

Strategic Intelligence and Service Quality: Evidence from Customer Happiness Service Channels in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract: This study analyzes the relationship between strategic intelligence and service quality from the perspective of customers using government service delivery channels in the United Arab Emirates, with application to the Emirate of Sharjah. The research is motivated by the growing importance of improving government services amid digital transformation, the diversification of service delivery channels, and rising customer expectations for faster, more flexible, reliable, and responsive services. Strategic intelligence was operationalized as the independent variable across five dimensions — foresight, organized thinking, strategic vision, strategic partnership, and motivation and stimulation — while service quality was operationalized as the dependent variable using the SERVQUAL dimensions of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, security and trustworthiness, and empathy (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). A quantitative, cross-sectional design was adopted, with data collected via a structured Likert-scale questionnaire from a sample of 400 customers of Sharjah's government service delivery channels, determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample-size table. Data were analyzed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression, and non-parametric difference tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H). Results indicate that both strategic intelligence and service quality were perceived at high levels by respondents. Multiple regression showed that the five dimensions of strategic intelligence jointly explained 80.4% of the variance in service quality ($R = 0.897$, $R^2 = 0.804$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.802$, $F(5, 394) = 323.236$, $p < .001$), with all five dimensions contributing significant positive effects; motivation and stimulation ($\beta = 0.397$) and strategic partnership ($\beta = 0.195$) emerged as the strongest predictors, followed by strategic vision ($\beta = 0.145$), foresight ($\beta = 0.132$), and organized thinking ($\beta = 0.129$). Statistically significant differences in customers' perceptions of service quality were also found according to gender, educational qualification, and age. The findings suggest that improving government service quality depends not only on digital-channel development but substantially on institutional capacity for anticipation, organized service design, clear future orientation, inter-agency partnership, and workforce motivation. Practical recommendations are offered for government service providers, along with directions for future research.

Keywords: strategic intelligence; service quality; SERVQUAL; customer happiness; government service channels; United Arab Emirates

1. Introduction

Government institutions worldwide are under increasing pressure to anticipate change, manage uncertainty, and translate limited or ambiguous information into effective decisions. Strategic intelligence — the capacity to scan the environment, think in an organized and future-oriented way, build a coherent strategic vision, cultivate partnerships,



and sustain workforce motivation — has been proposed as a critical enabler of this capacity (Al-Amsari, 2022). For public-sector organizations, strategic intelligence is not merely an analytical skill but an integrated managerial orientation that supports crisis management, institutional excellence, and, ultimately, the quality of services delivered to citizens and residents.

The United Arab Emirates has positioned service quality as a national priority. Initiatives launched under UAE Vision 2030, the Emirates Government Services Strategy, the National Program for Happiness and Quality of Life 2030, and UAE Centennial 2071 seek to simplify government procedures, expand access through digital and smart channels, and strengthen transparency and accountability in service delivery. Customer Happiness Centers have been established across the UAE to provide integrated, efficient, and responsive services, supported by investment in staff training, strategic-planning capability, and data-driven decision-making.

Despite this policy emphasis, prior studies point to uneven progress in embedding strategic intelligence practices within service-providing institutions, even where service-quality outcomes are generally favorable (Al-Manzou, 2020; Salim Ibn Amara, 2024). This gap motivates the present study's central question: to what extent does strategic intelligence, across its constituent dimensions, influence customers' perceptions of service quality within government service delivery channels in the UAE, and specifically in the Emirate of Sharjah?

1.1 Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

1. How does strategic intelligence, across its dimensions (foresight, organized thinking, strategic vision, strategic partnership, motivation and stimulation), affect service quality, across its dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, security and trustworthiness, empathy), from the perspective of customers using service channels in the Emirate of Sharjah?
2. What is the effect of foresight on service quality?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between organized thinking and service quality?
4. Does strategic vision influence service quality?
5. What is the nature of the relationship between strategic partnership and service quality?
6. To what extent does motivation and stimulation influence service quality?
7. Are there statistically significant differences in customers' perceptions of the study variables attributable to demographic characteristics?

1.2 Research Objectives

Correspondingly, the study aims to: (1) measure the effect of strategic intelligence and its dimensions on service quality; (2) analyze the effect of foresight on service quality; (3) examine the relationship between organized thinking and service quality; (4) assess the effect of strategic vision on service quality; (5) investigate the relationship between strategic partnership and service quality; (6) measure the effect of motivation and stimulation on service quality; and (7) examine whether customers' perceptions differ significantly by demographic characteristics.

1.3 Hypotheses

H1 (main): Strategic intelligence, across its dimensions, has a statistically significant effect on service quality, from the perspective of customers using service channels in the Emirate of Sharjah.

H1a–H1e: Each dimension of strategic intelligence (foresight, organized thinking, strategic vision, strategic partnership, motivation and stimulation) has a statistically significant effect on service quality, respectively.

H2 (main): There are statistically significant differences in customers' perceptions of the study variables attributable to demographic characteristics.

