

MOBILE TELEPHONY USER SATISFACTION IN PERU: THE ROLE OF QUALITY OF SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, for a company to be successful, it needs to understand and study the needs of customers in order to make efforts to satisfy them. For this reason, this study was conducted with the objective of evaluating the quality of service provided by Peruvian mobile telephony companies and its effect on user satisfaction. The research was developed with a quantitative approach, with a cross-sectional, non-experimental, correlational design. The technique used for data collection was an 18-item questionnaire addressed to a representative sample of 170 users who have been served by the mobile operator. Through a valid model, the size of the representative sample was determined from a finite population. The questionnaire applied was based on the SERVQUAL model for the evaluation of service quality and user satisfaction. The results were collected from July 25, 2023 to July 31, 2023. Among the findings was the prevalence of service quality problems (13.6%) and user satisfaction (11.2%), and a significant relationship ($r=0.710$, $p=0.000$) was also found between the variables, which means that if strategies are proposed to improve the quality of service provided by Peruvian mobile telephony companies, they will contribute to improving user satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Quality; Service; Satisfaction; User; Telephony

INTRODUCTION

We currently have different information and communications technologies (ICT) that have brought about changes in the way we relate to other people. More and more people are accessing the basic and new services of mobile telephony. The continuous increase of users is due to the fact that this telephony brings benefits such as effective communication, simplicity of life, greater control of time, cost reduction, and the possibility of making informed decisions, among others (Černá et. al., 2024).



In Peru there are several companies that provide mobile telephony services. In a study conducted by OSIPTEL, the most representative companies in this niche are Movistar, Entel, Claro, Bitel, Suma Móvil, Flash Mobile, Guinea Mobile and Dolphin. These companies provide different services such as: mobile lines (prepaid and postpaid), home service lines (telephone), Mgb Internet packages, social network packages, cable channels, among others (Ybáñez, 2023).

While it is true that there is a positioning and boom in the mobile market, it has been shown that there are many complaints and dissatisfaction with the services provided, since they present interruptions and failures in the network, distortion of voice and messages, low loading speed, poor infrastructure, etc. This generates negative consequences for users, such as difficulty in accessing meetings or classes, loss of time, lack of communication, inaccessibility to information and increased stress levels.

The problem of dissatisfaction among users of mobile telephone companies is present in different countries. For example, in Portugal, Torrão and Teixeira (2023) found customer dissatisfaction with the service provided, mainly affecting their loyalty, due to factors such as the absence of transparent policies on the storage of their personal data.

In El Salvador, Urrutia (2022) found results similar to those of Torrão and Teixeira. The author showed moderate dissatisfaction among users of telephone companies. This dissatisfaction was due to factors such as connection problems (34%), low telecommunication quality (31%), non-transparent contracts (71%), very high tariffs (12%), misleading advertising (85%) and limited speed in providing solutions to service problems (50%).

In Chile, Ríos (2019) analyzed the level of satisfaction in an interval from 0 to 10, in 353 users belonging to different companies in the telephony sector. The author found that 70% of users were not fully satisfied with the service they received. The results revealed that mainly 24% of the users were dissatisfied with the quality and price they paid for the cellular line and Internet service.

De la Vega (2021) demonstrated dissatisfaction among users of telephone companies in Quito-Ecuador. The results showed different percentages of dissatisfaction according to the elements evaluated, being mainly reliability with 41.93%, service coverage (35.42%), staff availability (37.5%) and transaction security (30.21%).

Peru is no stranger to the problem of dissatisfaction with mobile telephony services. Huapaya (2020) is one of the authors who demonstrates (through a review of various articles and news items) that 30% of users in the country feel dissatisfied with the service provided by mobile operators. This dissatisfaction leads many users to frequently wish to change mobile operators. Huapaya states that the mobile operator "claro" is the one with the highest user dissatisfaction (49%).

Gamboa and Obando (2018) found a similar situation in the city of Chiclayo. The Movistar and Claro telephone companies frequently encounter high dissatisfaction from their users. This is mainly due to the lack of speed and efficiency in resolving problems that arise, the high price of services, and the lack of flexibility for solving problems in person.

