Article No.21

SERVICE QUALITY, STUDENT SATISFACTION & BRANDING FOR BUSINESS SCHOOLS

Dr. Mohammad Razi-ur-Rahim
Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

Abstract: MBA is the course of elites. The “elitist” character of management education has been counteracted by the effective role played by the universities in India by spreading management education from classes to masses. This is evident from almost a mushroom growth of management courses in the universities as well as by several autonomous bodies (private institutions). Thus growth in numbers has predictably resulted in a wide divergence in the quality of education provided by schools. This quantitative expansion without adequate preparation and even the basic infrastructure has adversely affected the quality of management education. Hence there is an urgent need for developing a monitoring system for management education. To control the quality degradation in management education there should be a regular feedback from those who received management education as well as by the users of the product. A continuous dialogue with the users in public and private undertakings as well as in the academic field would serve a dual purpose of having a rapport with the users. The pressure to provide better student services has never been greater. Students have become more and more aware of their requirements and demand higher standards of services. Their (Quality Gap) are continually evolving making it difficult for the service providers to measure and manage services effectively. The key lies in improving the services selectively, paying attention to more critical service dimensions as a part of service management. Students are very sensitive to various service dimensions. Now, the challenge is to reduce dissatisfaction among the students is equally strong.

Key Words: management education, perceptions and expectations, Quality Gap.

Introduction

The new generation in search for professional career has begun to aspire for MBA education which is now a new status symbol. Now the management education has become “Mass Education” rather than “Class Education”. Today B-schools are emerging in like the beauty shops in every market corner. This quantitative expansion in B-schools has adversely affected the quality of management education.

The higher management education industry in India is encountering problems related to quality standards of education, inadequate infrastructure, industry interaction, reliability issues, course curriculum, degradation in studies and low levels of student satisfaction. To control the quality degradation in management education, there should be a regular feedback from those who received management education. This paper is an attempt to...
investigate measure the prioritization of dimensions of service quality and the effect of service quality on user satisfaction and institution reputation.

**Literature Review**

The service products are different from tangible physical products. Services are summarized as intangible, inseparable, heterogeneous and perishable (Zeithaml et al., 1985). Services are behavioural rather than physical entities and have been described as deeds, performances, efforts and process (Rathmell, 1966). Most services are intangible (Berry, 1980). The production and consumption of services is inseparable (Carman and Langeard, 1980). Service quality is created in the delivery process with an interaction between consumer and provider. Services are consumed while they are produced. Inseparability reflect the simultaneous delivery and consumption of services (Zeithaml et al., 1985). Heterogeneity reflects the potential for high variability in service delivery (Zeithaml et al., 1985). There are fewer set standards for services and performances, service vary with different individuals, for different objects, and at different times.

Inseparability reflect the simultaneous delivery and consumption of services (Zeithaml et al., 1985). Heterogeneity reflects the potential for high variability in service delivery (Zeithaml et al., 1985). There are fewer set standards for services and performances, service vary with different individuals, for different objects, and at different times. Services cannot be stored and carried forward to future time period (Rathmell, 1966). Onkvisit and Shaw (1991) suggest that services are “time dependent” and “time important” which makes them very perishable. Unlike physical goods, service is ephemeral and cannot be stored in the way that physical goods can be (Berry et al., 1985). When the service delivery processes are discontinued services ceases to exist.

**Education - A Service Product**

Higher education is a service, it is undoubtedly both intangible and heterogeneous, and is produced and consumed simultaneously when the consumers are participating in the delivery process. This meets the criterion of inseparability. Finally, education is perishable for it is impossible to store, despite the technology of video (Cuthert, 1996).

**Educational Quality Defined**

In the area of education, Cheng (1997) stated “Education quality is the character of the set of elements in the input, process and output of the education systems that provides services that completely satisfy both the internal and external strategic constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations”. In addition, Harvey and Green (1993) proposed five ways of thinking about quality in education. First, quality is regarded in terms of excellence. Second, quality is perfection or consistency, third, quality is fitness for purpose. Fourth, quality is value for money and finally, quality is transformation processes that have value-added activities.

**GAPS Model**

Quality of service has been studied in the area of business management for years because the market is more competitive and marketing management has transferred its focus from
internal performance such as production, to external interests such as satisfaction and customers’ perception of service quality. Service quality is a concept that has aroused considerable interest and debate in the research literature because of the difficulties in both defining it and measuring it with no overall consensus emerging on either (Wisniewski, 2001).

