FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNERS' SATISFACTION TOWARDS QUALITY OF ENGLISH CERTIFICATION TRAINING SERVICES IN VIETNAM: A CASE STUDY IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

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Abstract

The study was conducted to analyze the factors affecting learners' satisfaction towards quality of English Certification Training services in Vietnam. Qualitative and quantitative research methods in combination were selected to survey 566 learners using 47 observed variables to determine influential factors of the service quality. The study results revealed 5 factorial groups that proved to have impact on learners' satisfaction: (1) Competence, (2) Tangibles, (3) Empathy, (4) Responsiveness, and (5) Reliability. The objects of the findings are as follows: firstly, to identify the factors that affect learners' satisfaction towards service quality of English Certification Training; secondly, to determine the order or ranking of factors explored from most to least influential level; and thirdly, to propose solutions for enhancing learners' satisfaction toward the service quality in the future.

Keywords: Learners' Satisfaction, Customer' Satisfaction, English Certification Training Services, Service Quality, Training Service Quality

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, along with the integration trend, economic change and growth, the demand for English learning is increasing in Vietnam. English learners are drawn form all backgrounds, ages, and learning purposes. In response to such need, various forms of English schools and training centers are mushrooming in Vietnam and particularly in HCMC, focusing on: English communication skills, Grammar, ranging from Basic to Advanced level of English training, especially training for IELTS, TOEFL as international English proficiency certificates. According to experts in education field of Vietnam, in December 2015, there is an inverse relationship between quantity and quality of English language centers operating in the country. Several centers appeal learners only by imposing infrastructure, favorable training courses, modern facilities, vermicular or foreign and experienced teaching staff, etc. However, after less than one week of training in reality, they fail to provide promised learning conditions, from teaching staff, training content, to training methods. Specifically, in terms of teaching staff, many of the schools introduce their academic personnel as carefully selected foreigners coming from English-speaking countries, certificated and experienced English teachers; however, they are actually English tourists who know English well, with zero experience in neither English training or pedagogic approach. The reality has raised great difficulties for learners and learners' parents in finding a prestige English center. Educational and media experts in Vietnam have cost a lot of time and effort in discussing the issue for years, but not yet reached final research findings and serious assessment of this status. Therefore, it is necessary for English training centers, colleges and universities in Vietnam to evaluate the satisfaction of their learners given to their service quality, in order to propose strategic and sustainable development plan in competitive context in the coming years.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Unlike tangible product manufacturers, training institutions find it hard to standardize service quality, because it depends not only on specific quality policy of the schools, but also factors originating from customers' needs and wants (Bunn et al., 2013). Customer satisfaction level determines the existence and sustainable growth of organizations (Phillip Kotler, 2011). The Servqual scale model (Parasuraman et al., 1985) is one key tool in marketing activities used to evaluate the service quality. Many authors studied and tested Servqual scale with different theories that are evaluated Servqual scale reliability and high value. This scale can be applied in the different types of services such as schools, retail sector, restaurants, hotels, hospitals, supermarkets, airlines and others. Servqual scale measures service quality based on the perception by customers using its service. Parasuraman et al (1985) said that in any services

the quality of service perceived by customers could apply to the scale of the model including the 10 components Reliable, Responsiveness, Competence, Access, Courtesy, Communication, Credibility, Security, Empathy, Tangibles. Later, many authors studied and tested selected models 05 scale model as noticed some overlapping scales and close correlation. Cronin and Taylor (1992, 1995) systemarized Servqual model into Servperf model which had 05 factors according to flexibility depending on the service sector. The model applied for this research includes 05 key factors determining the quality of the service including: reliability, responsiveness, competence, empathy, and tangibles.