The Kano model is one of the references (frequently used, for example, by the above-mentioned antecedents) for an adequate measurement of customer satisfaction. This model has five dimensions, which are basic, enthusiasm, performance, indifference and inverse factors. The basic factors are the necessary requirements for the provision of services, which if not met can cause dissatisfaction or dissatisfaction in customers (Sotomayor, 2023); on the other hand, the enthusiasm factors are unexpected things that can be attractive and allow differentiating the service provided (Fuentes & Vargas, 2022); while, performance factors are attributes that, if present, cause customer satisfaction and allow the service not to go unnoticed (Cruz, 2021); indifference factors are those that may go unnoticed by some customers (García et. al., 2021); and finally, the inverse factors, are attributes that if absent can generate customer satisfaction (Sanchez, 2018).

Service quality could be one of the variables related to user satisfaction, in other words, the quality of telephone service may influence customer satisfaction levels. Sasomir et. al. (2024) are authors who confirm this relationship by conducting a study of these variables in users of an aviation company in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Alibraheem et. al. (2024) supported Sasomir et. al. (2024), these authors found a significant relationship between service quality and its dimensions with the level of satisfaction of commercial banks in Jordan. Also, emphasize the importance of implementing internal control to improve the quality of service provided to customers.

Another author who affirms the existence of a significant correlation between the variables of quality of service and user satisfaction is García (2023). In his study of mobile telephony users at the Peruvian University of the Union, he identified a significant relationship (p value equal to 0.00) and a Kendall's Tau-b correlation of 0.881.

Campos and Hidalgo (2018) investigated a model of service management and customer satisfaction at a university in Colombia. The study revealed that students tend to choose universities that demonstrate high service quality. In addition, they found that service time significantly influences customer satisfaction (significantly relationship between service management and user satisfaction).

Morocho (2019) in his study of Alpecorp S.A. customers found that the implementation of the SERVQUAL model improved the quality of service provided by the company, which, in turn, significantly increased customer satisfaction. This link was evidenced by a statistically significant positive correlation ($p < 0.05$) between service quality and customer satisfaction, with a Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.821.

In other research with users of a mobile telephone company in Lima, Córdova and Plasencia (2022) identified significant opportunities to improve the service offered. In addition, they established that there is a positive correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction, with a statistical significance level of $p < 0.01$.

It is therefore necessary to evaluate the quality of service in order to verify the relationship with customer or user satisfaction. A reference construct frequently used to evaluate service quality is the SERVQUAL Model proposed by Parasumaran (1991), which consists of five dimensions that are indispensable for any research and for obtaining optimal results, these elements are reliability, sensitivity, security, empathy and tangible elements. Reliability is the confidence provided by the company to provide the service in a safe or reliable manner; sensitivity is the company's posture to provide adequate service to customers; security are the attributes presented by the staff to provide quality service; empathy is related to the level of attention they can give to provide a personalized service according to the need and expectation; and tangible elements are the physical properties that the customer can perceive by the company (Barragán, 2019; Barragán et. al., 2022; Zapata et. al., 2023).

Mobile telephony service quality problems are also present in different parts of the world. For example, in Ecuador, Granda and Moya (2019) found that the Guayaquil telecommunications corporation had to implement a service marketing plan for user loyalty, given that the company had problems regarding weak technical attention, slow solutions to problems, frequent complaints about internet service and loss of customers.

Also in Ecuador, Cadena and Solano (2021) found that users of telephone companies (Claro, Movistar and CNT, which are the most representative) frequently change mobile operators (26%) due to poor service quality. According to the respondents, this service quality problem is based on the fact that the digital product portfolios are not adapted to the needs of the users.

In Argentina, Legaspe (2019) studied the mobile telephony market and found low quality levels as 97% of users are on the wrong plan. In addition, the rights of mobile telephony users are not always respected, and the price of services is high, influenced by the economic problems the country is going through.

