

# **THE RELIABILITY & VALIDITY OF OBJECTIVE MEASURES OF CUSTOMER SERVICE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the reliability and validity of an “objective” method of measuring customer service, referred to as “mystery shopping”. We used data from a large mystery shopping program involving over 200 outlets surveyed twelve times over a year. We examine inter-rater reliability, convergent and criterion validity, and find positive results. We also examine the stability of service performance factors in estimating overall service quality. Finally, we examine the validity of the process of objective service quality measurement at individual store level. We find that sampling error makes it virtually impossible to determine if real change has occurred at store level. Sampling error aside, the variation in service performance that we report throws doubt on the meaningfulness of reporting an average level of service quality for a store.

Keywords: Service quality, Rater Reliability