

Vol : 6 | Issue: 1 & 2 | Jan - Dec 2014

VNSGU

ISSN 0975 6361

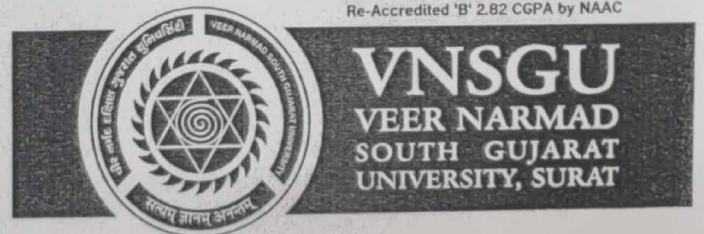
# JOURNAL

*of* MANAGEMENT

&

# ADMINISTRATION

( A Biannual Publication )



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Martina. R. Noronha and Purvesh. K. Nanavati

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## A STUDY ON THE SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS OF SUPER MARKETS IN GUJARAT STATE

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### *Abstract*

*Quality in a service is a measure of the extent to which a delivered service meets the customer's expectations. Service quality is considered a critical determinant of competitiveness. Superior service quality is a key to improved profitability. Consumer service is a key factor towards generating loyal retail customers, and ultimately, successful retail businesses. The main objective of the study is to find the most significant dimension of Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) influencing service quality of super markets in Gujarat State. Purposive sampling method is used to collect data. 400 respondents visiting Big Bazaar, D-Mart, Pick-N-Pay, Star Bazaar and Vishal megamart in Gujarat were taken to study their perception and preferences regarding service quality of super markets. With the help of RSQS model, it was found that super markets in Gujarat State are fulfilling the expectations of the Customers. It further indicates that the perception of the consumers towards super market is good and that super markets are succeeding in its mission of replacing the traditional stores in India.*

**Keywords:** *Service Quality, RSQS model, Super Markets*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Consumer service is a key factor towards generating loyal retail customers and ultimately, successful retail businesses. Defined as an activity that supplements or facilitates store sales, consumer service includes such items as free parking, gift wrapping, environment and delivery. Additionally, sales personnel offer consumer service through their interactions and relationships with customers. Nature and extent of Service Quality is dependent upon certain identifiable factors or dimensions which can be optimized with wise managerial judgments.

The subject of service quality has aroused considerable recent interest among business people and academics. Of course, buyers have always been concerned with quality, but the increasing competitive market for many services has led consumers to become more selective in the services they choose. Conceptualizing the quality for services is more complex than for goods. Because of the absence of tangible manifestations, measuring service quality can be difficult.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Bernardo Balboni (2011) in their article demonstrates the crucial role of retail service quality as a key activator in the formation of customer loyalty to the store. The results prove that customers consider retail service quality as a second-order dimension and recognize the main contribution of physical aspects and reliability first-order dimensions.

Chowdhary and Prakash (2007) suggested that generalization of quality dimension was not possible among all type of service taken together. Gronroos (1983) elaborated service quality as both technical and functional, the first signifies what the customer gets and the latter how the customer receives the service. When a customer assessed service quality, the company's profile or image acts a "filter". If a company had a positive image, it is easier to overlook smaller mistakes in its service delivery; to regard them as temporary disturbances.

Edward Burch et al. (1995) examined the applicability of the service quality measurement scale (SERVPERF) to the rental industry. The SERVPERF scale was found to explain a great deal of the variation in service quality. While satisfaction seems to have a significant positive effect on purchase intention, service quality does not seem to have a similar effect.

Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1982) defined service quality in terms of physical quality, interactive quality and corporate (image) quality. They also suggested that when compared with the other two quality dimensions, corporate quality tended to be more stable over time.

Leen et al. (2004) aimed at validating the retail service quality (RSQS) instrument developed by Dabholkar et al. (1996) in the Malaysian business setting, specifically in the context of apparel specialty stores. Findings obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis and reliability tests indicated that all the five dimensions of physical aspects, reliability, personal interaction, problem-solving and policy were highly suited for measuring retail service quality in clothing stores, also proving that the instrument was applicable in the Malaysian culture. Through the correlation analysis, it was shown that retail service quality is furthermore associated with future consumption behaviour in terms of the customers' intention to visit, purchase and recommend the stores to others.

