

The Public Service Qualitative Dimensions from the Citizen-Customers perspective: A Literature Review and Conceptual Model

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of public service quality in its relationship with citizen-customers satisfaction. The methodological choice consists of a synthesis of public service theories, a conceptual frameworks of service marketing and models of service quality. This theoretical synthesis made also possible to discuss the concepts of service quality and their application in the context of public administration. Thus, this article proposes a conceptual model of quality based on seven qualitative dimensions of the public service influencing citizen-customers satisfaction. The theoretical results indicate that these qualitative dimensions make it possible to grasp the contribution of quality to mastering the complexity of public service through citizen-customers satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Administrative Reform; Public Service; Quality Management; Satisfaction; Citizen-customers.

1 INTRODUCTION

Public service has been the subject of several reform programs. The introduction of quality management methods is a component of these programs. According to [48], Total Quality Management (TQM) was adopted to develop quality systems in public administration [55]. notes that the New Public Management (NPM) model has integrated quality management in public service since the 1980s. This reform model aimed to improve the public service quality by adopting a client-oriented approach [65]. In fact, [106] specify that these programs essentially focused on the quality of service and the satisfaction of expectations of (citizen) customers.

This movement of public service quality has helped, according to [43], to establish a culture of public action rationalization. In addition, according to [42], the publication of public service charters which require the improvement of the public service quality has encouraged the introduction of quality standards in public management in order to meet the expectations of citizen-customers. According to these authors, these charters also introduced the culture of measuring citizen-customers satisfaction. This has made reforms in the administration increasingly focused on the citizen-customers and his satisfaction. According to [4], the administration has started to use the term "customer" instead of "user" thanks to the new concept of beneficiaries of public service introduced by public service charters.

The quality movement in the context of public service has not stopped at this stage. Public administrations have started to develop their own quality management benchmarks as in the case of the Public Service Self-Assessment Framework (CAF) and the "Marianne" Reception repository. Although quality systems are becoming an integral part of public management, their impact on improving public service delivery remains largely unknown [82]. Administrations are under increasing pressure to provide quality public services [80]. Furthermore, the qualitative dimensions of public service likely to improve public service are not detailed in the logic of achieving citizen-customer satisfaction. This satisfaction and this new status of users of the public service require also conceptual clarifications.

In this context, the authors propose a conceptual model of the public service quality making it possible to understand how to improve the citizen-customer satisfaction. This model also helps to overcome the conceptual obstacles of public service and to master its complexity. It is based on a system of seven qualitative dimensions of public service. This work also emphasizes

the contribution of quality management to the resolution of public problems often assigned to dominant disciplines in this sector such as public law [42].

In the form of theoretical synthesis, this article first presents a clarification of the concept of service and public service. Next, the authors discuss the conceptual approaches of service quality before tackling a classification of seven qualitative dimensions of service from the literature. This has led, according to an interpretative approach, to identify the links existing between each of these dimensions and the total quality of public service. Finally, these relationships will be presented by a conceptual model from the literature review highlighting the causal relationship between these qualitative dimensions and the total quality of public service on the one hand and between total quality and citizen-customer satisfaction on the other.

2 THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

2.1 THE COMPLEX CONCEPT OF SERVICE

The concept of service is complex to define despite the many attempts to define it. According to [67], these definitions are still vague. Indeed, several authors and organizations have attempted to define "service" in order to define its concept ([47], [81], [45], [89], [54], [95], [10], [58], [39], [60], and [27]).

Definitions are found which emphasize the intangibility of the service by opposing it to material goods as confirmed by [47], "market services are the transactions of an enterprise or entrepreneur with the market when the object of this transaction is other than a transfer of ownership of a tangible asset". The American Marketing Association also confirms this by considering that the service "comes in the form of activities, profits or satisfaction offered at the time of sale or provided in connection with the sale of products". Others address the theme of the existence of a product-service continuum ([81]; [95]). This is what [81] underlines, "service is an act, a performance, an effort, in contrast to a product, a material good which is a thing, an object, an instrument".

For [95], because there are very few pure services and pure products, he proposes a structural definition of the service in the form of a molecular model, being understood that if one of the constituent elements changes, the entity global can be completely changed [63]., for its part, questions the problem of the boundaries between product and service. He says that "if marketers point out that the service relies on physical media and, conversely, many products are accompanied by services; then, where "the service begins and where does the product? ".

As for [45], a service is "the transformation of the condition of an individual, or of a property belonging to any economic agent, resulting from the activity of another economic agent, at the request or with the approval of the first agent". This definition reflects the complexity of the concept of "service" [35]. considers it imprecise and proposes a distinction between service as a process and service as a result. It specifies that a service activity "is an operation, aimed at transforming the state of a reality C, owned or used by a consumer (or customer, or user) B, carried out by a service provider A at the request of B, and often in relation to it, but not leading to the production of a good capable of circulating economically independently of the support C".

In addition, this concept is not clear because of its particular characteristics, both in management science ([72]; [57]; [40]) and in economics ([20]; [36]). The authors do not hide the complexity of the concept of "service" and the problem of its difficult definition. This is why [24] did not approach in their work "Servuction" the problem of definition of the service. Rather, they focused their work on the system of its realization: Servuction [27]., for its part, presents a service typology based on the criterion of the complexity of the service. Its classification makes it possible to distinguish among business services, "added" consulting services with high added value, and "do" or "standardized" services, largely calling upon a low-skilled workforce.

In connection with the words of [24], [70] states that service is "the result or output of a production system based on the interaction between the physical medium, the staff and the customer. This is a systemic vision that highlights the importance of relationships... between the various constituent elements of the service business";

In a systemic logic of service, [24] considers servuction as "the systematic and coherent organization of all the physical and human elements of the customer-business interface necessary for the performance of a service of which the commercial characteristics and the quality levels have been determined". Its elements are: the customer, the personnel in contact, the service, the physical support and the internal organization system. The complexity of the service depends on them. In order to better understand the specific problems of public management, it is essential to examine the manufacturing process of a public service: its Servuction System.

