

Ten Kinds of Expectations

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ABSTRACT The concept of expectations has been extensively studied for decades; this has caused a terminological proliferation, alongside semantic confusion. This paper undertakes to provide an integrated framework to facilitate the study of expectations. A number of ways to interpret expectations has been found; the authors conducted content analysis and identified four approaches: i) comparison, ii) ideal amount, iii) levels, and iv) assessment point. In addition, we tried to shed light as to the factors which influence the creation of expectations, how judgments affect the service, and what limits should be considered to define service delivery levels. All these questions seek to determine the presence of expectations throughout the purchase process.

KEYWORDS quality of service, consumer behavior, expectation, satisfaction.

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Diez tipos de expectativas

RESUMEN Durante décadas el concepto de expectativas ha sido ampliamente estudiado, lo cual ha provocado una proliferación terminológica y, con ella, una confusión semántica. Este artículo tiene por objetivo ofrecer un marco integrador que facilite el estudio de las expectativas. Se han detectado numerosas formas de interpretar las expectativas y, tras el análisis de contenido, los autores han identificado cuatro enfoques: i) comparación, ii) cantidad ideal, iii) niveles, iv) momento de valoración. Además, se intenta dar respuesta a cuáles son los factores que condicionan la creación de las expectativas, cómo afectan los juicios sobre el servicio y qué límites son considerados para definir el nivel de prestación del servicio. Todas estas preguntas tienen como finalidad determinar la presencia de las expectativas a lo largo del proceso de compra.

PALABRAS CLAVE calidad de servicio, comportamiento del consumidor, expectativa, satisfacción.

Dez tipos de expectativas

RESUMO Durante décadas o conceito de expectativas tem sido amplamente estudado, o qual tem provocado a proliferação terminológica e, com ela, uma confusão semântica. Este artigo tem por objetivo oferecer um referencial integrador que facilite o estudo das expectativas. Têm-se identificado numerosas formas de interpretar as expectativas e, após análises de conteúdo, os autores identificaram quatro enfoques: i) comparação, ii) quantidade ideal, iii) níveis, iv) momento da valoração. Além disso, intenta-se dar resposta a quais são os fatores que condicionam a criação das expectativas, como afetam os juízos sobre o serviço e quais limites são considerados para definir o nível de prestação do serviço. Todas essas perguntas têm como finalidade determinar a presença das expectativas ao longo do processo de compra.

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Introduction

The expectations and their relationship with customer satisfaction are fundamental elements to define the business quality strategies and constitute an object of academic research analysis. Within a globalized and highly competitive environment, achieving customer satisfaction becomes an indispensable requisite for the companies which seek want to assure their survival. Nowadays, the costumers claim for the best service quality possible (Fisk, 2011, p. 20); therefore only the companies that encourage going beyond the expectations of their customers can have the ambition to hold leading positions in the market. Academic research has turn toward the study and comprehension of quality and the factors that condition it; however, despite the broad bibliography on both topics, these studies continue to offer opportunities to improve the understanding of two perspectives on which such topics hold fundamental impact (Oliver, 1977, 1980; Cadotte, Wooldruff & Jenkins, 1987; Oliver & Burke, 1999; Andreassen, 2000; Torres Moraga, 2010; Duque-Oliva & Mercado-Barboza, 2011):

1. Offer approach: the perspective in the process of generating added value for the customer; looking for his satisfaction and, all in all, a higher market share. From this perspective springs a great interest in knowing how the company generates quality, how customers evaluate such quality and how it is translated into satisfaction, as well as what to do in order to make the customer choose this particular offer again among thousands of alternatives.
2. Demand perspective or process of customer purchase behavior: the process begins with: a) the acknowledgment of needs; b) the search of information; c) the analysis of alternatives using diverse criteria; d) the purchase decision and e) the behavior after the purchase. From the customer perspective, satisfaction will be key to gain the customer's fidelity to a brand and to have them talk favorably about it or, on the contrary, to have them give other people unfavorable criticism.

In these two processes, it is generally accepted that satisfaction reflects someone's judgment when purchasing the perceived efficiency of a product regarding his expectations, and that, at the end of the day, expectations influence the customer's evaluation of quality and his satisfaction.

Consumers choose among alternatives on the base of their expectations. Additionally, expectations on the quality of a product also play a core role in subsequent satisfaction (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1994a y 1994b; Kopalle, Lehmann & Farley, 2010). Research has not ignored the key role of expectations, and we find again great dispersion in terminology that has caused certain confusion that makes analysis and comprehension difficult.