Shashank Mehra (2006) in his study of Grocery store (Reliance Fresh and Big Bazaar) suggested that Reliance fresh has a chance to improve on its parking facility and Big Bazaar has to improve their overall service quality.

Tan et al. (2010) used SERVQUAL model to evaluate the link between service quality dimensions and knowledge sharing. They found that assurance and the reliability dimensions of service quality were the two most important dimensions and had significant positive relationship with knowledge sharing.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH PLAN**

To find the most significant dimension of Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) influencing service quality of super markets in Gujarat State.

### **Nature of Data and Sources of Data**

Primary data is used for the study. This data has been collected through questionnaire.

### **Sample design**

Purposive sampling method is used to collect the data. A sample size of four hundred consumers was taken from different cities of Gujarat State. A structured questionnaire was given to 400 respondents of different cities of Gujarat State which consisted of close ended questions.

### **Population**

Population includes Consumers in different cities of the Gujarat State.

### **Sample element**

Individual Consumers who visit the super markets are the sample element.

### **Sampling technique**

Purposive sample technique is used to select the sample.

### **Sample size**

The sample size of 400 respondents was taken from different cities of Gujarat State.

### **Questionnaire design**

A Structured questionnaire has been prepared and distributed among the selected consumers in different cities of Gujarat State to study their perception and preferences regarding service quality dimensions of Super Markets.

### **Area of the study**

The area of study is limited to Gujarat State. Different Super markets of Gujarat State like Big Bazaar, D-Mart, Star-Bazaar, Vishal-Mega mart and Pick- N-Pay are selected for research to study the consumers perception and preferences regarding service quality dimensions of Super Markets. The study can be extended for consumers across greater geographical area.

### **Frame work of data analysis**

Statistical package for social science (SPSS.16) was used to analyse the data. RSQS (Retail Service Quality Scale) model was used.

### **Limitations of the study**

For the research work, data was collected and interpreted with utmost reliability and consistency but due to prejudices of a few respondents, certain limitations of the study are as follows:

1. The study depicts the present scenario in the different cities of Gujarat and hence the result may not be applicable to another period of time.
2. The study is limited to 400 respondents belonging to different cities of Gujarat.
3. Answer to the questionnaire depends upon the beliefs and prejudices of consumers.

4. It is assumed that respondents are true and honest in expressing their views and have filled the questionnaire honestly and without any bias.
5. The study is conducted only for super markets, hence this cannot be generalised for other retail formats.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 Classification of respondents of selected super markets of Gujarat State

Super Markets	Respondents
Big-Bazaar	150
D-Mart	175
Star-Bazaar	25
Vishal-Mega mart	25
Pick-N-Pay	25
Total	400

**Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) Measurement**  
Table 2 Service Quality Evaluation of Super Markets

Statement	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	mean	S.D	S.E
<b>Dimension 1: Physical Aspects</b>						
1.The super market has modern- looking equipment and fixtures	88	10	2	4.18	0.758	0.038
2.Materials associated with this supermarkets service (such as shopping bags, loyalty cards and catalogs ) are visually appealing	66	25	9	3.71	0.879	0.044
3. The super market has clean, attractive and convenient physical facilities ( restrooms, fitting rooms)	71	21	8	3.90	0.964	0.048
4. The layout at the super market makes it easier for customers to find what they need	89	7	4	4.40	0.835	0.042
5. The layout at the super market makes it easier for customers to move around in the super market	83	14	3	4.31	0.827	0.041
<b>Dimension 2: Reliability</b>						
6. When this super market promises to Do something (such as repairs, alterations ) by a certain time, it will do so	35	35	30	3.04	1.159	0.058
7.The super market provides its services at the time it promises to do so	51	33	16	3.46	1.035	0.035
8. The super market performs the service right the first time	52	30	18	3.45	0.992	0.050
9. The super market has merchandise	70	18	12	3.82	1.018	0.051

