engagement disparity is biggest in Hisar (68% vs. 53%) and smallest in Gurugram (76% vs. 68%). This pattern shows that the disparity is lower in Tier-1 markets, where merchants are more likely to spend money on techniques that generate engagement and experiences. In Tier-2 and Tier-3 markets, where retail marketing isn't as advanced, customers are happy with the basics but not with more in-depth interactions. This has enormous strategic implications: the best places for retail expansion in Haryana are not Gurugram (where engagement is already high), but locations like Hisar and Ambala, where bridging the satisfaction–engagement gap can give you a big edge over your competitors.

### 5.3 PLS-SEM Results: Service Quality → Satisfaction → Engagement

The PLS-SEM analysis examined the complete structural model, encompassing both direct paths (service quality dimensions → engagement) and indirect paths mediated by satisfaction. Table 4 shows the path coefficients and levels of significance.

Table 4: PLS-SEM Path Coefficients — Service Quality, Satisfaction, and Engagement

Path	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-Value	p-Value	Finding
Physical Aspects → Satisfaction	0.312	4.87	< 0.001	Significant ✓
Reliability → Satisfaction	0.268	3.94	< 0.001	Significant ✓
Personal Interaction → Satisfaction	0.341	5.22	< 0.001	Significant ✓
Problem Solving → Satisfaction	0.229	3.51	< 0.001	Significant ✓
Policy → Satisfaction	0.187	2.89	< 0.01	Significant ✓
Satisfaction → Engagement	0.394	6.18	< 0.001	Significant ✓
Physical Aspects → Engagement (Direct)	0.218	3.41	< 0.001	Significant ✓
Personal Interaction → Engagement (Direct)	0.263	4.09	< 0.001	Significant ✓
Problem Solving → Engagement (Direct)	0.197	3.04	< 0.01	Significant ✓
Reliability → Engagement (Direct)	0.091	1.44	0.149	Not Significant
Policy → Engagement (Direct)	0.112	1.76	0.079	Marginally Sig.

Source: PLS-SEM analysis; SmartPLS 4.0; N=480; Significance: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$

The findings offer robust empirical validation for Hypothesis H1 - all five dimensions of service quality strongly forecast satisfaction. The most important factor in satisfaction is

Personal Interaction ( $\beta=0.341$ ), followed by Physical Aspects ( $\beta=0.312$ ) and Reliability ( $\beta=0.268$ ). This conclusion aligns with existing literature on retail service quality in Indian markets, which identifies staff interaction quality and the physical shop environment as primary determinants of consumer satisfaction (Mittal et al., 2014; Das, Kumar, and Saha, 2010).

Hypothesis H2—that satisfaction partially mediates the service quality–engagement relationship—is validated. Satisfaction is a strong predictor of involvement ( $\beta=0.394$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), which confirms that it acts as a mediating channel. The significant direct paths from Physical Aspects, Personal Interaction, and Problem Solving to engagement substantiate Hypothesis H3: service quality exerts a direct influence on engagement that surpasses its indirect impact via satisfaction. This is the paper's most crucial finding: the quality of personal connection and the physical retail environment still have a direct effect on consumer engagement, even when satisfaction is taken into account.

This means that businesses who only try to improve satisfaction measures, including fixing complaints, matching prices, and making sure products are in stock, are missing an important way to get people involved: the quality of the shopping experience and the relationship with the store. A customer who gets good service from a staff member who is not interested in them may be happy, but she will not be engaged. The interpersonal, experiential, and atmospheric aspects of service excellence foster engagement through avenues that pleasure fails to encompass.

#### 5.4 Strategic Marketing Interventions as Moderators

To test Hypothesis H4—that strategic marketing interventions modify the service quality–engagement relationship—the study evaluated customers' exposure to and experiences with four forms of strategic marketing intervention: Loyalty Programs (46.2 percent of respondents were active members of at least one retail loyalty program), Personalized Communication (38.7 percent received personalized offers via WhatsApp, SMS, or email from retailers), Experiential Retail Events (29.4 percent attended any in-store event, demonstration, or special promotion in the last 6 months), and Omnichannel Experience (44.8 percent used at least two channels of the same retailer, e.g., app and physical store).

**Table 5: Effect of Strategic Marketing Interventions on the Service Quality–Engagement Relationship**

Strategic Intervention	Adoption Rate	Effect on Engagement Score	Moderation Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Significance
Loyalty Programme Membership	46.2%	+0.38 points (vs. non-members)	0.214	$p < 0.001$
Personalised Communication	38.7%	+0.29 points (vs. no personalisation)	0.176	$p < 0.001$
Omnichannel Experience	44.8%	+0.44 points (vs. single-channel)	0.248	$p < 0.001$
Experiential Retail Events	29.4%	+0.33 points (vs. no event attendance)	0.191	$p < 0.001$

Source: PLS-SEM moderation analysis; N=480; SmartPLS 4.0; 2024

All four strategic marketing actions exhibit substantial positive moderating effects on the connection between service quality and engagement. The most important factor is omnichannel experience ( $\beta=0.248$ ). This means that when customers contact with a retailer across more than

one channel and get the same level of quality and service across all of them, the influence of service quality on engagement is stronger. This finding corresponds with the expanding literature on omnichannel retailing (Halibas et al., 2023; Evaluating consumer perceptions, PMC, 2024), indicating that seamless cross-channel integration is the foremost catalyst for involvement in contemporary retail.

Membership in a loyalty program also has a high moderation impact ( $\beta=0.214$ ). This conclusion supports the idea that loyalty programs operate best when they are used to make an already great service experience even better, rather than as stand-alone tools for keeping customers. A loyalty program on top of great service provides a compound engagement impact. On the other hand, a loyalty program on top of bad service has no effect and may even make the difference between what the program promises and what is really delivered more obvious.

