

A Deep Understanding on the Circumstances and Conditions of Use of Technology by UE Students: An Investigation about the Popularity and Functionality of Portable-Word-Processor Gadgets

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Abstract— During the marketing era of the 1950s; when companies could produce what they can sell and not just selling what they can produce as it was during the production era, customers became very important in business. Since that time, the consumption era in marketing has begun. From the operations management points of view, it is obvious that customers play important roles in the organizational process. Before the placement of strategies and organizational structure, the customers are the first aspect considered by managements. The questions asked in the strategic planning are such as who will need to consume these offers. After these questions, the organization will design the product, segment the markets and create awareness. This does not only show the importance of customers in the business environment, but also the importance of satisfying them.

Index Terms— Business, Management, Marketing, Customers, Organizational Process, Organizational Structure, Strategic Planning

1 INTRODUCTION

Most companies are adopted the quality management programs for improving the quality of their products and marketing processes, because it has been proven that “quality has a direct impact on product performance, and thus on customer satisfaction” [1-8]. The reason for this is to satisfy the customers [9, 10]. But, are the customers satisfied because of the products or service quality? I.e., are the companies providing the actual qualities perceived by the customers/consumers?

The continuous research about customers is very critical due to the importance of customers in the business process [11]. The changes that may occur in the business process necessitate the research about customers before, during and after sales [12]. It has been proven by an author that “an organization that consistently satisfies its customers, enjoy higher retention levels and greater profitability due to increase customer loyalty” [13, 14]. For this reason, every company works hard daily to win the hearts of customers by satisfying them so that they become loyal customers to their brands in order to increase sales and profit [15-19]. When customers have good perceptions about a brand, they will always choose to go for the brand, because consumers form their preferences relative

to perceptions and attitudes about the brands competing in their minds [20, 21]. To get these loyal customers, companies must create relationships with the customers [22]. To create relationship with customers, companies need to conduct research to answer questions on how the customers make their purchasing decision and whether they are pleased with what the organization provides to them as offer in terms of product quality, service quality, price, etc [23-31].

Thus, customers will always prefer a product or service that gives them maximum satisfaction [24, 25]. But, how will the organization know whether the consumers’ consumption habits have changed, or if they are well served? How will the organization know if competitors’ brands are doing better than theirs, which can trap their customers? With the increasing number of businesses and growing competitions today, each company wants to be the customers’ first choice [26]. To achieve this, organizations need to answer the questions above via continuous research in this area so as to lead the organizations to their twin objective of satisfying their customers and making profits [27].

Although there are factors such as price, product quality etc. other than service quality that determine customer satisfaction, my interest is service quality alone for this study since service quality has been proven to be the best determinant of customer satisfaction when it come to service sectors [28, 29]. Also, providing quality services is one of the main targets when it comes to management with respect of customer satisfaction in the current business environment and therefore, it is

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a very critical topic [30].

Some authors stated that there is no specific definition of customer satisfaction, and after their studies of several definitions they defined customer satisfaction as "a response (cognitive or affective) that pertains to a particular focus (i.e., a purchase experience and/or the associated product) and occurs at a certain time (i.e., post-purchase, post-consumption)" [31-35]. This definition is supported by some other authors, who think that consumer's level of satisfaction is determined by his/her cumulative experience at the point of contact with the supplier [36-39]. It is factual that, there is no specific definition of customer satisfaction since as the years passes, different authors come up with different definitions [40]. Customer satisfaction has also been defined by another author as the extent to which a product's perceived performance matches a buyer's expectation. According to Schiffman & Karun, customer satisfaction is defined as "the individual's perception of the performance of the products or services in relation to his or her expectations" [41-43]. Briefly, customer satisfaction could be the pleasure obtained from consuming an offer. Measuring customer satisfaction could be very difficult at times because it is an attempt to measure human feelings [44-47]. It was for this reason that some existing research represented that "the simplest way to know how customers feel, and what they want is to ask them" [48]. This applied to the informal measures. Levy in his studies suggested three ways of measuring customer satisfaction:

- A survey where customer feedback can be transformed into measurable quantitative data.
- Focus group or informal where discussions orchestrated by a trained moderator reveal what customers think.
- Informal measures like reading blocs, talking directly to customers.