available when the customer want it							
10. The store insists on error- free sales transactions (relating to billing, returns etc) and records	74	16	10	3.99	0.975	0.049	
<b>Dimension 3 Personal interaction</b>							
11. Employees in the super market have the knowledge to answer customer's Questions	69	21	10	3.81	0.971	0.049	
12. The behaviour of employees in the super market instills confidence in Customers	67	22	11	3.74	0.976	0.049	
13. Customers feel safe in their transactions with the super market	67	24	9	3.85	1.017	0.051	
14. The employees in the super market give prompt service to customers	67	22	11	3.77	1.008	0.050	
15. Employees in the super market tell customers exactly when services will be performed	40	35	25	3.18	1.082	0.054	
16. Employees in the super market are never too busy to respond to customer's requests	50	30	20	3.40	1.055	0.053	
17. The super market gives customers individual attention	40	24	36	3.08	1.205	0.060	
18. Employees in the super market are consistently courteous with customers	67	21	12	3.77	0.979	0.049	
19. Employees in the super market talk courteously to customers on the telephone	57	25	18	3.50	1.076	0.054	
<b>Dimension 4 problem Solving</b>							
20. The super market willingly handles returns and exchanges	38	27	35	3.08	1.203	0.060	
21. When a customer has a problem, the super market shows a sincere interest in solving it	42	39	19	3.33	0.997	0.050	
22. Employees of the super market are able to handle customer complaints directly and immediately	48	31	21	3.35	1.042	0.052	
<b>Dimension 5 Policy</b>							
23. The super market offers high quality merchandise	73	19	8	3.94	0.956	0.048	
24. The super market provides plenty of Convenient parking for customers	77	13	10	4.08	1.034	0.052	
25. The working hours of super market are convenient to all their customers	69	21	10	3.89	1.038	0.052	
26. The super market accepts all major credit cards	71	19	10	3.99	1.071	0.054	

Consumer perception about the service quality dimensions of super markets were measured. The results obtained from the survey is presented as below:  
 It was found that the statements like; Modern- looking equipment and fixtures; the layout which makes it easier for customers to find what they need; the layout which makes it easier for customers to move around; insistence on error- free sales transactions (relating to billing, returns etc) and records; Convenient parking; acceptance of all major credit cards have mean value  $\geq 4$ . This indicates that super markets in Gujarat State are fulfilling the expectations of the Customers. It further indicates that the perception of the consumers towards super market is good and that super markets are succeeding in its mission of replacing the traditional stores in India, as none of the item score means value  $< 3$ .

### Dimension 1 (Physical Aspects)

In this category, five statements were measured and it is found that modern- looking equipment and fixtures, the layout which makes it easier for customers to find what they need and the layout which makes it easier for customers to move around in the super market had mean value  $> 4$  while remaining two statements had means value  $> 3$ . This indicates that the respondents strongly agree with all the statements.

Majority of the respondents had a positive perception of the physical aspects dimensions at super markets, ranging from 66% to 89% as they strongly agreed with all statements in this dimension. The strongest agreement was with the statement, "the layout at the super market makes it easier for customers to find what they need" while the weakest agreement was with the statement, "Materials associated with this supermarkets service (such as shopping bags, loyalty cards and catalogs) are visually appealing".

To test whether there is any statistical significant influences of select factors on customer perception at supermarket in Gujarat, "t-test" at confidence level of 0.05 or 95% (df = 399, t tab value =  $\pm 1.96$ ) and the mean and standard deviation values of RSQS were found.

$H_0$ : There is no significant influence of physical aspect of super market on customer perception in Gujarat

$H_1$ : There is a significant influence of physical aspect of super market on customer perception in Gujarat

Table 3 One Sample Test (Test Value = 3)

Physical Aspect Factors	N	mean	S.D	S.E	T	df	p-value Sig.(2tailed)
1. The super market has modern- looking equipment and fixtures	400	4.18	0.75	0.03	31.1	399	.000



2. Materials associated with this supermarkets service (such as shopping bags, loyalty cards and catalogs) are visually appealing	400	3.71	0.87	0.04	16.15	399	.000
3. The super market has clean, attractive and convenient physical facilities ( restrooms, fitting rooms)	400	3.90	0.96	0.04	18.67	399	.000
4. The layout at the super market makes it easier for customers to find what they need	400	4.40	0.83	0.04	33.53	399	.000
5. The layout at the super market makes it easier for customers to move around in the super market	400	4.31	0.82	0.04	31.68	399	.000

Based on the outcome of the t-test analysis at 95% confidence level, the  $H_0$ : There is no significant influence of physical aspect on customer perception at super markets in Gujarat is rejected, since one sample t-test successfully revealed a statistically significant values for physical aspects of super markets. Mean values fall in positive side of RSQS rating ( $> 3$ ),  $t_{cal}$  value  $>$   $t_{tab}$  value and  $p$ -value  $<$  0. 05 for all the select physical aspect factors under study.