Within such context, this paper has the aim of offering an integrating proposal of the kinds of expectations found in quality service literature. For this matter, a review of the main scientific magazines on the field of marketing was carried following two fundamental search criteria:

- Temporary reach: the most relevant proposals from 1977 up to the present will be analyzed without excluding the first references found, dated 1922.
- Importance of the bibliography consulted: research articles of great scientific impact in the field of marketing and the like. The results of this integrating work are made concrete through the identification of ten kinds of expectations distributed in four perspectives. Each of them as well as the variables that act upon their generation are conceptually treated in depth. The relationship between the customer's purchase behavior and his expectations are analyzed afterward, to finish with the conclusions.

The expectations about service quality

The relationship between expectations and satisfaction is a central topic in marketing (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Oliver, 1997; Mittal, Ross & Baldasare, 1998; Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Boulding, Kalra, & Staelin, 1999). Expectations can be defined as someone's beliefs regarding the attributes of a product or the effectiveness of service at a point in the future (Spreng, MacKenzie & Olshavsky, 1996) and they are a defining factor of satisfaction (Oliver & Winer 1987; Kumar, Kalwani, & Dada, 1997).

In addition to conceptualizing expectations, researchers have also worked in identifying variable premises. The consumer's expectations about

TABLE 1. Expectation premises

PREMISES	DIMENSIONS / FACTORS	AUTHORS
INTERNAL	Individual internal aspects	Influence of the consumer's previous attitude. Bitner, 1990.
		Level of the customer's demands. Kopalle & Lehmann, 2001.
		Individual likes Miller, 1977; Johnson & Mathews, 1997.
	Previous experience	Influence on knowledge structure. Based on past experiences that allow to predict the probability of an event or consequence. Miller, 1977; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1993; Johnson & Mathews, 1997; Clow, Kurtz & Ozment, 1998; Weeb, 2000; Kalamas, Laroche & Cézard, 2002; Higgs, Plonsky & Hollick, 2005.
	Interpersonal or mouth to ear communication	Factor that provides information through the previous experience of a third party. Miller, 1977; Clow, Kurtz, Ozment & Soo Ong, 1997; Weeb, 2000; Kalamas, Laroche & Cézard, 2002; Finsterwalder, Kuppelwieser & De Villiers, 2012; Golder, Mitra & Moorman, 2012.
EXTERNAL	Implicit information and explicit information issued by the company	Explicit information (advertisement or promises about the service offered) and implicit information through signals related to the quality of the service to be provided (basically, Price and other tangible signals). Miller, 1977; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1993; Johnson & Mathews, 1997; Kalamas, Laroche & Cézard, 2002; Finsterwalder, Kuppelwieser & De Villiers, 2012; Golder, Mitra & Moorman, 2012.

Source: Authors.

the quality of a product or service may come from various factors, which are shown in table 1 structured in two blocks: internal and external.

A customer's expectations are influenced by internal and external factors. Regarding the first category, personal factors are those inherent aspects to the customer's personality, that condition the way in which he interprets his surroundings; some of the most meaningful ones are shown in the table. The second internal factor is the customer's past experience (Miller, 1977; Kalamas *et al.*, 2002; Finsterwalder *et al.*, 2012; Golder *et al.*, 2012). The customer's expectations will be increased or reduced depending on the results of the service previously provided. This may mean that the concept of expectation is not characterized for subjective factors only, but that it is modeled along with time (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, R. & Zeithaml, 1993). Logically, this type of premise is possible only if the customer has had previous contact with the provider.

The promises made by the company are within the second type of premises (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Kalamas *et al.*, 2002), especially the so-called mouth to ear communication (Clow *et al.*, 1997; Weeb, 2000). Throughout this mechanism of communication, the customer collects information that conditions his knowledge structure and allows him to generate beliefs about the way his relationship with the provider should be. This

is why the tools for information diffusion used by companies issue a message that the customer (or potential customer) will interpret as the conditions of the future contract with the issuing Company; hence the importance of making feasible promises. Even if this is not the only source of external information that the customers have, the technological advances and the development of social networks gain more and more strength regarding customer to potential customer information transmission (Benedicktus, 2011).

After the introduction to conditioning factors, service quality expectations are presented hereby structured in four perspectives:

- Comparison perspective: definitions are based on the use of service quality expectations to purchase competitive brands (Miller, 1977; Oliver, 1980; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Kalamas *et al.*, 2002; Parasuraman, 2011).
- Ideal quantity perspective: definitions make reference to the level or attribute quantity that the customer considers ideal to purchase with the level of service provided (Miller, 1977; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Tsai, Hsu & Chou, 2011).
- Levels perspective: definitions establish various expectation levels admitted by the customers in the evaluation of service (Miller,

1977; Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1991; Higgs *et al.*, 2005; Nadiri, 2011; Parasuraman, 2011).

Moment of assessment perspective: definitions refer to the moment when the customer forms his service quality expectations (Clow *et al.*, 1998; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Hamer, Shaw-Ching Liu & Sudharshan, 1999; Oliver & Burke, 1999).

