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# Satisfaction as a key antecedent for word of mouth and an essential mediator for service quality and brand trust in international education

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Positive word of mouth in the form of recommendations and referrals is the most effective way to recruit new students. The purpose of this study was to determine how service quality, parental satisfaction, and brand trust affect the likelihood of parents recommending their child's international school to family and friends and to test the mediating effect of parent satisfaction. The study developed a contextually relevant and reliable survey to measure the perception of 458 Generation X parents at The International School of Macao. Scale items from the literature were contextualized for education. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to confirm convergent and discriminant validity. Structural equation modeling was used to determine the relationships. It was found that parent satisfaction had the biggest influence on the likelihood of parents recommending their child's international school by word of mouth. While the service quality that parents experience and the trust that they have in the school brand had an impact on satisfaction, it was found that parent satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between service quality and word of mouth as well as the relationship between brand trust and word of mouth. Schools must ensure that current parents are satisfied to cultivate positive word of mouth through recommendations and referrals to prospective parents. Previous studies have demonstrated the mediating role of satisfaction, but no significant studies have empirically tested the same in K-12 international contexts. The study contributes to the existing field of knowledge by providing support to the contention that satisfaction mediates the relationships between service quality, brand trust, and word of mouth.

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