### Dimension 2 (Reliability)

In the reliability category, five statements were constructed and it is found that none of the statements had mean value more than 4 but all the statements had mean value more than 3, which indicates the reliability of super markets in Gujarat.

35% to 74% respondents had a positive perception of the Reliability dimensions of super market and agreed with all statements in this dimension. The super markets provides the actual benefits to the customers by providing goods when the customers want it. The strongest agreement was with the statement, "The store insists on error- free sales transactions (relating to billing, returns etc) and records" while the weakest agreement was with the statement, "When this super market promises to do something (such as repairs, alterations ) by a certain time, it will do so".

$H_0$ : There is no significant influence of reliability aspect of super market on customer perception in Gujarat

$H_1$ : There is a significant influence of reliability aspect of super market on customer perception in Gujarat

Table 4 One Sample Test (Test Value = 3)

Reliability Factors	N	mean	S.D	S.E	T	df	p-value Sig. (2-tailed)
1. When this super market promises to do something (such as repairs, alterations ) by a certain time, it will do so	400	3.04	1.15	0.058	0.69	399	.000
2. The super market provides its services at the time it promises to do so	400	3.46	1.03	0.052	8.89	399	.000
3. The super market performs the service right the first time	400	3.45	0.99	0.050	9.07	399	.000
4. The super market has merchandise available when the customer want it	400	3.82	1.01	0.051	16.11	399	.000
5. The store insists on error- free sales transactions (relating to billing, returns etc) and records	400	3.99	0.97	0.049	20.31	399	.000

Based on the results of the t-test analysis at 95% confidence level, the  $H_0$ : There is no significant influence of reliable service on customer perception at super market in Gujarat is rejected, since the t-test successfully revealed a statistically significant values for reliable service factor. Mean values fall in positive side of RSQS rating ( $> 3$ ), t cal value  $>$  t tab value and p-value  $<$  0. 05 for the entire select reliable service factor under study.

### Dimension 3 (Personal Interaction)

Personal Interaction of super markets with the consumer value greater is good as the result indicates that all the statements in this category have mean than 3. This trend of interaction (relationship) will be helpful to win the confidence of the consumers and retain them.

40% to 69% respondents had a positive perception of the Personal Interaction dimensions at super market who agreed with all statements in this dimension. The strongest agreement was with the statement, "Employees in the super market have the knowledge to answer customer's Questions" while the weakest agreement was with the statement, "the super market gives customers individual attention".

$H_0$ : There is no significant influence of personal interaction aspect at super market on customer perception in Gujarat

$H_1$ : There is a significant influence of personal interaction aspect at super market on customer perception in Gujarat

Table 5 One Sample Test (Test Value = 3)

Personal Interaction Factors	N	mean	S.D	S.E	T	df	p-value Sig. (2-tailed)
1. Employees in the super market have the knowledge to answer customer's Questions	400	3.81	0.971	0.049	16.53	399	.00
2. The behaviour of employees in the super market instills confidence in Customers	400	3.74	0.976	0.049	15.10	399	.00
3. Customers feel safe in their transactions with the super market	400	3.85	1.017	0.051	16.67	399	.00
4. The employees in the super market give prompt service to customers	400	3.77	1.008	0.050	15.40	399	.00
5. Employees in the super market tell customers exactly when services will be performed	400	3.18	1.082	0.054	3.33	399	.00
6. Employees in the super market are never too busy to respond to customer's requests	400	3.40	1.055	0.053	7.55	399	.00
7. The super market gives customers individual attention	400	3.08	1.205	0.060	1.33	399	.00
8. Employees in the super market are consistently courteous with customers	400	3.77	0.979	0.049	15.71	399	.000
9. Employees in the super market talk courteously to customers on the telephone	400	3.50	1.076	0.054	9.26	399	.000

Based on the results of the t-test analysis at 95% confidence level, the  $H_0$ : There is no significant influence of personal interaction on customer perception at super market in Gujarat is rejected, since the t-test successfully revealed a statistically significant values for personal interaction factor. Mean values fall in positive side of RSQS rating ( $> 3$ ), t cal value  $>$  t tab value and p-value  $<$  0. 05 for all the select personal interaction factor under study.