In addition, the customer aggravates the delimitation of the concept of "service" by participating in the production and delivery process of the service. It is both consumer and producer of the service [37]. The authors who designed the Servuction

observed this participation on three levels: physical participation by replacing the staff in the execution of certain simple tasks (example: filling out a form); intellectual participation (example: use of orientation machines); and emotional participation. The authors have also identified three points of application of consumer participation: specification of the service, contribution to the provision of the service, and control (the customer expresses himself on the state of the elements and his perceptions concerning the production and service delivery process) [25].

"Where the people employed by the service company and whose work requires being in direct contact with the customer" [25], the personnel in contact is considered to be the most important resource in the provision of service [39]. His opinion on the quality of service is very close to that of customers/users [94]. It is one of the most important dimensions of the company's image: it personifies it in the eyes of the customer [76]. The listening skills, the dedication and the competence of the personnel in contact reveal to the customer the sense of evaluation of the service [12].

As a visible part, the physical medium represents the tangible part of the service. These are the immediate environment of the customer contact (or the material space in which the service takes place), the material elements necessary for the provision of the service and finally the material equipment of the personnel in contact [31].

Table 1. The Complexity Aspects of the "Service" Concept

Specificity	Meaning	Complexity aspects
Intangibility	Distinctive feature of services excluding any possibility of touching or feeling them as opposed to what we can do for physical goods	1-Services cannot be stored [10] 2-Services cannot be protected by patents 3-Services cannot be easily displayed or communicated 4-The prices are difficult to fix as well as the calculation of the costs. 5- Evaluating a service is difficult before, and sometimes even after consumption [24].
Simultaneity of production and consumption	Distinctive feature of services reflecting the interdependent links between the service provider, the customer receiving the service, and other customers sharing the service experience. Interactions that occur between the customer and the physical support on the one hand and between the customer and the "contact staff" on the other [24]	6-the consumer participates in the production 7- Other consumers participate in the production. 8. Centralized mass production of services is difficult.
Heterogeneity	Distinctive feature of services reflecting variability in terms of consistency, from one service transaction to another.	9-Standardization and quality control are difficult to implement. 10. Difficult individualization of the offer [85]
Perishability	Distinctive feature of services preventing any attempt to conserve them, recycle their unused part and inventory them.	11. Services cannot be inventoried. 12. Uncertainty on the duration of the production process and therefore on the use of the capacity to produce [91].
Multidimensionality	Distinctive feature of services made up of a procedural dimension (these are the systems and procedures leading to the production of the service) and a relational dimension (the interactions of personnel in contact with customers [40].	13. Service: the result of the interaction between the customer, the physical support and the personnel in contact. This interaction is essential to the achievement of the service and determines the consumers' judgments concerning the quality of the services [97].

[24] considers the service as "a temporal experience lived by the customer during the interaction of this one with the personnel of the company or a material and technical support". This is the aim of the servuction system and the result of the interaction between the customer, the physical support and the personnel in contact.

According to [31], in the servuction system, the part not visible, by the customer, is the internal organization system of the service enterprise. This is the set of administrative and a managerial function that allows you to set up the elements of the

Servuction systems, regulate them and perform the basic management operations necessary for the economic life of the establishment. In order to deepen the discussion around the complexity of "service" and the difficulty of its definition, we will dig into the research on this notion which is different from "product". The theorists who have worked on this issue ([88], [91], [10], [39], [24]) participated in the development of five specificities characterizing the "service" as shown in table 1 above: Intangibility, Heterogeneity (the service is more often "tailor-made"), Simultaneity of production and consumption, Multidimensionality and Perishability.

In conclusion, we note that all of the five specificities are not sufficient to define what a service is, since they do not apply in the same way to all of the services ([7]; [35]). This service theory is challenged by researchers in Service Marketing and others like [59]. However, these same criteria remain very useful for analysing services, and allow them to be distinguished from goods or from one another [13].

2.2 PARTICULARITY OF THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Logically, the complexity carried by the concept of "service" will contaminate the concept of "public service". At first, the theory of public service was based on a character giving the administration a competence of administrative jurisdiction, and the legal concept of public service, which appeared at the end of the XIXth century, considered public service as the activity of 'general interest supported by the administration. However, this legal model of public service was characterized by practical failure. For example, jurists had "a considerable reverence for the concept of public service, considered supreme not by the achievements it allowed in public intervention, but because of the role it played since its invention in 1900 in the construction of administrative law through the definition of the jurisdiction of the administrative judge " [41], and ignored the" administered "and their rights.

For [46], "the legal construction of the concept of public service will not give users the means to effectively assert their rights". This is why these authors consider public service to be a monopoly service offered by a public organization. The reality of public services is more complex than it may be a public monopoly, because there are public service missions which can be ensured in partial competitive situations [9]. The concept of public service also has economic foundations (theories of public goods, natural monopoly, externalities, theories of investment choice, discount rate, marginal cost pricing and maximization, surplus for community, etc.). This author thus notes that public service is part of a social construction and that it can be defined as a social activity that public authorities erect as such.

This refers, according to an organic approach, to the assimilation of the public service to the public entity which produces it and makes it public or private. This organic definition of public service has adapted to the interpenetration of public and private structures [56]. This concept is then defined with reference to the body that manages it. Public administration is not private enterprise, hence another aspect of complexity which accompanies the definition of public service. This complexity is also due to the nature and intensity of the link between the public authorities and the service provider [85]. This is why, since the appearance of private individuals entrusted with a public service mission, the methods of managing the service have gradually taken a central place in the definition of public service [71].

In addition, when we literally translate "public service" into another language, the meaning changes, for example, to German, we translate public service by the expression öffentliche Dienst, which more designates the professional body of civil servants and the relationship of public law by which they perform the function of administration.

