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A Services Quality Assessment in Higher Education,
Tough But Not Impossible-A case study of NIM BBA College, Surat.

Introduction

India has travelled a long way in education, from the "Guru -Shishya" practice of learning under the shade of a tree in medieval times, to becoming the third largest in the field of growth of higher education world over after United States and China.

India has significant advantages in the 21st century knowledge race. There are a small number of high quality institutions, departments, and centres that can form the basis of quality sector in higher education. The fact that the States, rather than the Central Government, exercise major responsibility for higher education creates a rather cumbersome structure, but the system allows for a variety of policies and approaches.

During the last few years, universities have increased manifold and colleges have mushroomed all over our country to impart higher education. However whether just the availability of educational institutes means do we have a strong higher education system? In this scenario, a conflicting picture arises with former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's words, "Our university system is, in many parts, in a state of disrepair. In almost half the districts higher education enrollment are abysmally low. Almost two third of our universities and 90% of colleges is rated below average in quality parameters"

Several of the well-endowed and effectively managed private institutions maintain reasonably high standards, although it is not clear that these institutions will be able to sustain themselves in the long run. They can help produce well-qualified graduates in such fields as

management, but they cannot form the basis for comprehensive research universities. This sector lacks the resources to build the facilities required for quality instruction and research in the sciences. Nor can enough money be earned by providing instruction in the mainstream arts and sciences disciplines. Most of the private institutions do not focus on advanced training in the sciences.

Like developed country in India too Higher education institutions are looking forward of improvements in teaching service quality to satisfy the expectations of their students and the society. Like any other industry in this education sector also there is a tough competition. Education sector particularly fall in to services industry. And as we all know managing services is difficult than managing the goods. Or we all know that marketing the services is different than the marketing of goods or tangible products. Hence it is necessary to understand that service processes which are different from manufacturing processes, especially due to their intangible nature and the direct participation of clients. Every company is Aiming to make clients loyal, and so companies have made every effort to meet their needs and exceed their expectations. The main thing to make them loyal or satisfied is to provide them better quality services. And how to assess the quality of intangible and perishable is big question but The SERVQUAL scale is one of the tools that can help in this sense. Education services have very particular characteristics; the SERVQUAL model must be adapted according to the most important determining factors proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985). These are Reliability, Tangibility, Responsibility, Security and Empathy.

About Trust and NIM BBA College

Navnirman Institute of Management, managed by Kantha Vibhag Navnirman Mandal, Surat, affiliated to Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, was established in 2007 with an objective to provide qualitative management education to the students from Surat. It had only 60 students in 2007 and now it grows to more than 700 students in 2012 and recognized as NIM BBA in academic community. This college is amongst the very few which offers three specialized area during third year of students, namely Finance, Marketing, and Human Resource. This college is having well qualified faculties having academic as well as industrial experience to inculcate the students in all the aspects. They have very advanced library which has more than thousands of books & magazines of various subjects related to management. They have advanced computer lab, lust green ground, and canteen. This shows the overall efforts of NIM BBA College and its Management to maintain its good and prime reputation and providing the tough competition to other BBA colleges in Surat city.

Review of Literature

The reviews that are collected by the researcher should give an insight into the field under study. These reviews will explain the need and scope of the study under consideration.

Service quality is and has always been something hard to measure as well as evaluate. Unlike goods, where the quality can be measured objectively by indicators, such as durability and the number of defects, (Crosby 1979 & Garvin 1983) service quality is an abstract and elusive construct due to four characteristics unique to services; intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, and inseparability of product and consumption (Parasuraman et al. 1985). Due to the lack of an objective measuring system, an appropriate way of dealing with the quality of a service is to measure the perceptions of customers" view on quality. It was not until the 1980"s that different models and instruments were created for this purpose. Parasuraman et al. (1988), developed SERVQUAL and it has become one of the most frequently used instruments for measuring customers" experiences with service encounters.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) emphatically pointed out that the concept of quality prevalent in the goods sector is not extendable to the services sector. Being inherently and essentially intangible, heterogeneous, perishable, and entailing simultaneity and inseparability of production and consumption, services require a distinct framework for quality explication and measurement.

One major contribution of **Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988)** was to provide a brief definition of service quality. In line with the propositions put forward by Gronroos (1982) and Smith and Houston (1982), Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985, 1988) posited and operationalized service quality as a difference between consumer expectations of 'what they want' and their perceptions of 'what they get.' Based on this conceptualization and operationalization, they proposed a service quality measurement scale called 'SERVQUAL.' The SERVQUAL scale constitutes an important landmark in the service quality literature and has been extensively applied in different service settings.

