An Investigation into Dimensions of Service Quality in B Schools

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Abstract - Researcher and managers of service firms concur that service quality involves a comparison of expectation with performance. Service quality is about how well the service delivered matches customer expectation. The first service quality analysis model was produced in the eighties (Gronroos 1983). This was followed by the Gap Analysis Model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985).

The objective of the research is to explore the various factor of service quality in B-schools in NCR India. For this purpose the students have been considered as the respondent. For data collection all the MBA students were considered. Around 300-400 students were collected from NCR using quota sampling dividing into four zones of the NCR, Judgemental sampling is used for the purpose of survey. It was found from the research that the major factors which are for measuring the services quality in B-schools are Administrative support Promises kept, Accurate and retrievable records , Convenient opening hours, Internal quality programmes , Academic facilities , Responding to request for assistance and Placement cell, Next is Empathy which includes Flexible syllabus and structure, Variety of programmes/specializations Ideal campus location/layout and Fair amount of freedom. Next important factor is Training and Placement is another major factor with Flexible syllabus and structure, Variety of programmes/specializations Ideal campus location/layout and Fair amount of freedom. Next factor is Responsiveness Knowledgeable of systems/procedures, Service within reasonable time frame and Feeling secured and confident. Reliability Should tell when services will be performed Employees who are trustworthy, Should do as promised, Individual attention to customers and Up-to-date equipment. the second is Academic aspects Knowledgeable in course content, Responding to request for assistance, Caring and courteous faculty and Sincere interest in solving problem.

Keywords: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy, Responsiveness, Gap Analysis, B-Schools

Introduction
Researcher and managers of service firms concur that service quality involves a comparison of expectation with performance. Service quality is about how well the service delivered matches customer expectation. Smith and Houston (1982) claimed that satisfaction with the service is related to confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations. Service Quality, as perceived by the customers, involves a comparison of what they feel the service
should be (expectation, E) with their judgment of the services they received (perceptions, P) (Parasuraman et al., 1985). It is defined as the difference between customer expectations of service and perceived service.

The first service quality analysis model was produced in the eighties (Gronroos 1983). As per the model service perceived by the customer has two dimensions: one is technical quality which emphasizes on ‘what’ customer actually receives from service and the second is functional quality which emphasizes on ‘How’ service is delivered. This was followed by the Gap Analysis Model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985). This model highlights shortfalls in achieving excellent service. Gaps in service quality were identified using in-depth interviews with managers and employees of retail banks, credit cards, securities brokerage and repair & maintenance plus a series of focus groups with customers of these services to identify shortfalls in service quality.

**Literature Review**

Many researchers (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Carman, 1990; Bolton and Drew, 1991a, b) concur that service quality is an elusive concept, and there is considerable debate about how best to conceptualise this phenomenon. Lewis and Booms (1983, p. 100) were perhaps the first to define service quality as a “...measure of how well the service level delivered matches the customer’s expectations”. Thereafter, there seems to be a broad consensus that service quality is an attitude of overall judgement about service superiority, although the exact nature of this attitude is still hazy.

Some suggest that it stems from a comparison of performance perceptions with expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1988), while others argue that it is derived from a comparison of performance with ideal standards (Teas, 1993a, b) or from perceptions of performance alone (Cronin and Taylor, 1992).

In terms of measurement methodologies, a review of literature provides plenty of service quality evaluation scales. Some stem from the realisation of conceptual models produced to understand the evaluation process (Parasuraman et al., 1985), and others come from empirical analysis and experimentation on different service sectors (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Franceschini and Rossetto, 1997b; Parasuraman et al., 1988). The most widely used methods applied to measure perceived quality can be characterized as primarily quantitative multi-attribute measurements. Within the attribute-based methods, a great number of variants exist and among these variants, the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF instruments have attracted the greatest attention. Generally, most researchers acknowledge that customers have expectations and these serve as standards or reference points to evaluate the performance of an organisation. However, the unresolved issues of expectations as a determinant of perceived service quality have resulted in two conflicting measurement paradigms: the disconfirmation paradigm (SERVQUAL) which compares the perceptions of the service received with expectations, and the perception paradigm (SERVPERF) which maintains only the perceptions of service quality. These instruments share the same concept of perceived quality. The main difference between these scales lies in the formulation adopted for their calculation, and more concretely, the utilisation of expectations and the type of expectations that should be used.