According to [15], public service is "an activity of general interest managed by the administration or by a private person, who has been delegated by it and who is subject to control by the administration". The author has developed another more united definition, above all that solidarity is at the foundation of the theory of public service, which considers public service as "a legitimizing myth: it sculpts the image of a generous, benevolent State, only concerned about the well-being of its subjects" [14] [8]. joins the character of general interest of the public service and underlines that it covers all the activities of general interest which are carried out directly or indirectly under the aegis of public, central and local authorities.

The concept of public service therefore implies that it is an activity of general interest. However, there are a series of administrative activities which seem not to meet this imperative although they are legal [15]. For example, the activities by which the administration intends to obtain resources. But there is more: medical coverage, for example, is considered to be of general interest in some countries while it is of personal interest in others. In the United States, a large part of the population is not covered against the risk of "diseases", while it is present on the other side of the Atlantic, because the authorities consider that this risk is personal nature and that the community should not intervene. The idea of general interest therefore does not have the same repercussions and differs from one administrative system to another. Public service is therefore only the translation of the policies which the public authorities intend to conduct.

According to [85] public service can be defined as "a concrete activity, supported by a public or private organization, which results from a mission of general interest defined by the public authorities. The general interest purpose of public services (the functional dimension) justifies the control exercised by the public authorities over the definition and implementation of the service, whether it is managed by a public or private organization (the organic dimension). It also justifies that the public service provider should be subject to specific operating rules which protect users against the prerogatives of public power which they enjoy (the material dimension). "

This author gives a three-dimensional conception of public service based on three dimensions: functional, organic and material. These dimensions are evolving, according to the author, correlatively to the extension of the scope of intervention of public services. We have seen that multidimensionality is a permanent feature of service before it is public or private. This presents another aspect of the complexity that public service brings. Hence, the remark of the two authors [46] who call for reinvention at the bottom of public service.

Furthermore, the status of user of the public service also gives rise to several debates. It is presented according to several profiles: Public service customer, user, citizen, citizen, taxpayer, voter... etc. His relationship with public administration is also debated. This is what founds the difference between civil and public law: the two contracting parties are not on the same level of equality. Another aspect of complexity can arise here, which is how the demands of customers of the public service combine with the "vision, mission, professions of the public body" and of course the "legislative and regulatory corpus". Relationship still complex!

In addition, [14] distinguishes four types of public services according to the time of their appearance or their sector of activity: old public services, economic public services, social services and socio-cultural services. Each type hides an amalgam of problems (economic, social and cultural) which feed the complex nature of public service.

It is in this context that we adopt the words of [9] who considers public service as evolving in time and in space, it is a historical and societal construct, there are no Unique and "universal" "model" and therefore it is a particular concept which does not hide the complexity of public management.

In addition, the service is originally public in nature because privatization, which, according to [21], entrusts the public service to private companies, does not prevent the activity from remaining "public" in so far as it is a public service. It is public service management methods that have changed. After being managed by public management methods, the private service managed by private management practices is only public service. So to address the quality of "public service" we believe that studies conducted in the field of "service" quality are sufficient to deal with this subject while taking into account the characteristics of the public administration context.

Therefore, to master the complexity in defining the concept of "service" and "public service" and to better understand the problem of quality in the context of public administration, it is essential to take into account the five characteristics associated with the services (intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability of production and consumption, multidimensionality and perishability [24] assigned to the public service as well as the elements of its "Servuction system".

According to [67], and according to the work of [24] and [69], there are two approaches to tackle the issue of the public service quality. A physical approach that compares service to a product and thus involves treating the issue of quality in a manner similar to product quality. The second approach concerns the user of the public service, particularly his behaviour, which makes it possible to understand the concept of perceived quality in the field of Marketing. So in order to understand the concept of quality and better understand its dimensions in the context of public service we will also adopt the two approaches: "user" and "product". Here we call the "user" approach, a "Citizen-customer" approach; and the "product" approach, a "physical" approach to the public service quality.

3 CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE QUALITY

3.1 THE CITIZEN-CUSTOMER APPROACH TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE QUALITY

According to [3], the customer of the "public service" is also a citizen. So it is logical and normal that he unconsciously and naturally transpose his behaviour as a customer of services from private organizations to public services delivered by public organizations. This author believes that it has become necessary for several public administrations to adopt customer-oriented usage perceptions.

The same author considers that the notion of Citizen-customer has been reinforced in public management thanks to the neoliberalism of politicians. However, it is politicians who define the expectations of customers [86] and not public managers.

The dimensions of the public service quality must take this aspect into account and interact in a systematic mechanism of reconciliation between the conceptions of politicians and the implementation strategies of public managers.

This Citizen-customer approach to the public service quality has been adopted in recent models such as the Common Assess Framework. In quality management standards, both in the private and public sectors, the "customer" orientation concerns two aspects: understanding the present and future needs of Citizen-customer s, and determining the level of their satisfaction in order to integrate it into the quality strategy of the public service. Hence the need to implement a Citizen-customer listening mechanism in order to identify their needs and expectations and be able to respond to them as best as possible. In addition, it is essential to regularly assess the level of satisfaction in order to seize the opportunities and circumvent the risks.

It is therefore essential to open up the administration to its target population. His opinion is a qualitative criterion of his performance. This opinion also makes it possible to assess public policies and measure the success of public management reform projects. The Citizen-customer is not only a natural person but it can be a business, a civil society organization or other structure. The quality of the public service, therefore, becomes a factor of competitiveness and an element of health for the business environment (transparency, listening, flexibility, etc.). In doing so, and to assess the citizen-customers satisfaction, the administration must use measurement tools such as satisfaction barometers which must be carried out periodically. The complexity of the notion of Citizen-customer satisfaction, even vague, according to [78], reinforces our systemic reflection of placing it at the center of the qualitative dimensions of public service. According to this author, academic literature suggests that the preferred means of assessing the public service quality is the involvement of the Citizen-customer.