To check the performance, **Dr. Arshan Shahin (2004),** University of Isfahan, Iran conducted research with SERVQUAL and Model of Service Quality Gaps. SERVQUAL methodology as an analytical approach for evaluating the difference between customers' expectations and perceptions of quality was also studied. While this research provides some perspectives to the field of service quality, it is believed that there are a number of things that should be done to

confirm the demonstrated methodologies as well as to expand the use of SERVQUAL in design and improvement of quality services.

Prajapati and Kachwala (2006) in their study have found out that the delivery of information i.e. knowledge transmission in the case of Management Education Institutes (MEI) is intangible in nature. Therefore, the inputs in terms of delivery of this knowledge - faculty, equipment and the entire environment and infrastructure are very important for quality. A gap was found between the quality rendered by faculty and service provider, and quality required by students. It is essential to understand the exact quality required by the students to develop a course and curriculum that suit their requirements. Service quality needs to be quantified and thus it can be described in terms of objective and perceptual characteristics: Objective characteristics include things like, lecture time, wait time, etc., and can be easily quantified. Perceptual characteristics on the other hand, depend on the students' perceptions, which include dimensions of service quality based on the SERVQUAL and other service quality instruments. The study encompassed Business Schools in Mumbai as perceived by students are evaluated.

Michael Stodnick and Pamela Rogers (2008), Department of Management, College of Business Administration, University of North Texas, they claim that above mentioned research was the first to apply the SERVQUAL scale to measure student perceptions of service quality in a classroom setting. Although the scale itself is well established, the application of it to the classroom and its success empowers this report's success. The findings suggested that the SERVQUAL scale is reliable and exhibits both convergent and divergent validity. In fact as per this research, in terms of scale development, SERVQUAL performed better than a traditional student evaluation scale, the Brightman scale.

Rodney, Arambewela, **John and Hall** (July, 2006) found that their study investigated the relationship between the SERVQUAL constructs of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles and the country of origin and satisfaction among four groups of postgraduate business students from Asia studying in Australia. The findings indicated that all SERVQUAL constructs had an impact on student satisfaction level, though there were variances in the impact of each construct. It was clear however that the tangibles construct was the most significant in forming satisfaction among all groups of students as confirmed by previous studies on student satisfaction. The study revealed that the importance placed on individual service quality variables within each construct also differed between the four groups of students, providing an insight into the post-choice behavior of students. The

findings therefore will be useful for educational institutions in prioritizing action to achieve positive outcomes in the satisfaction levels of students and their choice of study destinations.

Faranak Khodayari and Behnaz Khodayari (2011) proposed that perceived service quality reflects the difference between consumer expectations and perceptions which depends on the size and direction of the four gaps related to the delivery of service quality on the providers' side. SERVQUAL can trace the trend of customer relative importance, expectation, and perception, if applied periodically and it is able to identify specific area of excellence and weaknesses. Also it is able to prioritize area of service weaknesses. The results of this research show that there is a gap between student`s perceptions and student`s expectations and among factors and dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are important for students.

Another study conducted by **Miguel Morales and Luis Felipe Calderon**, professor of Marketing , titled Assessing service quality in school of business: dimensions of service quality in counting professional education, found that delievering quality service has become an important goal for most business schools. This study found that the service quality can be measured with a four dimension scale where reliability –empathy is the most important for professional students. In practice the importance of this dimension points to the need for strong management emphasis on service dependibility and demonstration of rersonalised interesr when interacting with professional students. Although the result of this study provide valuable insight into the relationship of student satisfaction with business school services, one obvious limitation is its external validity.

So from the above mentioned researcher found that SERVQUAL is widely used research tool for assessing services quality in service organization. Hence this research adapted SERVQUAL instrument based on these past researches conducted with the help of this tool.

Research Methodology

Problem Definition:

The literature review itself pointing out that it is not something that one can assess whether its certain practices are profitable or not. So to assess the quality of education services is tougher than that of any normal services, because for any profit making services firm the quality is directly related with its profit but in case of education its' not so. Here in this research the main problem is to assess the service quality in NIM BBA College. And it would be helpful to move ahead with the changing environment.

Objective of the Study

Primary objective:

The primary objective of this research study was to assess service quality in a Navnirman Institute of Management-BBA College, Surat

Secondary objectives:

This research also investigated satisfaction level among students who come from different background i.e. family income per annum, family composition, their medium of schooling. These are listed as bellow:

a. To identify the difference in satisfaction level among male and female students of NIM
b. To identify the difference in satisfaction level among students who come from different income group.
c. To identify the difference in satisfaction level among students who come from different family composition.
d. To identify the difference in satisfaction level among students who attended different medium of instruction at school level

Research Design

This was a descriptive research because according to Hair et al (2002, p.41), the descriptive research is applicable when a researcher look to answers to the how, what, who, when and where. This study has measured the services quality offered at NIM BBA College. So it is descriptive research nature.