#### Dimension 4 (Problem Solving)

Three statements were used to know the problem solving aspects of super market and it was found that 48% of respondents reported that the employees of the super market are able to handle customer complaints directly and immediately (3.35 mean value), 42% of respondents reported that when a customer has a problem, the super market shows a

sincere interest in solving it (3.33 mean value) while 38% respondents reported that the super market willingly handles returns and exchanges (3.08 mean value).

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant influence of problem solving aspect of super market on customer perception in Gujarat

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant influence of problem solving aspect of super market on customer perception in Gujarat

Table 6 One Sample Test (Test Value = 3)

Problem Solving Factors	N	mean	S.D	S.E	T	df	p-value Sig.(2-tailed)
1. The super market willingly handles returns and exchanges	400	3.08	1.203	0.060	1.33	399	.000
2. When a customer has a problem, the super market shows a sincere interest in solving it	400	3.33	0.997	0.050	6.60	399	.000
3. Employees of the super market are able to handle customer complaints directly and immediately	400	3.35	1.042	0.052	6.73	399	.000

Based on the results of the t-test analysis at 95% confidence level, the H<sub>0</sub>: There are no significant effects of problem solving on customer perception at super market in Gujarat is rejected, since the t-test successfully revealed a statistically significant values for problem solving factor. Mean values fall in positive side of RSQS rating (> 3), t cal value > t tab value and p-value < 0.05 for the entire select problem solving aspect under study.

#### Dimension 5 (Policy)

To measure the policy of super markets, four statements were constructed for this purpose and it was found that the majority of the respondents (77%) reported that the super market provides convenient parking for customers (4.08 mean value). This indicates that majority of the respondents agree about the policy of convenient parking at super market while 71% reported that the super market accepts all major credit cards (3.99 mean value) and 73% respondent reported that the super market offers high quality merchandise (3.94 mean value).

H<sub>0</sub>: There are no significant effects in policy aspect of super market on customer perception in Gujarat

H<sub>1</sub>: There are significant effects in policy aspect of super market on customer perception in Gujarat

Table 7 One Sample Test (Test Value = 3)

Policy Factors	N	mean	S.D	S.E	T	df	p-value Sig.(2 tailed)
1. The super market offers high quality merchandise	400	3.94	0.956	0.048	19.58	399	.000
2. The super market provides plenty of Convenient parking for customers	400	4.08	1.034	0.052	20.77	399	.000
3. The working hours of super market are convenient to all their customers	400	3.89	1.038	0.052	17.11	399	.000
4. The super market accepts all major credit cards	400	3.99	1.07	0.054	18.33	399	.000

Based on the results of the t-test analysis at 95% confidence level, the  $H_0$ : There are no significant effects of super market service policy on customer perception at super market in Gujarat is rejected, since the t-test successfully revealed a statistically significant values for policy factors. Mean values fall in positive side of RSQS rating ( $> 3$ ), tcal value  $>$  t tab value and p-value  $< 0.05$  for all the select policy aspect under study.

### CONCLUSION

With the help of RSQS model, it was found that the statements like; Modern- looking equipment and fixtures; the layout which makes it easier for customers to find what they need; the layout which makes it easier for customers to move around; insistence on error-free sales transactions (relating to billing, returns etc) and records; Convenient parking; acceptance of all major credit cards have mean value  $\geq 4$ . This indicates that super markets in Gujarat State are fulfilling the expectations of the Customers. It further indicates that the perception of the consumers towards super market is good and that super markets are succeeding in its mission of replacing the traditional stores in India, as none of the item score means value  $< 3$ .