3.2 THE INTEGRATION OF "CITIZEN-CUSTOMER" AND "PHYSICAL" APPROACHES IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE SERVICE QUALITY

Public management can be defined as a science that brings together a harmonious and thoughtful interaction of a set of human, financial and material elements [13] with the aim of enabling a system of public body to provide a public service capable of create a balance within a society characterized by a political context. We cannot separate public management from its political reading. The two interact together on the public service quality. The strategy of public bodies is different from that of the company. The former do not fight for their survival but rather for the socio-economic stability of the state while the latter seeks to generate profit to earn only its survival. This observation reinforces our point of view of identifying the qualitative dimensions of public service specific to State organizations which take into consideration the dimension of socio-economic stability which is only possible, in our view, through the satisfaction of citizens-customers. Also possible thanks to the synergy between public policy and public administration action.

According to several authors [98], "public" management needs to invent a concept of quality specific to the public service. This new concept must form the consensus of the various stakeholders in the public service. These stakeholders are defined by [33] stakeholders theory, which has developed in strategic management and applies to public management ([32]; [61]) as well as to public policy analysis. By referring to this theory, stakeholders can also be actors. These are legal or natural persons who influence or are influenced by the achievement of the objectives of public administration.

In the context of public service delivery, we can identify three stakeholders: public managers, politicians (Ministers and deputies from political parties) and Citizen-customers.

In a systemic approach, we have identified seven qualitative dimensions of public service which take into account the two "physical" and "Citizen-customer" approaches as well as the political vocation of the action of public organizations in their relationship with service public users transformed into Citizen-customer. These dimensions contribute to the assessment of the public service quality, to measure the degree of satisfaction of the Citizen-customer and to master the relationships between public policy and administrative action.

4 CLASSIFICATION OF THE QUALITATIVE DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE

The multidimensional nature of our approach has its origins in the multidimensional nature of the concept of quality [30], the absence of units of measurement common to all services, the diversity of methods of measurement and the relativity of measurement scales. Therefore the quality of the service is considered as a multidimensional construct whose number of dimensions does not form the consensus of theorists. Indeed, there are researchers who limit this number to two dimensions ([39]; [53]) and others who identify three dimensions [84], five [74], or even ten dimensions [74].

Our conceptualization of the public service quality was based on six main works in the field of public management reform and in the field of service quality management. These are the works of [52], [24], [5]; [64], [77] and [42].

The analysis of all of this work has therefore enabled us to structure the field of public service quality around the following seven qualitative dimensions:

- The internal organization of the public service;
- The image of public administration;
- The know-how of the official in contact
- Emotional qualities of the behaviour of the official in contact
- User reception area
- Physical support of the public service;
- Quality of partnership.

4.1 INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

[24] evoke, in their quality of service model (see Fig 1), this dimension among the following three elements: "quality of internal organization, quality of physical support and quality of personnel in contact with the service provider. Indeed, in their "servuction system", these authors divide the quality of service into two parts, one visible and one not visible to the Citizen-customer.

According to the two authors, the quality of the visible part, represented by the physical support and the personnel in contact, is conditioned by the quality of the non-visible part, that is to say the internal organization system. The authors emphasize that this system is determined by the objectives set by the service organization, by its structure and by the operations it performs. It brings together all the classic and specific functions of the administration (human resources, legal services, finance, marketing, information system, etc.), necessary for the performance of the public service.

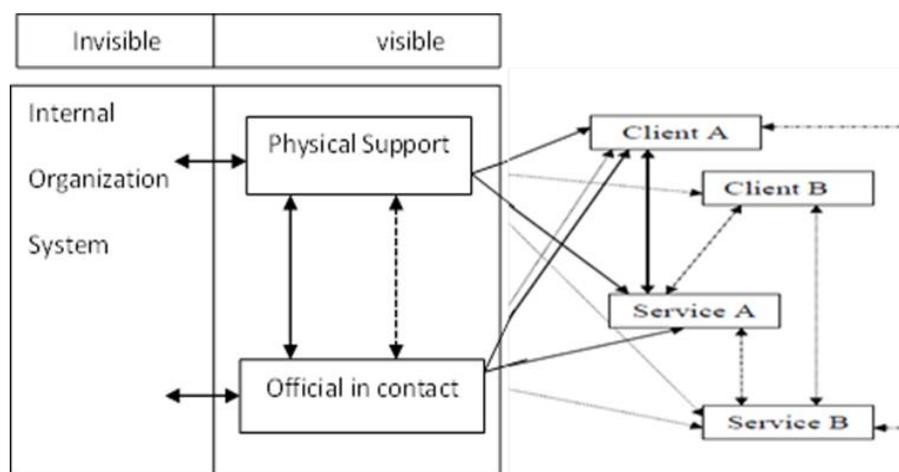


Fig. 1. Servuction System of [24]

In this sense, each public administration needs to develop an approach of integral management of the quality of the public service based on an "operational flexibility" [64] which facilitates, on the one hand, the adaptation, for each type of citizen - customer and public service, of the four elements of the public service system (physical support, personnel in contact, administration (internal organization and image), and the network of partners (environment)), and others share the continuous improvement of the qualitative dimensions of the public service from its realization until its repair [64]. classifies this dimension in the institutional category of service quality.

Another type of public sector leadership is needed to ensure the modernization of public administration through quality. It is institutional leadership which aligns with the "internal organization" dimension of quality. Indeed, according to [23], mastering the complexity of the reform, that is to say, the transition to an administration focused on the quality of the public service, results here from a complex game that is built on top management through the affirmation of institutional leadership. The author also specifies that this modernization cannot be achieved without a desire for change expressed by clearly defined institutional leadership. This leadership is, according to [23], the guarantor of managerial performance and the sustainability of public administration. According to this author, this cannot be achieved without improving the public service quality. He

considers institutional leadership as the main condition for a redefinition of the service which is also the result of the improvement of the quality of management that is to say of the internal organization of the public service.

"Hypothesis 1": The success of a Total Public Service Quality is strongly linked to the improvement of the internal organization of public administration.

4.2 THE IMAGE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

A second characteristic of the quality of the public service is reflected in the contribution of the image that the Citizen-customer has built up of their service provider administration [52].