Comparison perspective

The comparison perspective is based on the use of service quality expectations as reference information to compare brands. In this perspective three expectation concepts are identified: regulatory, fair or deserved and predictive (Miller, 1977; Oliver, 1980; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Kalamas *et al.*, 2002; Parasuraman, 2011).

Regulatory expectations are those that represent the level of service quality provided by a supplier and that is by someone considered excellent following a realistic and feasible evaluation (Cadotte *et al.*, 1987; Hamer *et al.*, 1999; Higgs *et al.*, 2005). In other words, regulatory expectations could be said to represent the level of service that is expected to be considered excellent (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Golder *et al.*, 2012). Yip, Chan, Kwan y Law (2011) conceptualized as the service expectations that the customers consider the company should offer, as a result of the mixture between desires and needs. Generally speaking, in literature the dominant standard to measure service quality are the *regulatory expectations* regarding a specific service category (Boulding *et al.*, 1993; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Dean, 2004; Higgs *et al.*, 2005; Medrano *et al.*, 2005).

The second type, *fair or deserved expectations* are the level of service that the customer retains he should get taking into account prices (Higgs *et al.*, 2005). Thus, a consumer will consider an interchange fair as long as the relationship between the price afforded and what he gets is, from his point of view, equitable (Oliver & Desarbo, 1988; Kopalle & Lehmann, 2001). From this perspective, the deserved or fair expectations are critically defined by the personal evaluation between the possible reward and the price.

In the third place, the *predictive expectations* are defined as someone's calculations on the basis of what he really expects to receive from a provider in a concrete situation. Their origins are the theory of value-expectation by Tolman (Clow

et al., 1997; Rodríguez del Bosque, San Martín & Collado, 2006), which studies the behavior of the human being and establishes that the reaction to certain stimuli is not mechanical or unconscious, but that the individual's conscience and imagination play an important role. Someone's attitude toward an object is formed upon the beliefs and the subjective evaluation of and object's attributes. Tolman (1922, 1932) establishes the existence of a *global expectation* in the individual that includes his knowledge and beliefs in the results he expects to obtain. The *predictive expectations* are considered to be the level of service a consumer really expects to receive in a given situation (Hamer *et al.*, 1999; Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Mitra & Fay, 2010; Golder *et al.*, 2012). From this perspective, two paths are found: the first one establishes that such *predictive expectations* are cognitive variables exclusively upon which emotional aspects have no influence (Miller, 1977; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993); whereas the second one points out the fact that such expectations are cognitive but admit the influence of affective factors (Bitner, 1990; Gnoth, 1997; Dean, 2004).

In addition to the general premises regarding all these types of expectations collected before, Golder *et al.* (2012) propose the passing of time between the ultimate enjoyment of the service by the customer and the evaluation of the expectations. Anderson & Salisbury (2003) conclude that the time passed as a great influence upon the modification of expectations when the market is growing strongly and the purchase frequency is high; furthermore, the time passed at a lower rate the modification of expectations in cases where the advertisement influence and the mouth to ear communication are elevated.

On the other hand, regarding regulatory expectations, the effect of reference price (Kopalle & Winer, 1996), the personal values (Kalamas *et al.*, 2002) and the image projected by the provider have been pointed out as premises (Gutiérrez, Vázquez & Cuesta, 2010). For instance, Yip *et al.* (2011) show that many personal aspects of the Chinese woman, such as the orientation to the physical appearance and the very body image, affect positively and meaningfully the generation of *regulatory expectations* about underwear stores.

Regarding *fair or deserved expectations*, Miller (1977) proposes as premise, besides general attributes (information issued by the company, mouth to ear communication and customer experience)

the individual likes and an emotional dimension linked to the personal evaluation of the relationship between expected reward and price.

Regarding the formation of *predictive expectations*, also here Miller (1977) talks about the influence of individual likes. Higgs *et al.* (2005) demonstrate the customers modify their predictive expectations once they have enjoyed the service. Kalama's *et al.* (2002) add the influence of the consumer's capability to use his memory and include as defining factors other people's influence and personal values. Weeb (2000) shows that the influence of previous experience and of acquired knowledge by participating in the experience of others (familiarity) affects the building of predictive expectations. Additionally, experience has an effect not only on the formation of predictive expectations of one's own but also, as shown by Yang, Kim & Yoo (2013), influence the formation of individual criterion to distinguish quality from information.

The paper by Clow *et al.* (1997) concludes that mouth to ear communication has an incidence over expectations, although they find differences in the influence presented by several variables in building predictive expectations depending on the service field under analysis. Evans, Stan & Murray (2008) study the influence of other consumers' attitude upon the formation of predictive expectations, and determine that the effect of service quality on the predictive expectations will be stronger

among the socialized customers than among the non-socialized ones. In the same line, Benedicktus (2011) claims that other consumers' opinion on the internet, as assessment, has a positive influence upon the predictive expectations and web-site trust. Nevertheless, he also shows that, to have such influence, the assessment should go over a minimum threshold.