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) provide a well-known framework for measuring service quality known as “GAP Model” of perceived service quality, which has defined service quality as the gap between consumers’ expectations and their perceptions of how the service is performed. This model has five gaps (Exhibit 2.2):

Gap 1: Consumer expectation –Management perception gap
Gap 2: Management perception –Service quality specification gap
Gap 3: Service quality specifications –Service delivery gap
Gap 4: Service delivery –External communication gap
Gap 5: Expected service –Experienced service gap (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985)

Fifth gap is a result of the other four gaps. Berry, Parasuraman and Zeithaml (1985) developed a popular disconfirmation model for measuring service quality used on perceptions of customers of service quality compared to their expectations. From their qualitative research, a new model was developed for evaluating service quality known as SERVQUAL. The five determinants with 22 statements were summarized from the original 10 which are used by customers in judging service quality, namely (RATER):

- Reliability (R): ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
- Assurance (A): knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
- Tangibles (T): appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.
- Empathy (E): caring, individualized attention the firm provide to its customers.
- Responsiveness (R): willingness to help customers and provide prompt services.

Each of the five distinct dimensions is represented in the 22 –item SERVQUAL scale. The SERVQUAL instrument can be used to measure the service quality of an organization along each of five dimensions.

**SERVQUAL Scale**

The SERVQUAL scale has been widely used to measure service quality in different service contexts, such as professional services (Freeman and Dart, 1993), health care (Lam, 1997), tourism (Tribe and Snaith, 1988), business school (Pariseau and Mc Daniel, 1997) and information systems (Kettinger and Lee, 1994). It has also been widely tested
for its validity and reliability (Babakus and Boller, 1992; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). In spite of the fact that some of these studies failed to support the five-dimensional factor structures, Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1994) defended the five-factor structure of service quality on conceptual and practical grounds.

Research Methodology

Research Question

Enhancing service quality has been demonstrated across numerous industries. B-schools while attempting to compete at academic levels with other players in this field should offer an added advantage to champion quality services to their students. It is important for the competitive excellence for the service oriented organization. By neglecting these aspects of quality services, the organization will be at competitive disadvantage compared to its counterparts. Because most of its revenues are enrollment related thus affecting its financial health (Zammuto et al., 1996). “Presumably, if quality programs were initiated based on marketing research – that is, the changes were market driven and customer oriented, the quality improvements should lead to customer satisfaction”.

This paper is an attempt to investigate the prioritization of the dimensions of service quality and to assess the satisfaction level of students on various dimensions which affect the loyalty viz-a-viz brand

RQ1: To understand and prioritize the dimensions of service quality as valued by students.

RQ2: To assess satisfaction level of students on various dimensions of service quality.

The result from the study can be used to give valuable information on the elements and the dimensions, which have been given a priority by students in assessing the quality of services and satisfaction. The information can be used by the management of B-schools to adopt effective service quality strategy. Based on extant literature and objectives of the study, hypotheses were framed to prioritizing the dimensions of service quality as valued by students. One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test was used for testing the hypotheses. It involved statistically examining the differences in the mean value of the dependent variables associated with the effect of controlled independent variables (Malhotra, 2007). The hypotheses were tested at significance level less than 0.05. The null hypotheses considered are listed below:

Hypotheses related to prioritizing the dimensions of service quality as valued by students.

H₀1: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Tangibility and Reliability
H₀₂: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Tangibility and Empathy

H₀₃: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Tangibility and Responsiveness

H₀₄: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Tangibility and Assurance

H₀₅: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Reliability and Empathy

H₀₆: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Reliability and Responsiveness

H₀₇: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Reliability and Assurance

H₀₈: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Empathy and Responsiveness

H₀₉: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Empathy and Assurance

H₀₁₀: Significant differences do not exist in the mean scores of the gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Responsiveness and Assurance

The survey method is used based on a number of factors which include sampling, type of population, question form, question content, response rate, costs, and duration of data collection (Aaker, Kumar and Day, 2002).

**Measurement Scale:** This study aims to measure the customer perceptions towards the education service quality, multiple-item scales were deemed appropriate as it is frequently used in marketing research to measure attitudes (Parasuraman et al., 1991). The use of a multi-item scale would ensure that the overall score, which was a composite of several observed scores, was a reliable reflection of the underlying true scores (Hayes, 1998). Two types of measurement scales were used in this research: nominal and interval. Nominal scales were used for identification purposes because they have no numeric value (Hayes, 1998). Interval scales were used to measure the subjective characteristics of respondents.