Majority of the respondents had a positive perception of the physical aspects dimensions at super markets, ranging from 66% to 89% as they strongly agreed with all statements in this dimension. The strongest agreement was with the statement, "the layout at the super market makes it easier for customers to find what they need" while the weakest agreement was with the statement, "Materials associated with this supermarkets service (such as shopping bags, loyalty cards and catalogs) are visually appealing". Improvements in the ambience of the outlet, better shelves and space management, clear electronic sign posts, clean walkways and aisles, lighting, promotional islands, etc should improve overall shopping experience for customers.

In the reliability category, 35% to 74% respondents had a positive perception of the Reliability dimensions of super market and agreed with all statements in this dimension. The super markets provides the actual benefits to the customers by providing goods when the customers want it. The strongest agreement was with the statement, "The store insists on error- free sales transactions (relating to billing, returns etc) and records" while the weakest agreement was with the statement, "When this super market promises to do something (such as repairs, alterations ) by a certain time, it will do so". Improvements that can be done by management are; Improving communication amongst staff members, using updated systems to process complaints and when super markets promises to do somethings like repairs, alterations etc. it should fulfill its promises within a certain time.

In the Personal Interaction aspect, 40% to 69% respondents had a positive perception of the Personal Interaction dimensions at super market who agreed with all statements in this dimension. The strongest agreement was with the statement, "Employees in the super market have the knowledge to answer customer's Questions" while the weakest agreement was with the statement, "the super market gives customers individual attention". Training of staff to enable them in assisting customers and provide them with relevant and timely information. The super markets should send mail at certain joyful occasion such as marriages, Birthday, Anniversaries etc. The consumers will have the feelings of concern about themselves by the retail outlets.

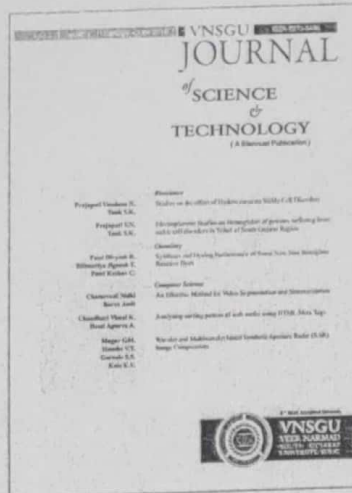
In the Problem Solving aspect, 48% of respondents reported that the employees of the super market are able to handle customer complaints directly and immediately (3.35 mean value), 42% of respondents reported that when a customer has a problem, the super market shows a sincere interest in solving it (3.33 mean value) while 38% respondents reported that the super market willingly handles returns and exchanges (3.08 mean value). The super markets should provides proper training programs to its sales person because they are the person who push the brand to the consumers.

To measure the policy aspect of super markets, four statements were constructed for this purpose and it was found that the majority of the respondents (77%) reported that the super market provides convenient parking for customers (4.08 mean value). This indicates that majority of the respondents agree about the policy of convenient parking at super market while 71% reported that the super market accepts all major credit cards (3.99 mean value) and 73% respondent reported that the super market offers high quality merchandise (3.94 mean value). The super markets should provide information regarding special schemes to regular consumers personally by phone or mail.

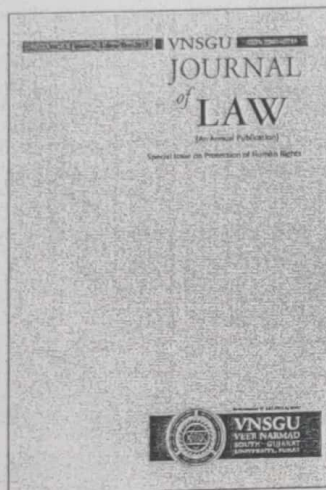
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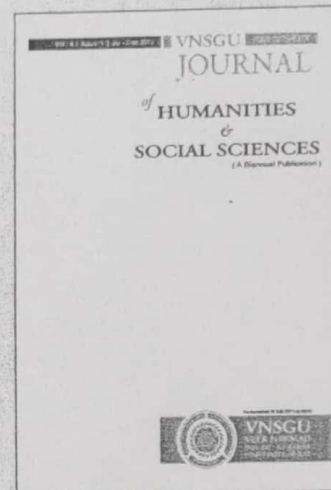
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