The Citizen-customer collects information on public administration in order to use it, according to [64], in his decision-making process. This information helps him to choose the behaviour to adopt when participating in the realization-consumption of the public service. We cite, for example, if the image conveyed by the administration concerned is corrupt, the Citizen-customer can choose between behaving in the same way or taking offensive measures and in both cases he will not be satisfied with the public service.

This image of the administration is also influenced by its communication policy, the degree of its openness to the Citizen-customer, word-of-mouth practices, its tradition and its ideology.

In the internal quality management system, and according to the systemic approach, it is considered that the directorates, divisions and services must work in the logic of complementarity and not only of specialization as dictated by bureaucracy.

In doing so, in order to successfully reform public management, the public administration must continuously improve its internal management and ensure that a good image is circulated by exploiting the possibilities offered by new information and communication technologies. Internal management then contributes to producing a quality public service which arouses the citizen-customers satisfaction. As for the public image of the administration which participates in the construction of the expectations of the Citizen-customer, it must correspond to the reality of public service provision and be in harmony with the perceptions of its consumers [64]. gathers also this dimension in the institutional category of service quality.

"Hypothesis 2": The success of a Total Public Service Quality is strongly linked to the improvement of the image of public administration.

4.3 THE KNOW-HOW OF THE OFFICIAL IN CONTACT

It is a question of the know-how of the staff in direct interaction with the citizens-customers, in particular their good knowledge of the service, their mastery of the presentation of the service in clear terms, their problem-solving capacities, etc.

In this context, [40] identifies an "interactive" relational dimension of the quality of service defined by the interactions of staff in contact with customers [97]. considers it as the essential element for the achievement of the service which determines the evaluation of the quality of "public" service by "Citizen-customer" [69]. adds that the role of the "Citizen-customer" must be taken into account in the process of achieving the "public" service.

According to [96], the success of the "public" service is strongly linked to the competence of the personnel involved in the final phase of providing the service to the customer. This official comes into contact directly with the Citizen-customer and becomes the real provider of the service at that time. Its interaction with the Citizen-customer and the behaviour of both accentuate the complexity of carrying out public service at this stage and make it difficult to control the interactive dimension of quality.

[44] considers that it is important to organize training for the benefit of the personnel in contact in order to be able to improve the quality of the service and thus satisfy the citizen-customers.

The mastery of interactive quality and implicitly the success of the management system through the quality of the public service translate into actions to strengthen the capacities of personnel in contact, namely: motivation and training of personnel in contact. Motivation also implies satisfaction of the personnel in contact. This satisfaction is influenced by factors linked to the environment [29] in which the personnel in contact work, such as the good atmosphere at work, organizational support and general working conditions. The satisfaction of the personnel in contact also requires training, as underlined by [11], several pleas to improve the quality of the public service call for circumventing the risks linked to the know-how of the personnel in contact and their professionalism weighing on autonomy essential to the production of the public service. In addition, [64] classifies this dimension in the interactive category of service quality.

"Hypothesis 3": The success of a Total Public Service Quality is strongly linked to the improvement of the know-how of the official in contact with the Citizen-customer.

4.4 EMOTIONAL QUALITIES OF THE BEHAVIOUR OF OFFICIAL IN CONTACT

The interactive emotional qualities of the behaviour of the official in contact relate to the behaviour of the personnel in contact (helpfulness, availability, honesty, courtesy, sensitivity to the constraints of Citizen-customer s, etc.). The interaction between the official in contact and the Citizen-customer, during the production of the service, presents, according to the "user" approach to quality, an inseparable character of the public service. It concerns the simultaneity of the public service and its use by the Citizen-customer. This approach, according to [67], attaches particular importance to the psychological, sociological and situational factors which interact during the simultaneous production and consumption of the public service and which influence the perception of the quality of the service.

The public service is, under these conditions, a temporal experience lived by the Citizen-customer during the interaction of this one with the personnel in contact ([24], civil servant of the public administration. This official must be selected according to his interactive capacities, in particular those of relationships, as emphasized by [44]. These two authors also emphasize the importance of the satisfaction of these staff to involve them in improving the quality of service and in the Citizen-customer satisfaction.

Indeed, given the large number of public service customers and the significant pressure they can exert, public administration cannot afford to offer a service with a failing interactive qualitative dimension. Their satisfaction is a condition for improving the public service quality.

Furthermore, the relational aspect of the profession of personnel in contact transforms public service into socio-political, cultural, ethical and interpersonal acts [11]. Although this interactive dimension is not fundamentally political, it has real effects on public policies and managerial practices. The managerial vision of public management reform through the interactive public service quality is not only aimed at transforming the profession of the personnel in contact, but also administration and public policy [64]. also groups this dimension into the interactive service quality category.

"Hypothesis 4": The success of a Total Public Service Quality is strongly linked to the improvement in the emotional qualities of official in contact behaviour.

4.5 PHYSICAL SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

According to [67], this dimension includes the tangible elements of the service associated with the service or its provider, such as the physical installations, equipment and appearance of the official in contact.

This dimension seems a little paradoxical because of the intangibility of the service and its originally non-physical nature. This characteristic of the service presents an obstacle [64] before the reduction by the quality of the public service. Moreover, [93] confirm this and note that the intangibility of the service is a consequence of an experience resulting from a transaction and less of the use of a tangible good. It makes it difficult to ensure the quality of the service before consumption.

However, according to the "product" approach to quality, service is considered to be a product with an intangible and intangible character [54]. This consideration measures the quality of the service and thus facilitates quality management despite the consequences of the intangibility of the public service.

According to [24], the physical support of the Servuction system must be both an effective communication tool (the public service window) and a profitable working tool (the public service manufacturing system). Based therefore on criteria related to the characteristics of the physical support of the public service Servuction system, the evaluation of quality becomes objective [67]. Moreover, [64] considers this dimension as a component of the physical dimension of service quality.

"Hypothesis 5": The success of a Total Public Service Quality is linked to the quality of the physical media.