### 5.5 City-Tier Comparison and Hypothesis H5

The comparison between Tier-1 (Gurugram) and Tier-2/3 (Ambala, Hisar) customers substantiates Hypothesis H5. In Gurugram, the main factors that generate interaction are Physical Aspects and Omnichannel Integration. This is because the city has a high-end retail infrastructure and a tech-savvy consumer base. In Hisar, human interaction and policy (particularly, credit flexibility and store hours) are the biggest factors that keep people coming back. This is in line with the fact that personal relationships and convenience are important in smaller cities' retail markets. This discovery has substantial real-world consequences: a single, national-level retail marketing plan won't work well in Haryana's heterogeneous market. Retailers that tailor their investments in service quality and marketing efforts to the distinct engagement needs of each city tier will strengthen their relationships with customers and become more competitive.

## 6. DISCUSSION

This research advances academic literature and retail marketing in India. The main contribution is empirical proof that service quality stimulates consumer engagement through its own direct pathways, especially Personal Interaction and Physical Aspects, rather than satisfaction. This finding strengthens Van Doorn et al. (2010) and Pansari and Kumar (2017)'s consumer engagement framework in emerging-market India's physical retail environment, supporting the theory that satisfaction is not enough in Haryana. Omnichannel experience is the most important mediator of the service quality–engagement connection, which is consistent with service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) and India's rapidly digitizing retail sector. Those who view a product online, go to a store to look at it, buy it through a mobile app, and get advice through WhatsApp have a more complex relationship with the business than those who just use one channel. Every touchpoint with good service deepens the engagement link. Personal service in Haryana's smaller cities, especially Hisar and Ambala, reflects Indian retail culture. Traditional kirana stores have been India's most popular shopping format for centuries. Personal relationships: the business owner knows the customer's family, preferences, informal credit, and door-to-door delivery. Organized retail in India has struggled to replicate this relationship depth, but the present findings show that merchants that use staff training and CRM tools to provide individualized service will be best positioned to take share in these transitional markets. In Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, the satisfaction–engagement gap between retailers' products and consumers' loyalty, advocacy, and lifetime value is particularly large. Haryana's retail sector must prioritize closing this disparity over the next decade.

## 7. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

**Table 6: Evidence-Based Strategic Marketing Recommendations for Haryana Retailers**

Priority	Strategic Intervention	Target Market	Expected Outcome	Timeline
1 (Highest)	Omnichannel Integration: Seamless app–store–WhatsApp journey with consistent service quality	Gurugram, Faridabad	↑ Engagement (~0.44); ↓ switching	6–12 months

Priority	Strategic Intervention	Target Market	Expected Outcome	Timeline
2	Personalised Loyalty Programmes: AI-driven, behaviour-based rewards with emotional benefits	All cities (focus Gurugram)	↑ Repeat purchase, WOM, CLV	3–9 months
3	Staff Training & Empowerment: Focus on personalised service & complaint handling	Faridabad, Ambala, Hisar	↑ Interaction quality; ↑ engagement	Ongoing
4	Experiential Retail Design: In-store events, demos, themed displays	Ambala, Hisar	↑ Store visits; ↑ emotional engagement	↑ 6–18 months
5	Digital Payment & Credit: Expand UPI, BNPL, EMI with support	Hisar, Rohtak	↑ Policy satisfaction; ↑ adoption	1–3 months
6	Hyperlocal Personalisation: Tailor offerings using local data	All cities	↑ Relevance; ↑ loyalty	↑ 9–18 months

Source: Researcher's recommendations based on PLS-SEM findings and field observations, 2024

Table 6 ranks the six strategic recommendations by projected impact using PLS-SEM moderation coefficients. Omnichannel integration and tailored loyalty programmes moderate the service quality–engagement connection best, making them the top interventions. Staff empowerment, which addresses the lowest-rated RSQS elements of personal connection and problem solving, is third but 'ongoing' because it requires continual human capital development rather than a single initiative. Retailers in Tier-3 Haryana cities like Hisar and Rohtak prioritize digital payment infrastructure, the service quality attribute with the highest satisfaction score and the baseline expectation of even traditional-format consumers. Meeting this expectation is the first step before investing in further engagement-building techniques.

### 8. Limitations and Scope for Future Research

This study is limited to four cities in Haryana and cannot be fully generalised across India. Although NCR markets share similarities with cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru, Tier-2 and Tier-3 markets may differ. Data collected over six months may also be influenced by seasonal factors such as Diwali and Dussehra. Additionally, the study focuses only on consumer perceptions and excludes retailer-side insights. Future research should include longitudinal studies to track engagement over time, comparative studies across states (e.g., Punjab, Rajasthan, Maharashtra), and focused analysis on quick-commerce platforms such as Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart.

### 9. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that service quality in retail extends beyond satisfaction by directly driving consumer engagement, especially through personal interaction and store environment. Three key findings emerge:

- (i) Personal interaction and physical aspects strongly influence engagement;
- (ii) Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities show a larger satisfaction–engagement gap, indicating untapped potential;
- (iii) Omnichannel integration and personalised loyalty programmes are the most effective strategies.

Although consumers in Haryana are generally satisfied, meaningful engagement remains limited. Bridging this gap between basic service and enriched customer experience represents the key strategic opportunity for the state's retail sector.

### Acknowledgements

The 480 retail consumers in Gurugram, Faridabad, Ambala, and Hisar gave their time and honest feedback for this survey. The author acknowledges the supervising committee and

department research researchers for their constructive criticism on earlier revisions of this manuscript.

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