**Response Format:** Two types of response format were chosen: dichotomous close-ended and labeled scales. Information pertaining to respondents’ demographics a dichotomous
close-ended question format was used and so as to obtain respondent’s perception towards education service quality, labeled scale response format was used. In relation to the number of scale points, many researchers acknowledge that opinions can be captured best with five to seven point scale (Aaker et al., 2002; Malhotra, 2007). Hence a seven-point Likert scale was used in this research.

**Population** - The target population of this study was defined as the regular MBA students of AICTE approved B-Schools situated in U. P. **Sampling Frame** - To choose B-schools in U. P. random sampling method is used. **Sampling Method** - The stratified random sampling process was adopted for this research. As when there is diversity within the population the stratified random sampling technique is usually used (Baines and Chansarkar, 2002). **Sample Size** - The required sample size depends on factors such as the proposed data analysis techniques, financial support and access to sampling frame (Malhotra, 2007). The data analysis technique employed in this research is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). It was decided to target a total of around 150 respondents from AICTE approved B-schools located in Uttar Pradesh.

**Assessment, Refinement and Validation of Measurement Scales** : Prior to carrying out further analysis, the multi-item scales developed for the study have to be evaluated for their reliability, unidimensionality, and validity (Aderson and Gerbing, 1988).

**Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis** : To assess and refine the measurement scales in terms of unidimensionality, reliability and validity, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is performed.

### Summary of EFA and CFA for Scale Assessment and Validation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Factor Analysis</th>
<th>Type of Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EFA for individual scale</td>
<td>Unidimensionality, Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Cronbach Alpha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>EFA for all scales together</td>
<td>Convergent Validity, Discriminant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>CFA for individual scale</td>
<td>Unidimensionality, Convergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Validity, Composite Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CFA for selected pairs of scales</td>
<td>Discriminant Validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>CFA for all scales together</td>
<td>Overall Measurement Model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Hau, L N (2005).

**Data Analysis Strategy**:

Descriptive analysis gives a meaning to data through frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation, which are useful to identify differences among groups. Inferential statistics used for this research were Correlations, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

*AIMA Journal of Management & Research, November 2012, Volume 6, Issue 4/4, ISSN 0974-497 Copy right © 2012 AJMR-AIMA*
Hypothesized Research Model
The hypothesized research model for the present study is based on the expectation disconfirmation theory and the SERVQUAL instrument. The measurement model consists of five (indicators) to measure expectation disconfirmation and overall perceived performance. The most widely used customer perceived service quality model is SERVQUAL model. Thus, the five formative latent constructs (Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy) are based on the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL instrument. The instrument model is shown in Exhibit 1.1.

Limitations of the Study
a) It was observed that there was an apparent reluctance by AICTE approved B-schools in general to participate in academic research.
b) There was lack of extensive prior research in this field, particularly in the context of Indian Management Education Industry.
c) This study is restricted to specific region in India. The required data were mainly obtained from AICTE approved B-school students in U.P.
d) Regardless of the attention and effort, the identified variables may have been influence by the interests and knowledge limitations of the students and this may not be considered to be exhaustive.

Model Analysis
The structural equation model followed conventional linkages between service quality constructs, overall satisfaction and loyalty of the students towards the institute i.e. building the brand image of the institute. The model employed maximum likelihood estimation. Two versions of the model were estimated. Version 1 was for perception and version 2 for GAP. The estimated relationships are presented in Table 1.1 and hypothesis are tested in table 1.2. The relations between independent and dependent variables in the present study, as assessed by SEM, show that there is a significant direct and positive relationship between nearly all independent and dependent variables, thus indication sufficient criterion validity.

Findings
Students perceive Tangibility, followed by Assurance, Responsiveness, Reliability and lastly Empathy to be having direct impact on Satisfaction. Tangibility builds satisfaction, though its impact on loyalty is low. However Assurance followed by Reliability, Responsiveness and Empathy affect Loyalty to a greater extent. GAP in case of Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance and Tangibility (respectively) not only affects satisfaction but also the loyalty.