Regarding the influence of the communication issued by the companies upon predictive expectations, Kopalle & Lehmann (2006) study the effects of publicity in the case of a new product, and conclude that the quality level reflected on the publicity has an influence upon such expectations.

Finally, it is relevant to note that the customer is able to distinguish regulatory expectations from predictive ones. Golder *et al.* (2012) establish that the *predictive expectations* are more elementary because they are formed for every offer; meanwhile, the *regulatory* ones have a defined category as reference. In the same way, these authors consider that customers keep trust intervals both for predictive and regulatory expectations. It has also been defined that predictive expectations are related to a service provided in the short term, while regulatory expectations do not require such temporary proximity (Iglesias, 2004). In this sense, it has been proven that *regulatory expectations* are steadier in time than *predictive expectations* (Johnson & Mathews, 1997; Clow *et al.*, 1998).

TABLE 2. Comparative perspective

TYPES OF EXPECTATIONS		
Regulatory expectations	Fair or deserved expectations	Predictive expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They represent the level of service someone considers a supplier should give to provide excellent quality. • Mixture between the customer's desires and needs. • They present certain stability in time. • They are determined for a category. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are the level of service that the customer considers he should obtain taking into account the price he has afforded (fair interchange). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They represent someone's calculations regarding what he really expects the supplier to provide in a given situation. • They are less steady in time than the regulatory ones, because they are form for each offer. • Two perspectives can be seen: 1) they are considered cognitive variables upon which emotional aspects have no influence; 2) they are primarily cognitive with the influence of emotional aspects
SPECIFIC PREMISES FOR EACH TYPE OF EXPECTATION		
Regulatory expectations	Fair expectations	Predictive expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal values and culture. • Providers' image. • Reference price. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual likes. • Affective evaluation of the relationship between the expected reward and the price afforded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual memory. • Other people's influence, including internet opinion. • Personal values. • Individual likes.

Source: Authors.

Ideal quantity perspective

The *ideal expectations* have been defined by Miller (1977) as “the level desired about a service performance”. In this line, Zeithaml *et al.* (1993) define them as “the consumers’ desires about the provision of a service”. Tsai *et al.* (2011) consider that these expectations are the beliefs about the provision of services that constitute references or ideal points in the evaluation of the effectiveness or performance of the company.

One of the essential differences between this type of *ideal expectations* and the *comparative expectations* of the brand is that the latter require the evaluation to be feasible for a specific expectations referred to the ideal point may refer to a hypothetical situation and a level that may or not be reachable by the provider (Woodruff, Cadotte & Jenkins, 1983; Higgs *et al.*, 2005). Golder *et al.* (2012) claim that customers have trust intervals for the ideal expectations just as it happens with comparative expectations.

The essential element of this kind of ideal expectations is that they are established from the quantity of service desired by the customer or ideal point (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1994a; Golder *et al.*, 2012). The distinction is based on the definition of the ideal point referred to each attribute; hence, there are two types of attributes:

1. Those in which the consumers require a *finite* quantity as ideal quantity denominated *ideal point attributes*, an inferior or superior quantity of the attribute generates the loss of utility for the consumer.
2. Attributes in which the ideal quantity required by the customer is *infinite*; due to this, the customer will never achieve maximum utility, because the level of service it provides will always be below his desires (Teas, 1993; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1994a). The expectations that correspond to this type of attribute are denominated *vector expectations*.

Likewise, literature has established two kinds of *expectations* regarding the *attributes of the ideal point* (Teas, 1993; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993):

- *Expectations of the classical ideal point*: those where the ideal level is finite, but currently unreachable to all suppliers.
- *Reachable expectations of ideal point*: those where the ideal level is reachable and whose level can be currently provided by the best service supplier (Clow *et al.*, 1997).

Level perspective

This perspective is based on the existence of a gradation to do a previous evaluation of provision quality. The customer considers the best level possible as a result of such expectation level structure –*desired expectations*–, the minimum tolerable level –*suitable expectations*– and a zone between these two types of expectation, called *tolerance zone* (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1991; Nadiri, 2011, Parasuraman, 2011). A summary of this level perspective is presented in table 4.

O Miller (1977) proposes the *desired expectations* that correspond to the highest performance level reached by the best supplier in its category “desired” (Higgs *et al.*, 2005) and they are the level of service the customer considers that can and should be expected (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1991; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1993, 1994a).

There also is a tolerable minimum, the *suitable expectations*, and they reflect the minimum level of service quality a consumer considers should be expected (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1991; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Nadiri, 2011).