In Colombia, Valencia (2021) analyzed the loyalty and quality of value perceived by users of telecommunications services, showing that users had problems with the quality and performance of mobile lines. Users considered that the price of services was high, and therefore their loyalty was low due to a prevalent dissatisfaction.

In Peru, there are also problems with the quality of mobile telephony service, which generates preferences for one operator or another. In Arequipa, the best positioned companies are Claro, Movistar and Entel; however, there are high portability rates due to the fact that the

plans offered are not sustainable for the population; there are several complaints about call interruption, line congestion and Internet load problems (Gonzales & Fuentes, 2021).

Similarly, the problem of the quality of mobile telephony service has been demonstrated in Lambayeque. In quantitative terms, it was found that 48% of users were dissatisfied with the quality of service provided, since the companies do not attend to their complaints, in some months the charge is higher for the contracted service, calls are congested and operators take a long time to answer questions (Pérez, 2022).

Despite the problems evidenced, there are still few studies of service quality and user satisfaction in mobile telephony operators in Peru, for example, specifically in Lima, which is the capital city with approximately one third of the Peruvian population. For this reason, the objective of this study was to evaluate the satisfaction of mobile telephony users in Lima, verifying the role of the quality of service provided.

Methodology

In this study, the existing theories on user satisfaction and quality of service have been applied to solve a problem of specific knowledge of these variables from the perspectives of mobile telephony users in Peru. The research was developed with the quantitative approach (deductive process) because it is appropriate to answer the research question that has been posed, by measuring each variable of study to finally determine the relationship between the two.

The stages of the deductive process have been followed, starting with the observation of the practical problem (user satisfaction and quality of service) regarding the mobile telephone service in Peru, then the research question was formulated in the face of the knowledge gap detected, the objectives were stated, the relevant literature about these variables was reviewed, through a strategy (research design) a measurement of the variables was performed, the measurements were analyzed using statistical methods and conclusions were deduced (Hernández & Mendoza (2018).

The scope of this research is correlational, since it seeks to demonstrate the correlation between the problems of quality of service and user satisfaction with respect to mobile telephone service in Peru. The non-experimental cross-sectional design allowed obtaining the required results, which were collected in the natural state of the population studied, that is, without concern for the control or manipulation of other variables that are not of interest. The design is cross-sectional because the results reflect the perspective of mobile telephony users in Peru regarding the quality of service and their satisfaction at a given time. The research design was executed as follows:

- The results of the evaluation of the quality of service and satisfaction of mobile telephony users in Peru were collected.

- The results obtained were processed and interpreted in the frequency table, both absolute and relative, taking into account the levels of the ordinal scale used.
- According to the results obtained, correlation coefficients were determined for the variables, as well as for the dimensions.

The following table shows the dimensions of the variables Quality of service and user satisfaction, elements that made it possible to measure the variable for the achievement of the research objective.

Table 1

Dimensions and indicators of service quality and user satisfaction

Study variables	Dimension	Indicators
Quality of service	Tangible elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical installation • Accessibility • Appearance of personnel • Quality of service
	Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism • Punctuality • Honesty • Security
	Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partners offer a fast and efficient service • Employees are always ready to help • Employees are never too busy • Employees communicate when the service will be terminated

Customer satisfaction	Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courtesy and kindness • Dedication of time to the customer • Understand customer needs • They care about their customers
	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price and service level • Recommendation and permanence or repurchase • Post-sales communication • Clear information
	Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of truthfulness • Trust • Protection in installations • Communication compression
	Expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences from previous care • Waiting time • Opinions of friends and family

Note. The dimensions and indicators are based on the SERVQUAL model and its adaptations to evaluate service quality and user satisfaction.

To evaluate the service quality variable, the SERVQUAL model originally proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1991) was taken into account, which has been used with some adaptation by many authors up to the present day. The questionnaire consists of 16 items or questions, and is divided into 4 dimensions, which are tangible elements, reliability, capability and empathy, with 4 items respectively. In addition, it was validated by an expert judgment prior to its application. Its reliability was determined by calculating the value of Cronbach's alpha, where a value equal to 0.914 was obtained. According to Hernandez et. al. (2014) the minimum

value for the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to be acceptable is 0.7; which confirms that the questionnaire applied in this research is reliable.