As the parameter estimates in table 1.1 show as per to expectations, satisfaction was having high impact on loyalty. Original model also showed the positive impact of satisfaction and loyalty. The low value of standard error in case of loyalty in modified model indicates that the parameter can be reasonably determined by the data in hand (Diamantopoulos et al., 2000).

a)
Exhibit 1.1   Showing Hypothesized Measurement Model

Tangibility
- Visually appealing Physical Facilities
- Modern class room with up-to-date facilities
- Neat well dressed and visually appealing staff
- Efficient handling mechanism
- Materials associated with the education services

Reliability
- Staff gives personal attention to students
- Meet time commitment
- Student’s best interest at heart
- Prompt service to students
- Always willing to help students
- Understand specific needs of students
- Staff behaviour should instill confidence
- Keep error free records
- Consistently courteous staff
- Knowledge to answer students’ queries
- Individual attention to student
- Perform service right the first time
- Keep students informed about time of service
- Staff never too busy to respond to student’s request
- Assures campus placement

Responsiveness
- Assure students’ overall needs
- Special need students
- Problems due to critical incidents

Assurance
- Staff gives personal attention to special need students
- Special need students
- Problems due to critical incidents

Empathy
- Staff never too busy to respond to student’s request
- Assures campus placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Path Relation</th>
<th>Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un-standardized Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ←— Tangibility</td>
<td>0.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ←— Empathy</td>
<td>0.476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ←— Reliability</td>
<td>0.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ←— Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ←— Assurance</td>
<td>0.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty ←— Tangibility</td>
<td>0.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty ←— Empathy</td>
<td>0.660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty ←— Reliability</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty ←— Responsiveness</td>
<td>0.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty ←— Assurance</td>
<td>0.660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty ←— Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.1: Parameter Estimates for Modified Model

Table 1.2: Service Quality in AICTE approve B-Schools – Results of t-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hyp.</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>NAAC Accredited Category</th>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>t-Test</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>t-Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₁</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Tangibility and Reliability in one category of B-school</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>- 7.774</td>
<td>7.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>- 7.172</td>
<td>10.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₂</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Tangibility and Empathy in one category of B-schools</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>- 8.271</td>
<td>6.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>- 8.561</td>
<td>7.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₃</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Tangibility and Responsiveness in one category of B-schools</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>- 8.905</td>
<td>6.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>- 7.341</td>
<td>6.121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₄</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Tangibility and Assurance in one category of B-schools</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>- 5.876</td>
<td>5.648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>- 6.473</td>
<td>8.347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₅</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Reliability and Empathy in one category of B-schools</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>- 5.074</td>
<td>5.764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>- 5.549</td>
<td>6.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Perceived</td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₆</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Reliability and Responsiveness in one category of B-schools</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>-9.841</td>
<td>8.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>-7.777</td>
<td>7.698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₇</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Reliability and Assurance in one category of B-schools</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>-7.223</td>
<td>8.416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>-6.768</td>
<td>5.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₈</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Empathy and Responsiveness in one category of B-schools</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>-8.561</td>
<td>7.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>-6.943</td>
<td>7.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₉</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Empathy and Assurance in one category of B-schools</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>-6.425</td>
<td>5.191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>-4.823</td>
<td>6.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₀₁₀</td>
<td>No difference gap between students’ perceived and expected service quality vis-à-vis Responsiveness and Assurance in one category of B-schools</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>-8.193</td>
<td>6.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>-5.974</td>
<td>5.748</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B 190 179.16 21.080
Conclusions

Service Quality Dimensions as Valued by Students
Students had ranked the importance level across the five dimensions on the basis of their expectations. Reliability dimension was regarded as the most important followed by Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance and Tangibility respectively. Some of the most expected aspect of services were “assure campus placement” (Assurance), “problems due to critical incidents” (Reliability), “special need students” (Reliability), “understand specific needs of students” (Empathy), “material associated with the education service” (Tangibility), “keep error free records” (Reliability), “always willing to help students” (Responsiveness), “meet time commitment” (Reliability) and “neat well dressed and visually appealing staff” (Tangibility).

Student Satisfaction on Various Dimensions of Service Quality
It is not surprising that student understand the concept of quality with regards to higher education in different ways. The relationship between independent and dependent variables, as assessed by Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), show that there is a significant and positive relationship between service quality dimensions, overall satisfaction and loyalty of students towards the institute which builds the brand. Tangibility followed by Assurance, Responsiveness, Reliability and Empathy dimensions of service quality as received by students having direct impact on Satisfaction. On the other side the gap in service quality as observed by the students on the dimensions as Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance and Tangibility respectively affects students’ satisfaction to a greater extent.