The *tolerance* interval is between these two levels. It reflects the degree in which the customers accept the service variation and admit the possible service heterogeneity caused by differences among the suppliers, the work of employees of the same supplier and even the service provided

TABLE 3. Ideal quantity perspective

<i>Ideal Expectations</i> : level desired or ideal point about service performance (may or not be reachable).		
CHARACTERISTICS		
Types of ideal expectations	Ideal level	Reachable / Not reachable
Classical ideal point	Finite	Not Reachable
Ideal reachable point	Finite	Reachable
Vector	Infinite	Not Reachable

Source: Authors.

by the same worker (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Nadiri & Hussain, 2005). The tolerance interval is not standard or steady, which means that it varies both depending on clients and time for the same client (accordion effect) widening and narrowing its size (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1991).

Going beyond on the topic, Nadiri (2011) considers that clients use *desired* and *suitable* expectations as levels of comparison in the evaluation of service. Furthermore, the results of his research reveal that the existence of a narrow tolerance interval implies a low level of acceptance of the heterogeneity in the quality of the service provided by different suppliers.

It has been observed that the variations in the size of the tolerance interval are more closely related to the fluctuation in the suitable expectations than in the desired expectations. In this sense, desired expectations are steadier and tend to increase as clients get experience (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Walker & Baker, 2000). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that the diverse levels of client's expectations are higher by enjoying a service again in the dimensions related to the service result as well as the way in which the service is provided (process dimensions) and that a tolerance zone narrowing is produced (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991).

Literature has distinguished between the tolerance interval for service quality and an

insensitive *zone* regarding the variations in service quality (Yap & Sweeney, 2007). Thus, Walker & Baker (2000) clarify that the uncertainty zone of Miller (1977) does not represent the same concept of tolerance about service quality. In the tolerance interval, the customer acknowledges the limits that correspond to the desired and suitable expectations, whereas the uncertainty zone reflects a nebula where the customer does not distinguish the limits clearly.

Miller (1977) and Zeithaml *et al.* (1993) argue that the *desired expectations* are influenced by the customer's personal needs and by steady individual factors that increase the sensitivity of the customer before the service. These last factors are known as permanent service intensifiers.

The *suitable expectations* are affected by transitory service intensifiers or temporary and short term individual factors that make the customer aware of his need of the service, as well as by the perception of service alternatives, the self-perception of the customer's role in a service - defined as the customer's perception about his degree of influence upon the service level perceived by him-, situational factors, and finally what the customers think they may receive. Zeithaml & Bitner (2002) state that these factors contribute to the increase of the expectation levels, thus establishing a direct relation between them and the expectation levels.

TABLE 4. Level expectations classification

HIGHT LEVEL	Desired level \gt <i>desired expectations</i> : highest level of performance reached by the best supplier in the category. "Desired by".
TOLERANCE ZONE	<p><i>Tolerance zone</i>: interval in which the customers accept service variation within certain known limits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of the tolerance zone: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Varies among the clients. - Varies within different points in the customer's time: accordion effect. • Its variability derives from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ The variability of the level desired (steadier). ▫ The variability of the suitable level. • Varies with service experience: it elevates and stretches in both its dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Service result dimension. ▫ Process dimension. • It is different from the <i>uncertainty zone</i> defined as a nebula where no limits are known.
LOW NEVEL	Minimum tolerable \gt <i>suitable expectations</i> : Minimum performance level tolerated by the customer.
SPECIFIC PREMISES	
<p>On <i>suitable expectations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual time and short term factors: transitory service intensifiers. • Service alternatives perception. • Self-perception of the customer's role at the level of service. • Situational factors. 	<p>On <i>desired expectations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer's personal needs. • Steady individual factors: permanent service intensifiers. • Costumer's culture. • Service intangibility.

Source: Authors.

Hamer *et al.* (1999) establish some specific individual premises: the customer's personal philosophy about the way service should be and about the way workers should provide such service, the customer's personal beliefs, and the transitory service intensifiers – such as personal emergencies, personal needs, the perception of service alternatives and the role the customer holds in the service performance.

On the other hand, Bebeko (2000) states that the *desired expectations* are influenced by the level of intangibility of the process and the result of the service. It has also been demonstrated in other papers that cultural factors condition the levels of desired expectations (Witkowski & Wolfinbarger, 2002; Kueh & Voon, 2007; Kopalle *et al.*, 2010).

Assessment moment perspective

This perspective is based on the evidence that consumers' expectations are constantly changing along the provision of the service (Clow *et al.*, 1998; Hamer *et al.*, 1999; Oliver & Burke, 1999). It has been established that there are two types of expectations regarding the moment: the *initial or previous expectations*, that represent those someone holds before beginning the service experience, and the *coming ones*, that represent the expectations about the quality of a service that is being provided before it ends (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Clow *et al.*, 1998; Hamer *et al.*, 1999; Oliver & Burke, 1999).

