

SERVICE QUALITY IN ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN THAILAND: STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT

To be a service leader in the educational field, it is necessary for private universities to offer quality services to students. As a continuation of the previous paper (Kitcharoen, 2004) on the service quality of administrative departments in Thai private universities, this research was aimed at exploring university senior administrators' opinions about service quality. Six private universities were randomly chosen from the population of 26 private universities in Thailand. The presidents and vice presidents of these universities were interviewed. The research findings show that according to the university senior administrators, the most important service attribute is "Empathy", while the best performed service attribute is "Tangible". Although most administrators believed the students are satisfied with the service quality, all of them acknowledged the necessity for further improvement.

INTRODUCTION

To be a service leader in the educational field, it is necessary for private universities to offer quality services to students. Service leaders view excellent service as the driving force of the business. Excellent service separates them from their competitors. Therefore, improving the service quality in private universities is one of the strategies to enhance their sustainable competitive advantage.

This research is a continuation of the two previous papers (Kitcharoen, 2004). The first paper reviews the literature related to the service quality in the education industry, in particular the application of the SERVQUAL model and the IPA techniques. The second paper reports the results of a questionnaire survey of students and the university staff members on the service quality of the administrative departments of Thai private universities. This research paper, on the other hand, focused on the qualitative data gathered from face to face interviews with the top administrators of six private universities in Thailand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the paper summarizes the relevant literature reviewed on the SERVQUAL model

and the IPA techniques which also constitute the theoretical framework of this research paper.

Service Quality & Customer Expectation

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, (1985) described service quality as the ability of the organization to meet or exceed customer expectations. The definition of service quality, therefore, is focused on meeting the customers' needs and requirements, and how well the service delivered matches the customers' expectations of it.

Dimensions of Service Quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), put forward a list of ten determinants of service quality that can be generalized to any type of service. These ten dimensions were regrouped in the well known five dimensions in the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1990) which include "tangible", "reliability", "responsiveness", "assurance", and "empathy":

- *Tangible* - appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.
- *Reliability* - ability to perform the promised service dependable and accurately.