The five dimensional factors also build loyalty. The services as received by the students explore the direct relationship between the service quality dimensions and loyalty. Assurance being the number one factor in building Loyalty followed by Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy and Tangibility. A slight gap in the service quality delivered affects Loyalty. The most affecting dimension in building Loyalty are Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance and Tangibility in the same order. The parameter estimates and original model showed a positive impact of Satisfaction and Loyalty.

Hence the research concludes that the five SERVQUAL dimensional factors having positive relationship not only with satisfaction of students but also build Loyalty among the students towards the institute. Satisfaction due to services received by the students build the Loyalty. Satisfaction also affects the overall perception that institute satisfy students’ need and affects the Gap between overall perception and expectation that institute satisfy student’s needs. Whereas Loyalty built, influences the students to recommend the institute to their friends and other students.

This study looked at service marketing and higher education and investigated student expectations and student satisfaction at AICTE approved B-schools. The results of the survey supported previous research by Parasuraman, Zeithaml., Berry (1988, 1991, 1994 and 1996). This research compared qualitative research and quantitative research and posits that the expectations of students could be classified into five factors. For service
quality, the study pointed to several components those B-schools needs to improve, which are physical facilities, resolving problems for students, providing prompt service and understanding students’ specific needs. This research indicates the students’ expectations are generally met; they are generally satisfied with the service provided by the different AICTE approved B-schools. There are significant relationships between gap score; overall service quality; satisfaction and loyalty. Meanwhile, service quality and overall satisfaction can be predictably improved by decreasing gap scores to some extents. The research findings have provided several implications for B-schools business development mangers, leaders of marketing decision- making processes and accrediting agencies. The study offers useful information to B-schools to better understand students’ expectations and improve satisfaction and builds students loyalty.

This study is the systematic study that has made an attempt to explore the relationship between expected and perceived performance relating to the importance of service quality in B-school. Findings of the study provide an insight into decision making patterns of B-school aspirants with regard to various facets of service delivered. The present study focused on student’s (perspective) in the process phase of their study when they actually received the services provided by different B-schools. The findings exemplify that mere focus on perceived service quality is insufficient to develop long-term loyalty. Mediating effect of customer satisfaction also needs to be looked into. Thus service managers should ensure that the performance on all components of delivered service is perceived as excellent by students and also sustain high levels of satisfaction.

In order to meet the objectives of the services delivered, service staff must be well trained for keeping good relationship with students and for addressing students’ enquiries. As suggested from the measure of perceived service quality, besides the quality of interactions between service staff and students, physical outcomes are also important and need to be well managed.

Discussion

In this final section of the study, discussion on the important findings of the study is reviewed in terms of its significance and support by other researchers. This study attempted to examine the relationship between service quality dimensions (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness) and student satisfaction and to examine critical factors in service quality that contributes the most to satisfaction.

The research question indicates five service quality dimensions (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibility, Empathy and Responsiveness) and over all service quality has strong relationship with student satisfaction. The result is consistent with the findings by Athiyaman (1997). It is found that, although the dimensions in service quality are important but Reliability is found to be one of important factory. Consistent with what has been depicted by Soutar and Mc Niel (1996) in their research, stating that although all dimensions in service quality are actually useful that does not mean that all dimensions are significant. It is found that Reliability is one of the dimensions followed by Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance and Tangibility respectively are significantly
related with Satisfaction and Loyalty, meaning that student in higher education sector are actually concerned with reliability issues first to inspire trust and confidence.

**Directions for Future Research**

Based on the study, the following directions for future research may be pointed out:

- The model proposed in the present research needs to be further tested utilizing more variables and a large sample. Future research efforts need to focus on additional decisional variables pertaining to prediction of service quality.
- Future researchers can expand the scope of study to include smaller cities for data collection and study the difference in GAP between perception and expectation with respect to service quality of metro respondents and smaller city respondents.
- Further research might prove valuable in confirming the full impact of gender, semester of study, and age on service expectations and perceptions. Extension studied need to be carried out to unravel the relationship of demographic variables with service expectations and perceptions.
- Future researches are needed to determine the parameters of the students’ ‘zone of tolerance’. This is important for service provider to gradually improve the quality and allocate resource accordingly.
- This study has concentrated on the student’s perception of service quality. Future research should focus on the perception of service quality form other stakeholders (such as internal customer, government, industries, etc.).

***

**References**


Harvey, L and Green, D (1993), Defining ‘Quality’: Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education. 18(1), pp. 9-34.