Based on the theoretical framework of Servqual of Parasuraman et al., and Servperf Models of Cronin and Taylor and other authors, ideas from 38 experts in the education sector are consulted and a formal model of study is proposed as following:

Figure 1: Model Study of Factors Affecting Learners' Satisfaction towards Quality of English Certification Training Services
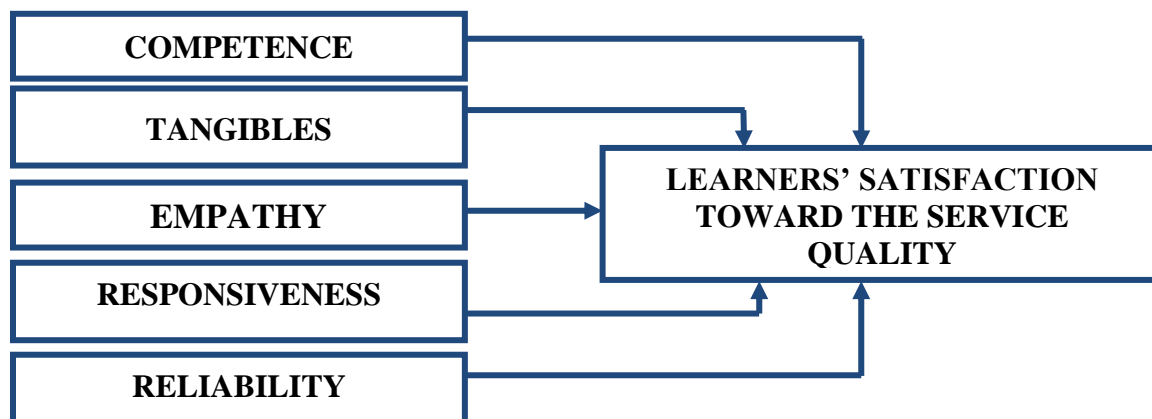
Competence (Service Capacity)

Competence refers to qualifications to perform the service, the ability to manifest when serving staff with customer contact employees directly performing services, research capabilities to capture information related need for customer service. In other words, the assurance of qualifications, the attitudes of staff and their ability create trust and confidence in clients. The spirit and enthusiasm of the staff is always ready to serve will ensure rapid implementation and quality. (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 1995)

Hypothesis H1: There is relationship between "Competence" and learners' satisfaction towards quality of English Certification Training services.

Tangibles

It is the set of elements as tangible evidence of physical material, equipment, people and information materials, service personnel costume, support equipment for the provision of services. (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 1995)

Hypothesis H2: There is relationship between "Tangibles" and learners' satisfaction towards quality of English Certification Training services.

Empathy

Empathy is the understanding, interest, sharing and considerate care reserved for customers, the offering of thorough treatment (Cronnin and Taylor, 1992, 1995). Adam Khoo et al. (2012) asserted that empathy to customers in business is not only to bring considerate understanding, interest, sharing and care to customers, but to make them feel like "guests of honor".

Hypothesis H3: There is relationship between "Empathy" and learners' satisfaction towards quality of English Certification Training services.

Responsiveness (Availability of the Company)

The desire and willingness of staff to provide services to customers; the guarantee of the quality and quantity of sources; the on-time guarantee and delivery schedules; the assurance of processes and process test work shows class carriage of the service provider. (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 1995)

Hypothesis H4: There is relationship between "Responsiveness" and learners' satisfaction towards quality of English Certification Training services.

Reliability (Trust, Reputation of the Company's Brand)

The term refers to the ability to perform services on time and fix right the first time, the ability to ensure the services is performed as promised with certainty exactly. (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, 1995)

Hypothesis H5: There is relationship between "Reliability" and learners' satisfaction towards quality of English Certification Training services.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Stage 1

Based on theory and the related results mentioned the above, qualitative research method was used for group discussing and leading experts consultating to select the variables and observed variable groups.

Stage 2

Based on the factor affecting learners' satisfaction towards quality of English Certification Training services in Vietnam, a questionnaire survey is designed and conducted to collect the opinions of 566 learners in HCM city. In this study, sampling and random method were used. The research model includes 5 scales, 47 observed variables (questionnaires), using 5-point Likert scale, Distance value = (Maximum - Minimum) / n = (5 - 1) / 5 = 0.8: 1. Completely disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. No opinion / Normal; 4. Agree; 5. Totally agree. Survey results were entered SPSS 20.0 and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to test reliability of the scale.