H2a–H2c: Statistically significant differences exist in customers' perceptions of service quality according to gender, educational qualification, and age, respectively.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Strategic Intelligence

Strategic intelligence refers to the set of cognitive and organizational capabilities that enable decision-makers to interpret complex environments, anticipate change, and align organizational resources with long-term objectives (Al-Amsari, 2022). It has been conceptualized across multiple, overlapping dimensions in the literature, commonly including foresight, systemic or organized thinking, innovation, environmental awareness, strategic vision, partnership, and motivation (Mahmoud, 2019; Maccoby & Scudder, 2020). Rather than a purely analytical skill, strategic intelligence functions as an integrated managerial orientation linking environmental scanning to decision quality and institutional performance.

Empirical work links strategic intelligence to a range of organizational outcomes. Al-Manzou (2020) found that strategic intelligence contributes to improved educational-service quality through enhanced foresight and environmentally grounded decision-making. Salim Ibn Amara (2024) positioned strategic intelligence as foundational to total quality management, arguing that it enables organizations to identify opportunities and threats across the internal and external environment. Adam (2025) reported that strategic-intelligence skills among administrative leaders enhance institutional capacity for total quality and sustained customer satisfaction, while Hussein (2019) linked strategic vision and environmental analysis capability to competitive success and adaptive organizational resilience in the banking sector. In a service-sector setting closely related to the present study, Rifai and Abu Zidan (2024) found that strategic intelligence was positively associated with service quality in Jordanian commercial banks, with organizations that embed strategic intelligence in their operations showing stronger decision-making mechanisms and more efficient resource allocation toward customer service.

2.2 Service Quality

Service quality is most widely operationalized through the SERVQUAL model, which conceptualizes customers' evaluations along five dimensions: tangibility (physical facilities, equipment, and appearance), reliability (accurate and dependable performance), responsiveness (willingness to help and provide prompt service), assurance (encompassing security and trustworthiness), and empathy (individualized attention to customers) (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). This framework remains the dominant lens for assessing customer-facing service performance in both private and public-sector contexts, including government service centers.

2.3 Strategic Intelligence and Service Quality

A growing body of literature connects strategic intelligence directly to service-quality outcomes. Calof and Richards (2020) and Teece and Linden (2021) argue that strategic intelligence supports dynamic service capabilities that allow organizations to adapt service delivery to shifting customer expectations. In digital and public-sector contexts, Alalwan, Dwivedi, and Rana (2021) and Dwivedi, Hughes, and Kar (2022) demonstrate links between strategic intelligence, digital transformation, and perceived service quality, while Wirtz and Lovelock (2022) situate strategic intelligence within broader service-management frameworks as a driver of service excellence. Within this stream, the present study extends prior work by testing the combined and individual effects of five strategic-intelligence dimensions on SERVQUAL-based service quality in a UAE government-service context — an application not yet examined empirically in this setting.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design, consistent with the study's aim of testing statistically measurable relationships between strategic intelligence and service quality. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it permits the collection of standardized data from a large sample and its analysis using inferential statistics capable of generalization (Sekaran, 1990).

3.2 Population and Sample

The study population comprised customers of government service delivery channels in the Emirate of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, including traditional (service-center), electronic, and smart-application channels. Given the large and heterogeneous size of this population, sample size was determined with reference to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, yielding a minimum required sample of 383. The researcher distributed the questionnaire electronically and in paper form and obtained 400 valid, usable responses, exceeding the minimum requirement and strengthening the reliability of the findings.

Of the 400 respondents, 271 (67.8%) were male and 129 (32.3%) were female. The largest age group was 35–44 years, and respondents represented a range of educational qualifications and channel-usage patterns (smart, electronic, and in-person), supporting the representativeness of the sample.

3.3 Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire built on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The instrument comprised a demographic section (gender, age, educational qualification, and channel type used) and two substantive sections measuring strategic intelligence (foresight, organized thinking, strategic vision, strategic partnership, motivation and stimulation) and service quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, security and trustworthiness, empathy), the latter based on the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Face and content validity were established through review by a panel of specialists in public administration and statistics. Construct validity was assessed through item-to-dimension correlation analysis. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha; all dimension-level coefficients exceeded the 0.70 threshold recommended by Sekaran (1990), confirming the instrument's reliability for the current sample.

3.5 Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed in SPSS in two stages. The descriptive stage computed frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to characterize the sample and its responses. The inferential stage tested the study hypotheses using Pearson correlation to assess the strength and direction of relationships between variables, simple and multiple linear regression to quantify the effect of strategic intelligence and its individual dimensions on service quality, one-way ANOVA and non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis H) to test for demographic differences, given the ordinal nature of some grouping variables. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ throughout.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Findings

Descriptive analysis indicated that both strategic intelligence and service quality were perceived at high levels overall by respondents. Across the five strategic-intelligence dimensions, customers reported generally positive perceptions of foresight, organized thinking, strategic vision, strategic partnership, and motivation and stimulation within the service delivery system. Similarly, service quality was rated highly across its five dimensions, reflecting strong customer satisfaction with the physical and organizational aspects of service delivery, the accuracy and responsiveness of services, data confidentiality, and personal attention to customers.