4.6 PHYSICAL RECEPTION OF CITIZEN-CUSTOMER

[31] identifies this dimension by the immediate environment of contact with the customer (citizen). This is the material space in which the servuction takes place, namely the material elements necessary for the production of the "public" service and the equipment and materials used by the personnel in contact.

According to [24], the tangible elements which accompany the reception of Citizen-customer s constitute the physical support of servuction. According to [2], these tangible elements physically characterize the reception of the public service, such as the decor, the atmosphere, the technology and the equipment which are considered to contribute to the capacity of the official in contact to provide the desired level of service.

In fact, the quality of the public service depends on the quality of the tangible elements that accompany the production and consumption of the service. As mentioned above, these are the materials, equipment, furniture, technologies and supplies used in the process of providing the service, as well as the characteristics of the place where the service takes place (atmosphere, sounds, smells...). All of these elements can be presented in the form of objective indicators for measuring the physical quality of the public service. These indicators also make it possible to monitor the degree of Citizen-customer satisfaction even before the public service is performed.

Thus, this qualitative dimension of public service is decisive in the performance of the physical support of public administration. It presents the second component of the physical dimension of service quality developed by [64].

In this sense, the public service has experienced the development of a quality reference system dedicated solely to improving the quality of reception of the public service such as the Marianne Reference System in France.

"Hypothesis 6": The success of a Total Public Service Quality is linked to the functional and aesthetic performance of the reception area.

4.7 THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

The partnership concerns all the agreements and links forged between the administration and its partners [73]. considers that the administration, as a service provider, is called upon to work with external actors by entering into coordination agreements with them. These agreements should reflect the degree of qualitative maturity of the Partnership. In other words, the administration must constitute its own network of partners which assists it in strengthening its capacities and mastering its disabilities. The participation of these partners in the production of public service must be guided by the continuous search for excellence.

All of the elements of this network constitute the environment of the administration and present it with a qualitative dimension of its public actions, particularly during their involvement in the provision of public service. As a result, this administrative environment is indirectly involved at various levels in its relationship with the Citizen-customer [5].

According to this author, the environment of the administration has a decisive impact on the production of the public service and consequently influences the quality of the service. He emphasizes the need to surround himself with a network of efficient public administration partners, to manage and control their activities in order to ensure total quality with Citizen-customer [64].

The collaboration between the administration and its partners is part of the service delivery and inter-organizational exchange [5]. is a specialist in inter-organizational exchanges. His work emphasizes the importance of developing a network of efficient and credible partners [64]. considers it as a dimension of the perception of the quality of inter-organizational services. This dimension seems of great importance in his model because the transactions are between structures and not individuals [64]. calls it environmental dimension of service quality.

At this level, communication becomes between organizations with different cultures, different levels of maturity and dissimilar management methods. Integrating into a successful network allows the organization to overcome its disabilities.

The integration of a successful network should not become an end for the administration but rather a means for the total quality of the public service. In addition, the administration must take care to prevent the dysfunction of this network because it can create negative repercussions on the provision of public service, as noted by [5]. This will affect the quality of the service and the relationship with the Citizen-customer, in particular the satisfaction necessary for maintaining the balance between public management and public policy. Likewise, the proper functioning of this network can achieve the expected results in terms of public service quality and stakeholder satisfaction.

Thus, the creation of high-performance networks makes it easier for the administration to learn from each other, knowledge management, sharing of experiences, and availability of professional skills and versatility of positions [6].

The qualitative dimension of the administration environment has several advantages. It promotes innovation in public organizations and makes them more efficient [103]. However, to structure and manage its network, the administration must develop relational (a targeted partnership), contractual (quality-oriented contracts and citizen-customer satisfaction) and

organizational (partnership management) capacities. According to [104], this requires the establishment of a professional and permanent quality network responsible for the policy of networking and management of partnerships.

The administration must prepare for each partner a sheet of competence and convergence with the qualitative requirements of the public service. If in the case of service companies, consideration is given to orienting towards total competition through quality of service, improvement of delivery time, after-sales service and its price [49], public administration must orient its network towards the total quality of the service around optimizing the delivery time of the public service, the provision of an after-consumption service at a lower price for the citizen customer.

"Hypothesis 7": The success of a Total Public Service Quality depends on the quality of partnership that the administration concludes with the various players in its professional environment.

5 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE QUALITATIVE DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICE TO THE CITIZEN-CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

In the public sector, the Citizen-customer approach is arousing more and more interest in research in the field of marketing in order to develop instruments which make it possible to assess the satisfaction of the user of the public service as a Customer [101]. In the form of satisfaction surveys, this research was conducted to assess public services and the quality of administrative management. Among these most significant researches and works, the creation of SERVQUAL as an instrument to measure the satisfaction of customers using the services [75]. Public services have experienced the development of instruments specific to the particularity of public administration, namely: the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), the Canadian Common Measures Tool (Schmidt & Strickland, 1998), the Swedish customer satisfaction index, the Quality Barometer in Belgium, etc.

These satisfaction measurement tools presuppose a direct causal link between the quality of the public service and the satisfaction of Citizen-customer s of public administration. The more the quality of the public service is improved the more the satisfaction of the Citizen-customer is improved. As part of the preparation of the administrative reform, the use of satisfaction indicators is essential, especially when we have information concerning the status of public service users who judge the quality of this reform [102]. According to [100], this perceived quality is produced by the expectations and the vision resulting from the interactions between the Citizen-customer and the public service (quality of the interactions of the civil servant in contact and the Physical Reception), between the citizens- customers themselves and the whole of society and between citizen-customers (quality of partnership) and the mode of operation of the public service (Internal Organization).