Stage 3

After testing the reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, Exploratory Factor Analysis - EFA was analyzed to shrink and summarize the data of the scale (Dinh Phi Ho, et al., 2012 "Quantitative Research SPSS"). This method is based on extraction ratio factor (Eigenvalue), under which only those factors having ration (Eigenvalue) greater than 01 will be kept, those smaller than one will not show information better than origin variable because after standardizing, each original variance is 01. The method of extracting the main components (Principal components) and original method of factor rotation (Varimax Procedure) were used to minimize the number of variables that have large coefficients for the same factor, which increases explaining the factors. The above results is used to analyze multiple linear regression to test the assumptions of the model, which is considered the impact level of these factors to learners' satisfaction towards quality of English Certification Training services.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

CODE	QUESTIONS	N	MEAN
REL01	The schools perform exactly what they have committed to students.	566	*3.48*
REL02	Training centers give adequate expert advice.	566	3.37
REL03	Entry-test for learner classification is fast and professional.	566	3.36
REL04	Academic results assessment is credible.	566	3.41
REL05	Courses have good quality.	566	3.43
REL06	Tuition is reasonable.	566	*3.00*
REL07	Learners' privacy and personal information is secured.	566	3.44
RES01	Teaching staff invest effort in revising their competence.	566	3.35
RES02	Teaching staff regularly apply innovate and creative teaching methods.	566	3.18
RES03	It is easy for students to find course information on websites.	566	3.02
RES04	The schools have clear policy for tuition remission for high performance learners.	566	3.11

RES05	The schools are capable of meeting learners' needs.	566	3.17
RES06	The schools have hotlines/ 24/24 operators for direct response for learners' feedback.	566	3.16
RES07	Teaching staff often give advice, academic consulting for learners via email or online channel.	566	3.07
RES08	The schools arrange flexible and selective training schedule for learners.	566	3.14
RES09	The schools often organize extra-curricular activities to improve Listening and Speaking skills for learners.	566	3.33
EMP01	The schools are capable of handling learners' complaints.	566	3.22
EMP02	Consultants take good care of learners' training process.	566	3.22
EMP03	Teachers always listen to each learner's ideas.	566	3.14
EMP04	Teachers maintain a thoughtful attitude to each learner.	566	3.25
EMP05	Teachers give considerate support to learners.	566	3.20
EMP06	Teachers give great attention to learners' needs	566	3.17
EMP07	Teachers are out-going.	566	3.27
EMP08	Teachers are enthusiastic.	566	3.18
EMP09	Students can share their problems and difficulties	566	3.33
EMP10	Security staffs are kind to learners.	566	2.87
COM01	Teachers have profound knowledge.	566	2.95
COM02	Teachers have high qualifications.	566	2.88
COM03	Teachers have high professional skills.	566	3.02
COM04	The schools have many qualified teachers coming from English-speaking countries.	566	*2.83*
COM05	Teachers have attractive teaching methods.	566	3.01
COM06	Teachers are able to apply knowledge to reality.	566	3.14
COM07	Teachers have good communication skills.	566	3.00
COM08	Executives are highly considerate and enthusiastic.	566	3.01
TAN01	Learning rooms are of good quality, luxurious and courteous.	566	3.30
TAN02	Desks are well-designed and comfortable to learners.	566	3.33
TAN03	Audio and light equipment (Micro, Loudspeakers, Projector, LCD…)	566	3.26
TAN04	Training manual, curriculum, and references resources are of good quality.	566	3.27
TAN05	Brochures, catalogues of course introduction	566	3.25
TAN06	Teachers and staffs' costumes are fine and polite.	566	3.26
TAN07	Reception area is well-decorated and impressive.	566	3.22
TAN08	Restrooms are clean.	566	3.21
TAN09	Parking area is safe and convenient.	566	3.17
TAN10	Elavators are good and safe.	566	*2.68*
GT01	I am really satisfied with training courses.	566	3.09
GT02	I will register more courses.	566	3.04
GT03	I will recommend the courses for my friends, relatives.	566	3.16

The average results of testing the scales showed that most of them are of average and good means values (from 2.68 to 3.48). The observed variables of "Reliability" scale fluctuate from 3.08 to 3.48; and of "Responsiveness" scale change from 3.02 to 3.35. However, the scale "Competence" is quite low, the observed variables' means range from 2.83 to 3.14. The results above reflected exactly current situation in Vietnam that the problems of English training has

been arising from the lack of teaching staff of high qualifications, especially teachers coming from English-speaking countries (COM04-2.83), and the inverse relationship between "quantity" and "quality" of training centers. Besides, tuition is inadequate to teaching quality (REL06- 3.00)

