

# A COMPARISON OF PERCEPTION, OVERALL SATISFACTION, AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AMONG WESTERN, ASIAN, AND THAI MRT PASSENGERS

by

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## Abstract

*This study aims to compare the differences in perceived service quality, satisfaction, and consumer behavior of Western, Asian, and Thai Bangkok subway customers. The data was collected from 606 respondents using the SERVPERF, overall satisfaction, and consumer behavior research survey instruments. The results revealed that perceived service quality, and overall satisfaction between three groups of MRT customers were significantly different but there was no significant difference in consumer behavior between three groups of MRT customers.*

## INTRODUCTION

Perceived service quality by customers is important to an organization because it affects customer behavior in terms of repeat purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth, and recommendation to other customers. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry (1985, 1988a, 1998b) proposed that higher levels of perceived service quality result in increased consumer satisfaction. Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994); and Bitner (1990) found that satisfaction tends to increase the possibility of recommending, and repurchasing, in contrast, customers may decrease their behavior because of dissatisfaction with a firm's perceived value. Also, customers of different nationalities may differ in their perceptions of service quality which is caused by customers' values and beliefs (Furer et al, 2002). In other words, the service provider has to understand the behavior of users which influences overall satisfaction and which is reflected in service quality dimensions of tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

The Mass Rapid Transit system (MRT) is the first and only one subway which has been providing transportation service in the Bangkok metropolis in Thailand since July, 2004. The project was established for solving problems related to traffic jams, pollution, and time consuming journeys that cause economic loss and physical and mental stresses, and diseases. It has also improved the quality of peoples' lives and the

surrounding environment.

In Bangkok, there are many choices of transportations for people traveling on the same routes as MRT offerings. Although the MRT's outstanding benefit is time saving, customers might be also concerned about other factors such as security, health, accuracy, prompt service, convenience, and costs - all of which affect their buying intention. As Cacioppo (2005) stated, satisfied customers tell five other people about their good treatment, and the average customers experiencing problems eventually tells nine other people. Moreover, it costs five to eight times to get a new customer than to hold on to an old one. It is also commonly argued that repeat purchase and word-of-mouth directly affects the viability and long-term profitability of a firm (Dabholkar et al., 1996). Therefore, the key element of the organization is to maintain and satisfy its existing customers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was grounded in service quality which focused on service performance (SERVPERF), overall satisfaction, and consumer behavior of Western, Asian, and Thai customers of MRT or what is popularly referred to as the Bangkok subway. Furthermore, perceived service quality or perception could be determined by the SERVPERF instrument scale that is divided into five dimensions: tangible (appearance of