The *coming expectations* are intimately related to the concept of critical incidents by Bitner, Booms & Tetreault (1990) or the moments of truth by Grönroos (1994). Such moments of truth are related to the place and time in which the service provider and the consumer get in contact, and the former has the opportunity of showing to the customer the quality of his service (Bitner, 1990; Bitner *et al.*, 1990). The management of the service encounters or moments of truth or critical incidents are considered a definite point in the user's satisfaction (Surprenant & Solomon, 1987; Bitner, 1990; Bitner *et al.*, 1990; Czepiel, 1990). These moments are called service encounters cascade (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2002) and imply that in every encounter the consumer will generate an idea about the provider, so that the quality of the encounter is a global evaluation about the set of interactions. What is relevant is that every interaction modifies the expectations (Mittal & Lassar, 1996).

Some researcher have studied the *initial or pre-encounter expectations* and the *coming or intra-encounter ones*. In the experiment carried out by Oliver & Burke (1999) with restaurant customers, the information given before the customers went to the restaurant was manipulated, and it was proved that manipulation affected the initial expectations but not the performance assessment.

On the other hand, there is evidence that strong and positive precedent expectations, about a brand or a company, soften the effect of a bad answer from the company regarding product flaws. In this sense, Choi & Mattila (2008) determine that, within the processing of service flaws, the service quality expectations (high or low) together with the perception about the possibility or not of avoiding such flaw are factors that decrease the effect of the flaw in customer's satisfaction: when previous expectations are high and the company could not avoid the mistake, the effects of the flaws are smaller.

Regarding the premises of the initial expectations, Hamer, Shaw-Ching Liu & Sudharshan (1999) distinguish two types of information received by the customer before enjoying a service, they condition his expectations: external and internal. External information is the one that the company issues, that comes from a third party or the press. Internal information is the one that comes from the customer's previous self-experience. Regarding the latter, Clow *et al.* (1998) establish that the type of perception the customer has about the performance of the service obtained – satisfied or not- modifies the initial expectations of a future encounter: the dissatisfied customers modified 16% more their expectations than the satisfied ones.

In the same way, the authors claim that the expectations remain steady in time when there is no experience.

About the factors that affect the *coming or intra-encounter expectation*, Hamer *et al.* (1999) point out that the information that appears as service is provided affects such expectations. As intra-encounter information is understood that transmitted explicitly by the organization during the service and the implicit promises or signals about quality issued by the company, such as price and brand. Besides, it is necessary to add situational factors such as weather conditions as defining factors of these intra-encounter expectations (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993).

TABLE 5. Moment of assessment expectations

TYPES	
<p>Initial, previous or pre-encounter expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They appear before the service is enjoyed. • Strong positive initial expectations that soften the assessment of flaws in the provision of a service. 	<p>Coming or intra-encounter expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are modified as the service is provided and before it ends. • They are related to the service encounters or moments of truth. • Each interaction in each encounter modifies expectations.
SPECIFIC PREMISES FOR EACH TYPE OF EXPECTATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information perceived by the customer before enjoying the service from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The company itself (announcement). - A third party (mouth to ear communication or the press). - Customer's previous experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information that appears during the encounter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explicit. - Implicit signals of quality such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Price. ▫ Brand. • Situational factors.

Source: Authors.

The expectations within the purchase process

Under the title "What is Quality?" Golder *et al.* (2012) present an integrating framework of quality where they analyze: 1) How companies produce quality; 2) how companies offer and how customers experiment quality, and 3) how customers evaluate quality. In this third process, the customers compare the attributes perceived from an offer with their expectations to form service quality and evaluate their satisfaction.

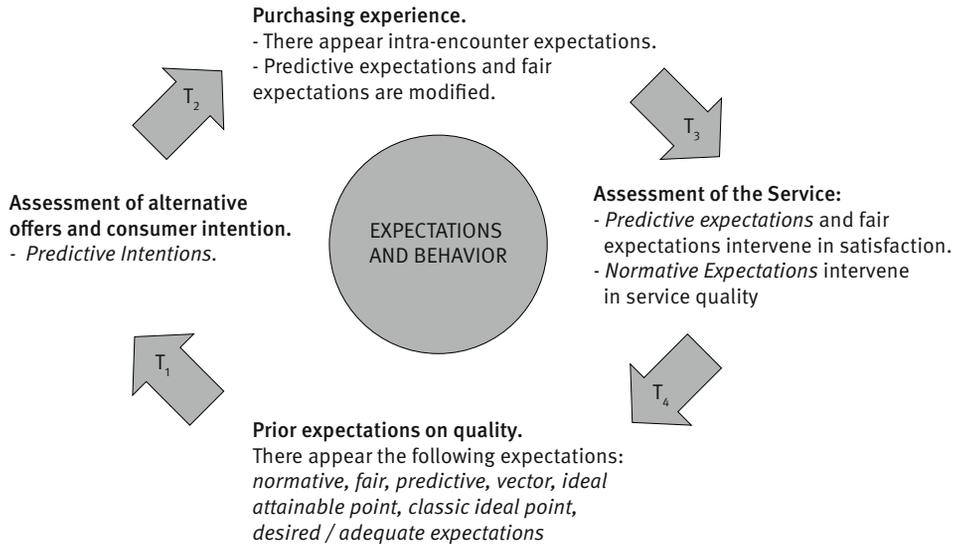
From this demand point of view, previous research indicate that consumers use their *expectations* about service quality when purchasing offers (Oliver, 1977, 1980; Cadotte *et al.*, 1987; Oliver & Burke, 1999; Andreassen, 2000; Torres Moraga, 2010, Duque-Oliva & Mercado-Barboza, 2011). There are several works that try to define the type of *expectation* really used by the customer when evaluating potential providers; however, there is not a clear agreement on this matter (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Walker & Baker, 2000).