In the American public sector, analysis of satisfaction surveys has shown that citizens' assessment of public services differs according to the type of service. For example, fire departments received better ratings than road repair services [102]. Other studies have shown that the evaluation of public services depends on the characteristics and particularities of these ([19]; [83]) [22]. have found that the nature and the particularity of the service affect satisfaction upstream regardless of its quality. These were: the heterogeneity of the service and the frequency of use. These elements must be taken into account in any attempt to find the satisfaction of the Citizen-customer. In addition to the quality of service, all administrative reform must be geared towards the satisfaction of the Citizen-customer. The problem that can arise in adopting a satisfaction-oriented public service improvement strategy is the instability of the behaviour of the public service user. It can be satisfied today but tomorrow we are not sure of the change in these expectations and the context in which the provision of public service takes place. Thus, taking into account his behaviour both as a customer and as a citizen can overcome this obstacle towards the control of the satisfaction of the user of the public service. The evolution of user satisfaction can only occur in two dimensions of behaviour: citizen demanding rights or exigent customer.

This variable of administrative reform, "satisfaction", is defined in the FD X 50 standard as "the opinion of a customer resulting from the difference between the perception of the product or service consumed and its expectations". It is in fact an individual or collective judgment based on objective observations (for example the quality of physical reception: information support, respect for waiting for lines, processing times for procedures, cleanliness, places of 'physical reception...') and subjective (for example the quality of the interactions of the official in contact: helpfulness, friendliness, etc.).

As an object of studies in the field of Marketing, satisfaction is a judgment resulting from an experience lived during the consumption of a service by its user [1]. According to [62], it results from the gap between the perceived service (evaluation) and the expected service (expectations). As for [28], he considers satisfaction as a judgment both cognitive and affective constructed during a specific transaction. In the public sector, satisfaction is characterized by:

- The psychological state of the Citizen-customer: it is a subjective emotional reaction;
- The nature of the public transaction: it is a judgment resulting from an experience lived by the Citizen-customer.
- The comparative process between the subjective and objective experience of the Citizen-customer.

- The social, cultural and personal references of each user (France Qualité Publique, 2004).
- The Intersubjective relationship between the public service user and the administration [50].
- The concept of justice in the provision of public service: the Citizen-customer judges whether he has been treated "fairly" or "unfairly" [87].
- The co-production of the service with the user implies that individual satisfaction relates to elements other than the strict framework of the service.
- The process of "servuction" implies not only taking into account the formal factors of production of the service (reception, deadlines, etc.) but also the circumstances of production (environment, characteristics of the beneficiaries, and quality of listening, attention to the agent ...).

Thus, we cannot talk about building a quality system in public administration without taking the satisfaction of the Citizen-customer as a starting pillar. Indeed, the service is a set of operations and activities that transform Inputs into Outputs with added value. These Inputs are ultimately only the needs of consumers and the Outputs automatically refer to the satisfaction of these needs. So, to build a quality management system, it is essential to put Citizen-customer satisfaction at the center of strategies, objectives, issues and challenges of public service.

[24] emphasizes that the satisfaction of the "Citizen-customer" is a subjective quality, unlike the physical quality of the service, which remains objective. The authors consider that the important dimension of the public service quality is carried by subjective quality.

[18] empirically noted the causality between the quality of the service and the satisfaction of the Citizen-customer. Quality and satisfaction, therefore, have a determining effect on the behaviour of the Citizen-customer and in particular on their loyalty. The two authors translate these effects by the notion of "customer buyout".

This does not mean that the administration must focus solely on satisfaction, as some authors mention [67]. These authors claim that satisfaction significantly influences consumer buyout. But the quality of service does not significantly influence the intention to buy in. However, these two components, service quality and customer-citizen satisfaction, are an integral part of the service system which is inseparable. Thus, all the qualitative dimensions of the public service are dependent on each other and that a defect in one system affects the others.

Finally, we believe that the status of the Citizen-customer is that which the administration must adopt in public service reform strategies to designate consumers of the public service. This adoption will allow the entire public administration (including the official in contact) to align itself with the reform policy focused on the public service quality. This will greatly contribute to the success of the change desired by public management decision-makers. It is a kind of involvement of all stakeholders in public administration, in particular politicians, public managers and the civil servant in contact. By identifying the new user of the public service, they will change methods of problem-solving, welcoming behaviour, in a partnership way and most importantly master the satisfaction of users of the public service, citizens-customers. Bringing public administration out of its consideration of the citizen as "subject", "administered", "subject" towards the adoption of the "Citizen-customer" status is one of the first issues to be taken up.

In this sense, once the administration recognizes the status of the Citizen-customer, it must measure its satisfaction. According to Emery, it is necessary to reconcile political (transformed into legal) and administrative (transformed into managerial) rationality and to work on the dimensions of the public service quality which underlie the satisfaction of the expressed and implicit needs of Citizen-customer s. This author considers that public management is subject to the coexistence of two statutes of dependent users: the citizen and the customer whose regulation must be related to it.

Therefore, to measure the citizen-customers satisfaction, it is first necessary to assess the total quality of the public service. Besides, satisfaction is in relation to the quality of service in the total form of its seven dimensions. According to [78], politicians and public managers, therefore, agree on the need to put Citizen-customer satisfaction at the center of public service concerns. This is felt in public strategies which are increasingly oriented towards obtaining the satisfaction of Citizen-customer.

In addition, according to [79], the speeches of actors in public action insist on the evaluation of public services by user satisfaction and agree on the transformation of the status of the user of the public service and the improvement of its satisfaction as central axes of the reform of the public service in particular and the State in general. This has become a defining feature of initiatives to bring together the public administration and its Citizen-customers [17]. It has also become both an explicit objective of public administration reform models and strategies and an indicator of administrative performance [109].

According to [17], the evolution of the implementation of public service reform programs is necessarily characterized by a refocusing on user satisfaction. In France, for example, the Interministerial Committee for State Reform (CIRE) and the Court of Auditors recommend resorting to the evaluation of the satisfaction of users' expectations, the results of which are used in

audit missions of the public service [13]. considers that any administrative reform must be geared towards better satisfaction of the user whose status is clearly defined.

More so, because Citizen-customer satisfaction is also considered as a parameter for evaluating public services ([13]; [107]; [108]; [109]), our conceptual model (see fig 2) proposes to master the complexity of the public service by quality while orienting its management towards the satisfaction of the Citizen-customer.