Testing Reliability of the Scales

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha

Code	Factors	Cronbach's Alpha
REL	RELIABILITY	0,888
RES	RESPONSIVENESS	0,915
EMP	EMPATHY	0,889
COM	COMPETENCE	0,918
TAN	RELIABILITY	0,913

The test results scale shows that the scale has good accuracy with Cronbach's alpha coefficient > 0.7 and the correlation coefficients of the total variables of measurement variables meet the allowed standard (> 0.3), the scale will be accepted. From the initial 47 observed variables, 2 variables are eliminated: Observed Variable "EMP10" for the reliability of this factor to increase 0,889; observed variables "TAN10" for the reliability of these factors to increase 0,913. The scales are better with 45 variables left so it would be suitable to Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	12.186	29.012	29.012
2	5.245	12.487	41.502
3	3.207	7.636	49.138
4	2.576	6.133	55.271
5	2.026	4.824	*60.095*

The results of EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) showed the total variance extracted is 60,095% greater than 50%. This means that the withdrawing factors would explain 60,095% for model, 39,905% is explained by other factors. Extraction ratio factor (Eigen Value) is greater than 01 that is kept.

Table 4: Factor Analysis

Code	Chi tiết				
	1	2	3	4	5
TAN02	.801				
TAN03	.776				
TAN07	.774				
TAN09	.769				
TAN05	.768				
TAN08	.763				
TAN06	.763				
TAN01	.747				
TAN04	.548				
COM04		.777			
COM05		.768			
COM03		.765			
COM07		.759			
COM01		.729			
COM08		.717			
COM02		.684			
COM06		.673			
RES08			.763		
RES05			.751		
RES06			.727		
RES07			.714		
RES04			.696		
RES02			.677		
RES03			.671		
RES09			.605		
RES01			.579		
EMP09				.803	
EMP01				.771	
EMP02				.769	
EMP08				.744	
EMP04				.714	
EMP07				.701	
EMP06				.662	
EMP05				.614	
EMP03				.613	
REL05					.795
REL02					.769
REL01					.754
REL07					.720
REL04					.700
REL06					.698
REL03					.647

The above results show that the model of EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) is consistent with the data, calculated into 5 groups of factors and these results may be used for a multiple regression analysis.

Analysis of Multiple Linear Regressions

Table 5: Summary model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.732[a]	.536	.527	.482	1.939

The table shows the correlation coefficient adjustment: $R2 = 0,527$ (verification F, sig. <0.05); which means 52,7 % of the variable Y shift is explained by the five independent variables (Xi). Coefficient Durbin - Watson (d) = 1,939; some observers n = 566, parameter k = 5, the level of significance of 0.01 (99%), in the statistical tables Durbin - Watson, dL (less statistical value) = 1.623 and dU (statistical value over) = 1,725. So (dL = 1.623) < (d = 1,939) < [4 - (dU = 1.725) = 2.275] proved that the model has no autocorrelation.

Table 6: ANOVA

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	69.874	5	13.975	**60.158**	.000[b]
1	Residual	60.398	260	.232		
	Total	130.271	265			

Accreditation ANOVA from the table is to assess the relevance of the theoretical regression model. The test results F = 60,158 value and Sig. = 0.000 <0.05 shows the building model is consistent with the data set and the variables included in the model are related to the dependent variable.

Generally, regression analysis is 99% reliability, corresponding to the selected variables with statistically significant at the p <0.01; the results also show that all variables satisfy the demand. Verification of conformity of the model show that multicollinearity phenomenon does not violate (VIF <10).