On the one hand, it is established that *service quality*, as the difference between the performance perceived by the customer and what he considers should be expected from a service category, has to be measured with *regulatory expectations*. Nevertheless, to measure *customer satisfaction* correctly the suitable standard would be the *predictive expectations* because, in this case, the customer compares the service performance with what he really expects from a specific provider (Boulding *et al.*, 1993; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; Dean, 2004; Higgs *et al.*, 2005).

Other authors state that customers do a quality evaluation using other type of expectations. In this sense, Woodruff *et al.* (1983) establish the possibility of the use of several different types of expectations by the consumer: the *predictive expectations*, the *desired expectations* and the *minimum tolerable ones*. Bolton & Lemon (1999) propose the use of *regulatory expectations*, while Oliver & Burke (1999) retain important the influence of both the *regulatory expectations* and the *predictive ones*. Spreng *et al.* (1996) consider the influence of the *predictive expectations* and the desire, defined as steady feelings referred to the attributes, benefits and results that lead to the achievement of what the person holds worthy, and, thus, close to the *feasible ideal point expectations*. Golder *et al.* (2012) introduce three types of expectations: *regulatory expectations*, *predictive expectations* and *ideal expectations*. Boulding *et al.* (1993) establish that the customer uses a combination of the *reachable ideal expectations* and the *predictive ones*. Zeithaml *et al.* (1993) consider the customer's use of three measures of service quality; *predictive expectations*, *desired* and *minimum tolerable level*.

Higgs *et al.* (2005) show that *predictive expectations* have a major influence upon the customer's decision to buy again than the *regulatory expectations*. In the same sense, Tse (2003) states that the tendency of a customer toward positive behavior after enjoying the service and toward the provider are mostly influenced by the discrepancy between the perception of the performance and the predictive expectations, and not as much on evaluation of service quality.

FIGURE 1. Dynamic relation between expectations and behavior



Source: Authors.

Summarizing all the works analyzed, figure 1 integrates the expectations studied about purchase behavior.

The process of service quality evaluation is produced when the customers purchase the attributes perceived in an offer with their expectations, and establish a judgment of quality value and then of the degree of satisfaction.

These expectations are not universal, innate or steady, they are subjective and moldable, formed by aspects that belong to the customer and the information perceived. This accumulated information conditions the knowledge of the customer, generated from his own experience or from the experience of others, the company's strategies the information in the media and signals of quality associated to each attribute (Kirmani & Rao, 2000; Woodruff *et al.*, 1983). In this process, the evaluation of the global quality level is the addition of the provisions of the offer attributes regarding the ideal expected by the customer. This is why along the purchase process different types of expectations are used, the customer starts internalizing the information and a new knowledge is generated during the new experience, until a judgment of value is established at the end of the experience.