To evaluate the user satisfaction variable, it was also based on the SERVQUAL model adapted by Zeithaml et al. (2009). The questionnaire consists of 11 items or questions and is divided into 3 dimensions which are communication (3 items), transparency (3 items) and expectation (2 items). It was also validated by an expert judgment before being applied, and its reliability was determined by calculating the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, obtaining a value equal to 0.878, a value that shows that the questionnaire applied is reliable.

The population consisted of 300 people between men and women, between 18 and 65 years of age, who were attended in person and virtually by the Mobile Operator. The sample consisted of 170 participants randomly selected from the population; the size was calculated using the following formula proposed by Bernal (2010) for finite populations:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N}{E^2 (N - 1) + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

Where:

n: sample size to be calculated

N: study population (in this case, N= 300).

Z: value that corresponds to the confidence level, for the chosen sample to be representative, the level is 95%, therefore $z = 1.96$).

p: probability of success in choosing a part of the population, the minimum probability is considered to be 50%, $p = 0.5$)

q: probability of failure in choosing an element of the population, because $p = 0.5$, then q equals $1 - p$, i.e. 0.5)

E: error that the sample is representative (in this case, the error is 5%, $E = 0.05$). Para determinar la relación de las variables de estudio (Calidad del servicio y satisfacción del cliente) se usó la prueba de correlación no paramétrica de Spearman después de pasar los resultados de cada variable por la prueba de normalidad.

Results

Table 2 shows that 0.6% of the users surveyed perceive that quality service is never provided by Peruvian mobile telephone operators. In addition, 0.6% perceive that quality service is almost never provided, and 12.4% perceive that quality service is sometimes provided. This shows that there is a relative problem in the quality of service provided by mobile telephone operators and, therefore, the need to propose solutions.

Table 2

Descriptive results of quality of service and its dimensions in Peruvian mobile telephone operators

Reply	V1: Quality of service		D1: Tangible elements		D2: Reliability		D3: Response capacity		D4: Empathy	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Never	1	0.6	2	1.2	1	0.6	1	0.6	1	0.6
Rarely	1	0.6	11	6.5	3	1.8	2	1.2	0	0.0
Sometimes	21	12.4	42	24.7	17	10.0	19	11.2	17	10.0
Almost always	97	57.1	77	45.3	97	57.1	95	55.9	67	39.4
Always	50	29.4	38	22.4	52	30.6	53	31.2	85	50.0
Total	170	100	170	100	170	100	170	100.0	170	100.0

Note: Own elaboration

The problem of service quality in Peruvian mobile telephone operators is distributed similarly in all its dimensions (tangible elements, reliability, capacity and empathy). Regarding the dimension of tangible elements, 1.2% of the users surveyed perceive that mobile operators are never consistent with respect to their service, 6.5% perceive that they are almost never consistent, and 24.7% perceive that they are sometimes consistent.

With respect to service reliability, 0.6% of users surveyed said that mobile operators never provide reliable service, 1.8% said that they almost never do and 10% said that they sometimes do. The data are similar with respect to service responsiveness: 0.6% of the users surveyed indicated that they never perceive service responsiveness to be adequate, 1.2% perceive it to be almost never, and 11.2% perceive it to be sometimes. Finally, 0.6% said that they had never observed empathy in the service provided by mobile operators, and 10% said that sometimes.

On the other hand, Table 3 shows that 0.6% of users have never been satisfied with the service provided by mobile telephone operators in Peru, 1.8% almost never and 8.8% sometimes. This shows the need to propose solutions for customer satisfaction according to their needs, and highlights the need to understand whether the problem of service quality is related to the problem of satisfaction.