Sampling Design

a) **Universe:** Students of NIM BBA College.
b) **Sample Size:** Sample size of study 250 students out of which 82 each from FY & SY BBA and 86 from TYBBA
c) **Sampling Method:** Researcher has selected samples by using Quota sampling method. Quota sampling is a method for selecting survey participants on non probability basis. In quota sampling, a population is first segmented into mutually exclusive sub-groups, just as in stratified sampling that is already done with FY, SY, and TY BBA. Then judgment is used to select the subjects or units from each segment based on a specified proportion.

Data Collection

This Study was based on Primary Data. For to examine the research objective and hypothesis primary data were collected through survey with structural Questionnaire was used as a survey tool, and for rest of the details regarding information on SERVQUAL and its adaptability, reference books, magazines, research papers, journals, news papers, websites were used.

Hypotheses

As SERVQUAL examines five dimensions of service quality, so for this research work hypotheses were:

H_1 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of boys and girls students of NIM BBA college.

H_2 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students belong to joint family and nuclear family

H_3 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students belong to different family income group

H_4 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students come from school having different medium of instructions

H_5 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students of FY, SY and TY BBA

1. Data analysis

Collected data was primarily analyzed with methodology of SERVQAUL, then for testing the reliability of data Cronbanch alpha was used which gave overall 0.8456 alpha value which indicates that data has good consistency as it is reliable to process on. After this various statistical tools were used to do in depth analysis. For detailed analysis descriptive statistics, t- test and ANOVA test were applied through SPSS Package.

The demographic profiles of the NIM students involved in this study are,

- In order to elicit responses from the NIM students a total of 310 questionnaires were distributed and 250 questionnaires were returned which amounts to overall response rate of 80.60%.

- In my survey researcher has found that out of the 250 Students 44% was boys and 56% was girls.

- In terms of Medium of instruction at school level of education more than 72% students had English, 25% of the students had Gujarati, and 2% of the students had Hindi.

- With regard to students family annual income, 40% students Family income were in the Less than 2 Lacs, 37% students family income were in the range of 2 Lacs to 5 Lacs followed by 17% of the students income were in the range of 5 Lacs to 10 Lacs and 6% of the total students Family income were more than 10 Lacs.

Students' Perception Versus students' Expectation

The Gap of dimensions And Average Weighted Gap score for each dimension as well overall weighted score

SERVQUAL Dimension	Base Score (E-P)	Avg. Weight	Weighted Score
Tangibility	-0.858	19.95	-17.11882
Reliability	-0.386	19.50	-7.528544
Responsiveness	-0.349	22.43	-7.828768
Assurance	-0.164	19.12	-3.13568
Empathy	-0.258	19.11	-4.930896
Average Weighted score:			**-8.108541**

[Table 1. Average Weighted Gap score for each dimension as well overall weighted score]

Table 1, indicates that overall average weighted score is also negative in which tangibility has highest that is -17.12 while assurance has lowest -3.14 score with its weighted. So here also we can say that according to weight of each dimension tangibility has very poor result followed by responsiveness that is -7.828, while overall Average weighted score is -8.108, which shows the neutral to negative perception for the college.

Hypotheses Testing

H₁ : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of boys and girls

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
OVERALL_ SATISFACTION	Equal variances assumed	.003	.954	-1.838	248	.067	-.21265	.11568
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.862	241.982	.064	-.21265	.11419

[Table 2: t-test for gender and overall satisfaction level with all dimensions.]

2-tailed significant value (P value) for independent sample t-test is 0.067, hence null hypotheses is fail to rejected, so it can be concluded that there is a no significant difference in the satisfaction level of boys and girls.

H₂ : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students belong to joint family and nuclear family

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
OVERALL_ SATISFACTION	Equal variances assumed	.792	.374	-.795	248	.428	-.09858	.12407
	Equal variances not assumed			-.821	164.671	.413	-.09858	.12011

Table 3: t-test for composition of the family and overall satisfaction level all dimension.

2-tailed significant value (P value) for independent sample t-test is 0.428, hence null hypotheses is fail to rejected, so it can be concluded that There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students belong to joint family and nuclear family

H$_3$: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students belong to different family income group

ANOVA

OVERALL_SATISFACTION

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.012	3	.671	.805	.492
Within Groups	204.797	246	.833		
Total	206.809	249			

Table 4: One way ANOVA test for family income and overall satisfaction level with all dimensions.

The ANOVA test indicates that significant value (P value) for independent sample ANOVA is 0.492, hence null hypotheses is fail to rejected, so it can be concluded that There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students belong to different family income group.

H$_4$: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students come from school having different medium of instructions

ANOVA

OVERALL_SATISFACTION

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.163	2	5.581	7.046	.001
Within Groups	195.646	247	.792		
Total	206.809	249			

Table 5: ANOVA test for students of different medium of instructions in school and overall satisfaction level with all dimensions.