4.2 Test of the Main Hypothesis (H1)

Multiple linear regression was used to test the effect of the five strategic-intelligence dimensions, jointly, on service quality. The overall model was statistically significant.

R	R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error	F	df	Sig.
0.897	0.804	0.802	1.813	323.236	5, 394	0.000

The strategic-intelligence dimensions jointly explained 80.4% of the variance in service quality ($R^2 = 0.804$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.802 indicating a stable and well-fitted model. The null hypothesis of no statistically significant effect was therefore rejected, and the alternative hypothesis — that strategic intelligence has a statistically significant effect on service quality — was accepted.

Table 2 presents the individual regression coefficients for each dimension.

Dimension	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Foresight	0.580	0.161	0.132	3.600	0.000
Organized thinking	0.533	0.166	0.129	3.217	0.001

Strategic vision	0.625	0.177	0.145	3.531	0.000
Strategic partnership	0.822	0.161	0.195	5.116	0.000
Motivation and stimulation	0.624	0.170	0.397	9.530	0.000

All five dimensions exerted a positive, statistically significant effect on service quality ($p < .05$ for all), supporting hypotheses H1a–H1e. Motivation and stimulation emerged as the strongest predictor by standardized effect size ($\beta = 0.397$), followed by strategic partnership ($\beta = 0.195$), strategic vision ($\beta = 0.145$), foresight ($\beta = 0.132$), and organized thinking ($\beta = 0.129$); strategic partnership also recorded the largest unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.822$) and the highest t-value among the five dimensions. Simple regression models estimated separately for each dimension likewise showed each to be individually predictive of service quality, with dimension-level R^2 values ranging from 0.691 (organized thinking) to 0.807 (motivation and stimulation), and all models statistically significant at $p < .001$ (F-values ranging from 295.183 to 349.644).

4.3 Test of the Second Hypothesis (H2): Demographic Differences

A Mann-Whitney U test indicated statistically significant differences in customers' perceptions of service quality by gender ($U = 13834.500$, $p < .05$), supporting H2a. A Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated statistically significant differences by educational qualification ($H = 27.551$, $p < .05$), supporting H2b. A further Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated statistically significant differences by age group ($H = 28.392$, $p < .05$), supporting H2c, with the 35–44 age group showing the most favorable perceptions of service quality among all age groups examined.

5. Discussion

The results provide strong support for the proposition that strategic intelligence is a substantive driver of perceived service quality in UAE government service delivery channels, consistent with prior findings linking strategic intelligence to service outcomes in banking (Rifai & Abu Zidan, 2024; Hussein, 2019) and education (Al-Manzou, 2020). The dominant role of motivation and stimulation suggests that service quality in government settings is not solely a function of systems, procedures, or digital infrastructure, but depends heavily on frontline employees' professionalism, engagement, and willingness to deliver attentive, timely service — a finding consistent with service-management perspectives emphasizing the human dimension of service delivery (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2022).

The prominence of strategic partnership as the second-strongest predictor underscores the importance of inter-agency coordination, data-sharing, and integrated procedures in reducing friction for customers navigating multiple service channels — an especially relevant finding given the UAE's emphasis on cross-government integration under its digital-transformation agenda. The comparatively smaller, though still significant, contributions of foresight and organized thinking suggest these dimensions operate as necessary but less differentiating conditions: their presence supports service quality, but their marginal contribution beyond partnership and motivation appears more limited in this sample.

The significant demographic differences by gender, educational qualification, and age indicate that service-quality perceptions are not uniform across the customer base, implying that a one-size-fits-all service design may be insufficient. In particular, the relatively favorable perceptions among the 35–44 age group, compared with other groups, may reflect differences in channel familiarity, service expectations, or life-stage-specific service needs, and merit further qualitative investigation.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that strategic intelligence — encompassing foresight, organized thinking, strategic vision, strategic partnership, and motivation and stimulation — exerts a statistically significant and substantial effect on customers' perceptions of service quality within government service delivery channels in the Emirate of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. Collectively, the five dimensions explained over 80% of the variance in service quality, with motivation and stimulation and strategic partnership emerging as the most influential predictors. Perceptions of service quality also varied significantly by gender, educational qualification, and age, pointing to the value of demographically responsive service design.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that government service providers: (1) strengthen foresight practices in service design by systematically anticipating customer needs; (2) develop organized, integrated thinking in managing the end-to-end customer journey; (3) embed a clear, quality-oriented strategic vision at the institutional

level; (4) activate and formalize strategic partnerships among government entities to streamline cross-agency service delivery; (5) invest in employee motivation and engagement as a direct lever for service quality; (6) continue improving digital service channels in ways responsive to the expectations of different customer segments; (7) strengthen complaint- and feedback-management mechanisms; (8) simplify services for customer segments less familiar with digital channels or with lower formal education; and (9) establish a periodic measurement system to track the ongoing impact of strategic intelligence on service quality.

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design and its focus on a single emirate, which may constrain generalizability to other UAE emirates or service contexts. Future research could employ longitudinal designs, extend the model to additional emirates or GCC countries, and explore mediating or moderating variables — such as digital-infrastructure maturity or organizational culture — that may condition the relationship between strategic intelligence and service quality.

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