Table 3

Descriptive results of customer satisfaction and its dimensions in Peruvian mobile telephone operators

Reply	V1: Customer satisfaction		D1: Communication		D2: Transparency		D3: Expectation	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Never	1	0.6	2	1.2	1	0.6	1	0.6
Rarely	3	1.8	3	1.8	0	0.0	2	1.2
Sometimes	15	8.8	10	5.9	13	7.6	13	7.6
Almost always	94	55.3	77	45.3	99	58.2	82	48.2
Always	57	33.5	78	45.9	57	33.5	72	42.4
Total	170	100	170	100	170	100	170	100

Note: Own elaboration

The problem of user satisfaction with mobile telephony operators is also distributed in all dimensions (communication, transparency and expectation), with transparency being the dimension with the greatest problem. Regarding the communication dimension, 1.2% of users have never felt satisfied, 1.8% almost never and 5.9% sometimes. As for the transparency dimension, 0.6% of users were never satisfied and 7.6% sometimes. Finally, with respect to service expectations, 0.6% of users were never satisfied, 1.2% were almost never satisfied and 7.6% were sometimes satisfied.

Tables 4 and 5 detail more specifically the most frequent problems with the quality of service of mobile operators in Peru and user satisfaction. With regard to service quality, the most prevalent problems are that the mobile operator's facilities are not in line with the services offered, discomfort with the layout and space for easy access to what is required, lack of personalized attention to customers, lack of compliance with the timeliness of the service provided, and that employees do not demonstrate a confident attitude when faced with a customer's dilemma (not providing an adequate solution to the problem that arises).

User dissatisfaction problems arise because the employees of mobile operators do not make an effort to provide quality service, the price of mobile services does not match the quality of the service provided by the company, there are long waiting times for service, and the service received does not meet expectations.

Table 4

Descriptive results of most frequent service quality problems

Quality of service	Frequency of the problem
1. Are the facilities of the mobile operating company in accordance with the services offered?	18.9%
2. Do you find comfort with the layout and spaces to have easy access to what is required?	18.3%
13. Do employees give personalized attention to customers?	17.7%
6. Are you satisfied with the timeliness of the service provided to you?	17.1%
8. Do employees demonstrate a confident attitude when faced with a customer's dilemma in solving a problem?	17.1%

Note: Own elaboration

Table 5

Descriptive results of most frequent user satisfaction problems

User satisfaction	Frequency of the problem
24. Do you consider that the employee strives to provide outstanding service?	22.4%
17. Is the price of mobile services communicating on all digital platforms in line with the service provided by the mobile operator?	20.1%
26. Was the waiting time for the mobile operator's service as expected?	18.3%
18. Would you recommend the service received and the permanence as a customer with the operating company?	17.0%
25. Was the attention received at the mobile operator company as expected?	16.8%

Note: Own elaboration

In summary, it is recommended that Peruvian mobile telephone operators give priority to solving or seeking solutions to all the most frequent problems detailed in Table 4 and 5. Although the overall problems of quality of service and customer satisfaction are relatively low in magnitude, Table 4 and 5 show a higher prevalence of problems per item evaluated.

On the other hand, in Table 6, the p-statistic value demonstrates a statistically significantly positive and high relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction; and a statistically significant and moderate relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction; responsiveness and customer satisfaction; empathy and customer satisfaction; and tangible elements and customer satisfaction. The positive sign of the correlation coefficients points to a direct relationship and the values point to a moderate and high level of relationship according to the scale of correlation coefficients described by Hernandez et. al. (2018). These results mean that Peru's mobile telephony service quality problems are significantly related to the prevalence of user dissatisfaction found; then, an improvement in service quality is sufficient for user satisfaction to increase. It is therefore important for Peruvian mobile operators to implement strategies to improve the quality of service provided, taking into account the most prevalent problems identified in this study (Table 4).