"Hypothesis 8": The mastery of the public service complexity by his total quality is strongly linked to its orientation towards the Citizen-customer satisfaction.

"Hypothesis 9": It suffices that one of the seven qualitative dimensions is defective that the level of the Citizen-customer satisfaction is lowered. ([42]; [64]; [52]; [24])

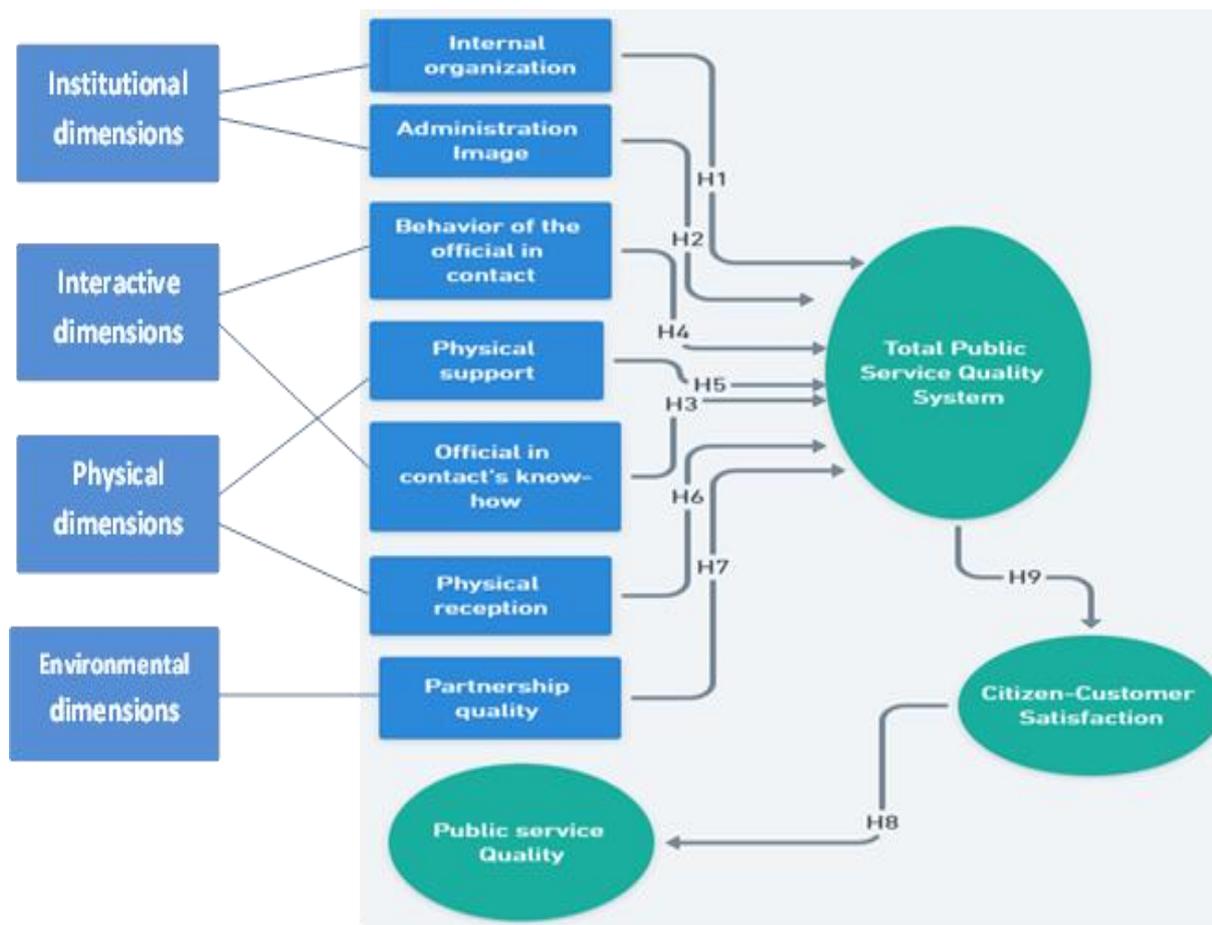


Fig. 2. Conceptual Model of the Public Service Quality Oriented towards the Citizen-Customer Satisfaction

Each numbered hypothesis presented in this conceptual model corresponds to a hypothesis formulated and numbered above. It describes the relationship between the variables. For example, hypothesis H1 refers to hypothesis number 1 which links the success of the Total Quality approach of the public service to the improvement of the internal organization of public administration. As a result, this model helps to conceptualize quality in the context of public services and gives a general overview of the relationship between Citizen-customer satisfactions and the qualitative dimensions of public service, whatever its type.

6 CONCLUSION

The issue of service quality in the context of public administration is reluctantly received by public managers and politicians. The citizen-customer satisfaction targeted by the public service quality is the main feature of this reluctance. In an interview

with public managers from four African countries, they expressed their disagreement with the integration of the variable "citizen-customer satisfaction" in the context of public service. Given the lack of resources of the public administration and the pressures which they undergo, they think that it is impossible to satisfy the citizen-customer. This is in particular with his constantly changing status and his growing criticism.

According to [42], the introduction of service quality management as model reform can resolve this reluctance accumulated by their experience with previous reforms. In this sense, the model proposed in this article allows, in addition, to fill the existing gaps in terms of measuring the need for new administrative reforms which seem non-existent according to [105]. As a result of understanding of the relationship between the quality of the public service and the satisfaction of the citizen-customer, this model makes it possible to measure the public service quality and the citizen-customer satisfaction necessary for the public service reform assessment by public managers.

However, the model presented in this article requires a confrontation with the four African countries reality in order to verify the relevance of the theoretical outcomes. The next stages of our research will consist in empirically studying the validity of the nine hypotheses according to a qualitative approach per case study. In conclusion, the model of seven qualitative dimensions proposed by this article is presented as a management system by the public service quality which completes the conceptual reform model proposed by [42] as an alternative to Post New Public Management (NPM) models.

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