The ANOVA test indicates that significant value (P value) for independent sample ANOVA is 0.001, hence null hypotheses is rejected, so it can be concluded that There is a significant difference in satisfaction level of students come from school having different medium of instructions. Furthermore Post Hoc Tests indicates that there is a significant difference between students comes from English medium and Gujarati medium as it has P value of 0.001. While the rest have no significant difference in satisfaction level of students come from school having different medium of instructions.

H$_5$: There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students of FY, SY and TY BBA

ANOVA

OVERALL_SATISFACTION

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.396	2	2.198	2.682	.070
Within Groups	202.413	247	.819		
Total	206.809	249			

Table 6 : One way ANOVA for students of FY, SY, TY BBA and overall satisfaction level with all dimensions

The ANOVA test indicates that significant value (P value) for independent sample ANOVA is 0.070, hence null hypotheses is fail to rejected, so it can be concluded that There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students of FY, SY and TY BBA.

Findings

Dimension		Tangibles	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy
age	18	-0.858	-0.437	-0.54	-0.432	-0.486
	19	-1.253	-0.756	-0.56	-0.155	-0.179
	20	-0.799	-0.09	-0.084	-0.116	-0.27
	21	-0.491	-0.27	-0.206	-0.083	-0.157
	22	0.1666	0.2	-0.875	-0.0833	-0.6667
Gender	Male	-0.6605	-0.655	-0.6169	-0.3096	-0.3724
	Female	-1.0106	-0.1787	-0.1418	-0.0549	-0.1687
Family Annual Income	2 lacs and below	-0.9141	-0.602	-0.3611	-0.25	-0.2404
	2 lacs to 5 lacs	-0.7472	-0.1608	-0.3641	-0.2744	-0.2673
	5 lacs to 10 lacs	-0.6918	-0.279	-0.1744	0.2093	-0.3023
	10 lacs and more	-1.5937	-0.6375	-0.6562	-0.0312	-0.1875
Transportation to College	Public	-1	-0.52	-0.35	-0.333	-0.5733
	Bike	-0.9093	-0.4198	-0.3508	-0.2046	-0.296
	Cars	-0.6875	-0.2656	-0.3437	-0.0273	-0.1781
School	English	-0.9272	-0.5483	-0.5247	-0.2486	-0.4032
	Gujarati	-0.7023	0.0888	0.1484	0.0711	0.1746
	Hindi	-0.03	-0.48	-0.2	-0.1	-0.4
Family Composition	Nuclear Family	-0.8611	-0.4	-0.3392	-0.1637	-0.4082
	Joint Family	-0.8512	-0.357	-0.3702	-0.1677	0.06835

[Table 7 : Summary of scores on different dimensions]

From the above table it can be observed that students belong to 5 lacs to 10 lacs family income group are satisfied for the dimension of assurance, while students coming from

Gujarati medium school are satisfied with reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy dimensions but not satisfied with tangibility dimension. Moreover, students belong to joint family are satisfied with empathy dimension. This result may be due to family values and culture as well as their past experience regarding education.

Results of hypotheses were:

H_1 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of boys and girls students of NIM BBA college. - Accepted

H_2 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students belong to joint family and nuclear family. - Accepted

H_3 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students belong to different family income group. - Accepted

H_4 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students come from school having different medium of instructions. - Rejected

H_5 : There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of students of FY, SY and TY BBA - Accepted

Conclusion

Being an academician for me it is a great experience to undertake this research and especially in a college where one of the researcher Mr. Baxis Patel teaches. Thus, there is a special intension to select this topic for my research paper. Even while doing the survey, we came across with various realities that we were unaware at the time of selecting this topic. Obviously such type of study will be value addition for the students as well as management and the whole academic fraternity. Because the effects of improving college service spread out and multiply throughout the service value chain, this study's findings are wide ranging indeed. As this study has demonstrated, one such method is using scales such as SERVQUAL. This customer-centric approach can help instructors improve their service delivery, thus increasing service quality for many of the stakeholders in the education model: students obtain higher-quality classroom experiences, instructors receive information for professional development, the college gains a better reputation, and future employers will get better trained graduates, and so on.

These abstract levels of constructs, terms such as empathy and assurance, certainly give the instructor a different perspective of the needs of their customers (students) than do questions

asking about very specific components like pace of instructor's speech, clarity of handouts, and so on.

From this research we come to know that the overall satisfaction level of the students of NIM BBA college is negative but if we compare all the dimensions across the various demographic variables, the result is not extremely poor because for the dimensions like empathy some students were satisfied, even students coming from Gujarati medium were almost satisfied with all dimensions except tangibility.

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