Table 6

Correlation coefficients for the study variables

Objective correlation	Spearman's Rho	p-value (Sig)
Service quality and customer satisfaction	0.710	0.000
Reliability and customer satisfaction	0.629	0.000
Responsiveness and customer satisfaction	0.578	0.000
Empathy and customer satisfaction	0.622	0.000
Tangible elements and customer satisfaction	0.562	0.000

Note: Own elaboration

Discussion

The problem of Peru's mobile telephony service quality and user satisfaction has been reflected in different countries. In Bolivia, Azero and Almeida (2021) found problems with service quality and user satisfaction, according to aspects such as the low quality of the network provided, the value-added service, the pricing structure, mobile devices and the service of collaborators towards customers. Likewise, Figueroa (2018) has found problems with mobile companies in Ecuador, in aspects such as the performance of workers and physical spaces for customer service. The results found by these authors are assimilated to those found in this research, however, the added value of other problems found are the untimeliness of the service, the lack of effort to provide quality service and that they do not meet the expectations that customers expect from Peruvian mobile operators.

It has been shown that there is a significant relationship between service quality and its dimensions with customer satisfaction ($r=0.710$, $p=0.000$) of Peruvian mobile operators. These results agree with those found by Campos and Hidalgo (2018) who indicate that their relationship is due according to the attention given to customer satisfaction and expectations, this is going to be reflected in the survival of the company; they also agree with Morocho (2018) who indicate the presence of a relationship ($r=0.821$, $p<0.05$) between the variables service quality and customer satisfaction in a Lima company, indicating that the service provided directly influences the needs and expectations, and therefore customer satisfaction. Other authors with whom these results agree are Córdova and Plasencia (2022) who assured this relationship between the dimensions of the service quality variable (empathy, reliability, responsibility, responsiveness and tangible elements) and customer satisfaction, said author has demonstrated the relationship with the chi-square test and linear regression. However, Wang et. al. (2004) indicated that responsiveness can be considered as a quality factor, but it is not related to customer satisfaction.

The results found for the study variables generate a research agenda, for example, to delve deeper into the characteristics and/or causes of the service quality problem of Peruvian mobile operators. This is key, because based on these complementary results, more efficient solutions to the service quality problem can be proposed and implemented, a situation that will generate an improvement in customer satisfaction.

To improve the quality of services in a mobile telephony company, there are several alternative strategies that can be applied. The following are some of them:

- Improving coverage and network quality: it is crucial to invest in infrastructure to extend coverage and improve signal quality in areas where users face frequent interruptions, including the transition to cutting-edge technologies such as 5G.

- Customer service optimization: establish a more effective and accessible customer service, with 24-hour availability; training customer service staff to ensure they provide quick and efficient responses.
- Develop an intuitive mobile application that makes it easy for users to manage their accounts, pay bills and access technical support.
- Implement a system for users to send real-time feedback on problems or suggestions.
- Develop loyalty and personalization programs: provide loyalty programs that offer benefits such as extra data, discounts or special promotions to reward customer loyalty.
- Staff training and development: constantly invest in the training of technical and support staff to keep them up to date with the latest technologies and methodologies, while fostering a customer-oriented organizational culture to increase team motivation and efficiency.

CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained show that there are problems in the quality of service and user satisfaction of mobile telephony operators in Peru; in quantitative terms, it was found that 13.6% of users perceive low levels of service quality and 11.2% have low customer satisfaction.

The most frequent problems perceived with respect to the quality of service were the facilities of the mobile companies, which according to users are not in keeping with the services offered; there is discomfort with the layout and space for accessing the service; the lack of personalized attention and the untimeliness of the service are also the most frequent problems perceived by users. Dissatisfaction is most frequently based on the lack of effort on the part of the operators to provide quality service, prices of mobile services not in line with the quality of the service provided, and long waiting times for service.

Finally, it was determined that there is a significant relationship ($r=0.710$, $p=0.000$) between service quality and customer satisfaction. Likewise, a relationship was found between the dimensions of service quality: Reliability ($r=0.629$, $p=0.000$), responsiveness ($r=0.578$, $p=0.000$), empathy ($r=0.622$, $p=0.000$) and tangible elements ($r=0.622$, $p=0.000$); with customer satisfaction. These results demonstrate the need for the implementation of strategies to improve service quality in order to increase the satisfaction of mobile service users in Peru.

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Please refer to articles Spanish Biographical abstract.