Most research studies do not support the five-factor structure of SERVQUAL posited by Parasuraman et al. (1988), and administering expectation items is also considered unnecessary (Carman, 1990; Parasuraman et al., 1991a, b; Babakus and Boller, 1992). Cronin and Taylor (1992) were particularly vociferous in their critiques, thus developing their own performance-based measure, dubbed SERVPERF. In fact, the SERVPERF scale is the unweighted perceptions components of SERVQUAL, which consists of 22 perception items thus excluding any consideration of expectations. In their empirical work in four industries, Cronin and Taylor (1992) found that unweighted SERVPERF measure (performance-only) performs better that any other measure of service quality, and that it has greater predictive power (ability to provide an accurate service quality score) than SERVQUAL. They argue that current performance best reflects a customer’s perception of service quality, and that expectations are not part of this concept.

Likewise, Boulding et al. (1993) reject the value of an expectations-based SERVQUAL, and concur that service quality is only influenced by perceptions. Quester et al. (1995) perform similar analysis to Cronin and Taylor in the Australian advertising industry, and their empirical tests show that SERVPERF performs best, while SERVQUAL performs worst, although the differences are small. Teas (1993a), on the other hand, discusses the conceptual and operational difficulties of using the ‘expectations minus performance’ approach, with a particular emphasis on expectations. His empirical test subsequently produces two alternatives of perceived service quality measures, namely EP and normed quality (NQ). He concludes that the EP instrument, which measures the gap between perceived performance and the ideal amount of a feature rather than the customer’s expectations, outperforms both SERVQUAL and NQ.

A review of service quality literature brings forward diverse arguments in relation to the advantages and disadvantages in the use of these instruments. In general, the arguments make reference to aspects related to the characteristics of these scales notably their reliability and validity. Recently, Llusar and Zornoza (2000) concur that SERVPERF results in more reliable estimations, greater convergent and discriminant validity, greater explained
variance, and consequently less bias than the EP scale. These results are consistent with earlier research that had compared these methods in the scope of service activities (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1994). In fact, the marketing literature appears to offer considerable support for the superiority of simple performance-based measures of service quality (Mazis et al., 1975; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Carman, 1990; Bolton and Drew, 1991a, b; Boulding et al., 1993; Teas, 1993a; Quester et al., 1995).

Objective of the study
The objective of the research is to explore the various factors of service quality in B-schools in India. For this purpose, the students have been considered as the respondent to find out these factors.

Research Methodology
Initial instrument was developed by generating items from the various review of literature available. The scale development procedures employed followed the procedures provided by PZB augmented by Cronin and Taylor, 1992 and utilized by many researchers. On the basis of the conceptual and operational concerns associated with the generic measures of service quality, the present research attempts to compare and contrast empirically the HEdPERF scale against two alternatives namely the SERVPERF and the merged HEdPERF-SERVPERF scales. The primary goal is to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of each instrument in order to determine which instrument had the superior measurement capability in terms of unidimensionality, reliability, validity and explained variance of service quality. The findings were eventually used in transforming HEdPERF into an ideal measuring instrument of service quality for higher education sector. Further for the data collection all the MBA students were considered. Around 300-400 students were collected from NCR using quota sampling dividing into the four zones in NCR and in each of these zones non random of Judgemental sampling is used for the purpose of survey. It is a sampling techniques in which the sample is obtained by selecting convenient population units.

Sample size: A sample of 300-400 students respondents was selected for the purpose of study in both the case.

Analysis and Interpretation
The first data analysis in the Exploratory Factor Analysis process (Pallant, 2007) is the assessment of its suitability (factorability). Two statistical measures: Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) can be used to investigate the factorability of the data.

Interpretation of Factors
Each factor needs to be assigned a name or label to characterise it and aid its interpretation (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Each of the measuring service quality in B-Schools factors that have been extracted via Principle Component Analysis in the Exploratory Factor Analysis process of this research data is displayed. The names allocated to each factor are a result of the interpretation of its shopping motivations factor scale items and are discussed in the following sub-sections.