Table 7: The factors affecting learners' satisfaction towards quality of English Certification Training services in Vietnam

Influenced factors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std.Error				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.226	.215		1.052	.294		
X1 (TAN)	.157	.043	**.143**	3.031	**.003**	.797	**1.254**
X2 (COM)	.391	.048	**.454**	8.214	**.000**	.579	**1.728**
X3 (RES)	.123	.054	**.132**	2.263	**.024**	.524	**1.907**
X4 (EMP)	.135	.047	**.134**	2.862	**.005**	.823	**1.215**
X5 (REL)	.120	.050	**.122**	2.426	**.016**	.705	**1.418**

The results of regression analysis explored the factors affecting learners' satisfaction towards quality of English certification training services and expressed the following priorities: (1) Competence: β = 0,454; (2) Tangibles: β = 0,143; (3) Empathy: β = 0,134; (4) Responsiveness: β = 0,132; (5) Reliability: β = 0,122. The regression equation is: Y = 0,143X1 + 0,454X2 + 0,132X3 + 0,134X4 + 0,122X5. This finding is the basis for proposing solutions to improve learners' satisfaction towards quality of English certification training services in Vietnam in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

The research results showed that all t value > 2 was statistically significant and high data reliability. Besides, the regression coefficients were positive. This showed that the effects of independent variables in the same direction with learners' satisfaction towards quality of English certification training services. In this research, the results had the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance shown to be the following VIF < 10. (1 < VIF < 10). This showed that there was not multicollinearity.

We had the component 1 (X1): The tangibles affecting learners' satisfaction towards quality of English certification training services with significance level of 5%.

We had the component 2 (X2): The competence affecting learners' satisfaction towards quality of English certification training services with significance level of 5%.

We had the component 3 (X3): The responsiveness affecting learners' satisfaction towards quality of English certification training services with significance level 5 %.

We had the component 4 (X4): The empathy affecting learners' satisfaction towards quality of English certification training services with significance level 5 %.

We had the component 5 (X5): The reliability affecting learners' satisfaction towards quality of English certification training services with significance level 5 %.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For "Competence" Factor Group

The schools and training centers should improve their competence in service quality, especially in strengthening the quality of teaching staffs. In particular, besides from recruiting teachers of English-speaking countries who perceive high qualifications and teaching experience, Vietnamese teachers should be provided with and be sent to attend further training sections at cooperated local and international partners in order to enhance serving competence and service quality. Teachers are key determinant and crucial factor of making the schools viable and developing. At the same time, consulting executives and security staff also need further training for customer service, customer care, and customer communication for upgrading service quality.

For "Tangibles" Factor Group

The schools should invest more in intensifying infrastructure, facilities and equipment used for modern teaching and training, for instance state-of-the-art classrooms, friendly and creative learning environment. In the era of digital technology development, the schools need to build up multi-media classrooms integrating mobile tools, laptops, IPad, internets… for content delivering, so as to optimize the effectiveness of their facilities and training equipment.

For "Empathy" Factor Group

The schools should cultivate a good sense of customer-oriented attitude among executives who perform most contacts with customers, learners and learners' parents, especially regarding communication skills and the art of customer service. Learners are "specialist customers"; therefore, persuasive communication is hard to carry out. Honesty, understanding, care, sharing and consideration given to customers will establish strong foot-hold in customers' trust.

For "Responsiveness" Factor Group

The schools should maintain hotlines or operators for direct or online response to learners for service quality upgrading. There are not many schools in Vietnam have successfully applied this approach. In current competition, providing that the school staffs are enthusiastic and perform effective interaction with learners by answering emails, consulting and giving academic advice for learners via emails or online channel, it is more likely for the schools to win positive impressive from their customers. By direct and online responses, and hotlines, it is possible for the schools to give initial assessment and surveyed exploration of learners' satisfaction, and based on which, timely customer policy modifications can be made accordingly to meet

increasing demand of the learners. Besides, the schools should build strong brand awareness and systematized brand management to boost the schools' images among learners.

For "Reliability" Factor Group

The results showed that "Reliability" in particular and the assessment of learners given to service quality of English training for certification in general are of average to fair-average level, but such levels are inadequate to recent studies in the field. Bernd Strauss and Neuhauss Patricia (1997, 2009) discovered that if the customer satisfaction only reaches "average" or level 4 on Likert 5-point scale, there are still chances that the customers deny service quality given by the provider at any time and select other better service providers instead. In the only case that the customers perceive highest level of satisfaction towards service provided by the providers, they can win customer loyalty. Therefore, improving service quality is the continuous revolution of the schools in accordance strategic and sustainable development.

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