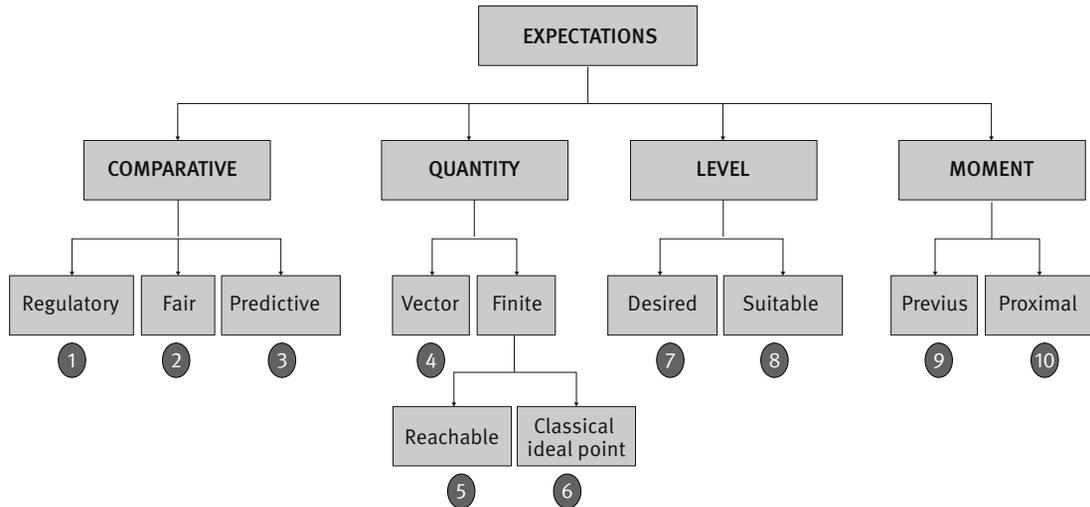
Discussion and conclusions

Expectations are a complex concept from the academic point of view and from the field of management. As it was stated, the consumer may have expectations about a given service category, but also expectations about a specific provider and, in addition, this concept is circumstantial and relative to a point in time. This paper integrates a wide variety of contributions to provide managers and researchers with a holistic view. With such aim in mind, ten kinds of expectations were structured in four perspectives (Figure 2).

Comparative perspective

- **Regulatory expectations** (1) *what the customer considers that should be.* They represent the level of service that someone considers should be provided by a supplier in order to give excellent quality regarding a specific service through a feasible evaluation.
- **Fair or deserved expectations** (2) or *what the customer thinks is fair to receive.* They are the level of service a customer considers he should receive taking into account the price associated to it.

FIGURE 2. Integrated view of the expectations classification



Source: Authors.

- **Predictive expectations (3)** or *what the customer considers he will really receive*. They answer to the objective calculation someone does on what he really expects to get from a provider in a specific situation.

Ideal quantity perspective

- **Vector expectations (4)** or *the ideal quantity a customer would like to receive being an infinite quantity*. They refer to attributes where the ideal quantity the customer requires is infinite, thus the customer never gets its maximum utility.
- **Ideal point expectations** or *the ideal quantity a customer would like to get being a finite quantity*. They refer to attributes where the ideal quantity is finite. Among these, we can also distinguish those where the *ideal quantity is finite and feasible*, **reachable ideal point expectations (5)**, and those that are not *currently reachable by any supplier* or **classical ideal point expectations (6)**.

Level approach

- **Desired expectations (7)** or *the reachable service level that the customer would like to get*. They constitute the highest level of performance a consumer considers reachable by the suppliers of a product category.

- **Suitable expectations (8)** or *the minimum service quantity a customer considers he can expect*. They reflect the minimum service quality a consumer thinks should be expected from the suppliers of a product category.

Assessment moment approach

- **Initial or previous expectations (9)** or *what the customer expects before the service begins*. They represent the expectations someone maintains before the service experience starts.
- **Proximal or intra- encounter expectations (10)** or *what the customer expects once the service has started and before it ends*. They represent the quality expectations about a service that has begun before it ends.

The importance of identifying and defining expectations is related to the need both business managers and researchers have of knowing the standards to be used in order to measure correctly different aspects of service quality and satisfaction. The measuring models of service quality –Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985, 1988, 1991; Teas, 1993; Grönroos, 1994, among the most relevant- have taken into account expectations but there is not criteria uniformity yet about their integration, nor is there about the

incorporation of some in the comparison of perceived performance.

Expectations are not steady in time or individuals, even if the management of the moments in which the customer and the provider establish contact, because these points of truth the satisfaction of the consumer may be promoted. Therefore, the knowledge of processes of service provision helps the supplier know the point of view of the customer and consider the factors that influence his evaluations. Each interaction, each encounter with the customer during the provision of a service. Interactions modify the customer's expectations (Mittal & Lassar, 1996), which leads us to thinking about the effectiveness of the company's external communication and about the importance of strengthening the brand value, for in case of occasional problems, the strong initial expectations may soften the assessment of the flaws of the company in the provision of the service. In this sense, this paper explains the process of service evaluation, establishing the types of expectations that influence each moment. Such model will help the managers in their decision making to provide services and the researchers in the design of models of service analysis.

As limitations, it is necessary to take into account the fact that expectations are not the only comparative standard in customer satisfaction. Hence, for instance, Chen & Chen (2010) consider more than appropriate the use of experience quality as a defining factor of satisfaction. They state that service quality refers to the performance of attributes from an objective point of view, while experience quality refers to the psychological answer of the individual which is more subjective.

For all the aforesaid, we propose the study of expectations considering different points in time and the interrelation of factors that influence expectations along the purchase process as the future lines of work; so that the key moments that take a customer to perceiving the information and to modifying his structured knowledge in order to produce a judgment of value may be identified.

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