Administrative support
The first factor with the highest Total Variance Explained value has been interpreted as Administrative support due to its inclusion of scale items identified and adapted from academic literature surrounding measuring service quality in B-Schools Administrative support, as displayed in table below:-

| Factor loadings for Administrative support |  |
| Promises kept | .788 |
| Accurate and retrievable records | .755 |
| Convenient opening hours | .693 |
| Internal quality programmes | .634 |
| Academic facilities | .633 |
| Responding to request for assistance | .601 |
| Placement cell | .536 |

The scale items that load onto the Factor 1 are related to the following for Administrative support Promises kept, Accurate and retrievable records, Convenient opening hours, Internal quality programmes, Academic facilities, Responding to request for assistance and Placement cell

Academic Aspects
The second factor with the highest Total Variance Explained value has been interpreted as *Academic aspects*, due to its inclusion of scale items identified and adapted from academic literature surrounding measuring service quality in B-Schools *Academic aspects*, as displayed in table below:-

Table 2: Academic Aspects

| Knowledgeable in course content | .788 |
| Responding to request for assistance | .770 |
| Caring and courteous faculty | .610 |
| Sincere interest in solving problem | .607 |

The scale items that load onto the Factor 2 are related to the following for *Academic aspects* - Knowledgeable in course content, Responding to request for assistance, Caring and courteous faculty and Sincere interest in solving problem.

**Reliability**

The third factor with the highest Total Variance Explained value has been interpreted as *reliability*, due to its inclusion of scale items identified and adapted from academic literature surrounding measuring service quality in B-Schools *reliability* as displayed in table below:-

Table 3: Reliability

| Should tell when services will be performed | .776 |
| Employees who are trustworthy | .771 |
| Should do as promised | .727 |
| Individual attention to customers | .632 |
| Up-to-date equipment | .615 |

The scale items that load onto the Factor 3 are related to the following for *reliability* - Should tell when services will be performed, Employees who are trustworthy, Should do as promised, Individual attention to customers and Up-to-date equipment.

**Responsiveness**

The fourth factor with the highest Total Variance Explained value has been interpreted as *Responsiveness*, due to its inclusion of scale items identified and adapted from academic literature surrounding measuring service quality in B-Schools *Responsiveness*, as displayed in table below:-

Table 4: Responsiveness

| Knowledgeable of systems/procedures | .739 |
| Service within reasonable time frame | .721 |
| Feeling secured and confident | .689 |

The scale items that load onto the Factor 4 are related to the following for *Responsiveness* - Knowledgeable of systems/procedures, Service within reasonable time frame and Feeling secured and confident.

**Training and placement**

The first factor with the highest Total Variance Explained value has been interpreted as *Training and placement*, due to its inclusion of scale items identified and adapted from academic literature surrounding measuring service quality in B-Schools *Training and placement*, as displayed in table below:-
Table 5: Training and placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselling services for placement</th>
<th>.745</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical services</td>
<td>.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student placement cell</td>
<td>.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality of information</td>
<td>.545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scale items that load onto the Factor 5 are related to the following for Training and Placement are Flexible syllabus and structure, Variety of programmes/specializations Ideal campus location/layout and Fair amount of freedom.

Empathy

The first factor with the highest Total Variance Explained value has been interpreted as Empathy, due to its inclusion of scale items identified and adapted from academic literature surrounding measuring service quality in B-Schools Empathy, as displayed in table below:-

Table 6: Empathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flexible syllabus and structure</th>
<th>.739</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variety of programmes/specializations</td>
<td>.730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal campus location/layout</td>
<td>.697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair amount of freedom</td>
<td>.501</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scale items that load onto the Factor 6 are related to the following for Empathy Flexible syllabus and structure, Variety of programmes/specializations Ideal campus location/layout and Fair amount of freedom

Conclusion

It was found from the research that the major factors which are for measuring the services quality in B-schools is Administrative support Promises kept, Accurate and retrievable records, Convenient opening hours, Internal quality programmes, Academic facilities, Responding to request for assistance and Placement cell. Next is Empathy which includes Flexible syllabus and structure, Variety of programmes/specializations Ideal campus location/layout and Fair amount of freedom. Next important factor is Training and Placement is another major factor with Flexible syllabus and structure, Variety of programmes/specializations Ideal campus location/layout and Fair amount of freedom. Next factor is Responsiveness Knowledgeable of systems/procedures, Service within reasonable time frame and Feeling secured and confident. Reliability Should tell when services will be performed Employees who are trustworthy, Should do as promised, Individual attention to customers and Up-to-date equipment. the second is Academic aspects Knowledgeable in course content, Responding to request for assistance, Caring and courteous faculty and Sincere interest in solving problem.

References