Asking each and every customer is advantageous in as much as the company will know everyone's feelings, and is disadvantageous because the company will have to collect this information from each customer [49]. The National Business Research Institute (NBRI) suggested possible dimensions that one can use in measuring customer satisfaction, e.g.:

- Quality of service
- Innocently
- Speed of service
- Pricing
- Complaints or problems
- Trust in your employees
- The closeness of the relationship with contacts in your firm
- Other types of services needed
- Your positioning in clients' minds

There exist two conceptualizations of customer satisfaction: transaction-specific and cumulative [50]. Following the transaction specific, customer satisfaction is viewed as a post-choice evaluation judgment of a specific purchase occasion until present date and then, researchers have developed a rich body of literature focusing on this antecedents and consequences of this type of customer satisfaction at the individual level [51]. Cumulative customer satisfaction is an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experiences with a product or service over time [52]. This is more fundamental and useful than transaction-specific customer satisfaction in predicting customer subsequent behavior and firm's

past, present and future performances [53]. It is the cumulative customer satisfaction that motivates a firm's investment in customer satisfaction [54].

It is sometimes believed that dissatisfaction is synonymous with regret or disappointment while satisfaction is linked to ideas such as "it was a good choice" or "I am glad that I bought it." When phrased in behavioral response terms, consumers indicate that "purchasing this product would be a good choice" or "I would be glad to purchase this product." Often, behavioral measures reflect the consumer's experience individuals associated with the product (i.e. customer service representatives) and the intention to repeat that experience [55-61].

A diagnostic approach to satisfaction measurement is to examine the gap between the customer's expectation of performance and their perceived experience of performance [62]. This "satisfaction gap" involves measuring both perception of performance and expectation of performance for a specific product or service attributed dimensions [63, 64].

Customer satisfaction is largely a reflection of the expectations and experiences that the customer has with a product or service [65]. However, expectations also reflect that influences the evaluation of the product or service [66]. When we make major purchases, we research the product or service and gain information from the advertising, salespersons, and word-of-mouth from friends and associates [67]. This information influences our expectations and ability to evaluate quality, value, and the capability of the product or service to meet our needs [68, 69].

In order for a company's offer to reach the customers, there is a need for services [70]. These services depend on the type of product and are different in various organizations [71]. Service can be defined in many ways depending on which area the term is being used [72].

In all, service can be defined as an intangible offer by one party to another in exchange of money for pleasure [73].

Thus, service equality can intend to be the way in which customers are served in an organization which could be good or poor [74]. Parasuraman et al. defines service quality as "the differences between customer expectations and perceptions of service" [75]. They argued that measuring service quality as the difference between perceived and expected service was a valid way and could make management to identify gaps to what they offer as services [76].

The aim of providing quality services is to satisfy customers. Measuring service quality is a better way to dictate whether the services are good or bad and whether the customers will or are satisfied with it. A researcher listed in his study: "three components of service quality, called the 3 "Ps" of service quality" [77, 78]. In the study, service quality was described as comprising of three elements:

- "Physical facilities, processes and procedures;
- Personal behavior on the part of serving staff, and;
- Professional judgment on the part of serving staff but to get good quality service."

He stated that "an appropriate, carefully balanced mix of these three elements must be achieved." What constitutes an appropriate mix, according to him will, in part, be determined by the relative degrees of labor intensity, service process cus-

tomization, and contact and interaction between the customer and the service process [79]. From the look of things, his idea could be design to fit with evaluating service quality with the employee perspective. The original study by Parasuraman et al. presented ten dimensions of service quality:

- 1-Tangibles: the appearance of physical artifacts and staff members' connected with the service (accommodation, equipment, staff uniforms, and so on).
- 2-Reliability: the ability to deliver the promised service.
- 3-Responsiveness: the readiness of staff members to help in a pleasant and effective way.
- 4-Competence: the capability of staff members in executing the service.
- 5-Courtesy: the respect, thoughtfulness, and politeness exhibited by staff members who are in contact with the customer.
- 6-Credibility: the trustworthiness and honesty of the service provider.
- 7-Security: the absence of doubt, economic risk, and physical danger.
- 8-Access: the accessibility of the service provider.
- 9-Communication: an understandable manner and use of language by the service provider.
- 10- Understanding the customer: efforts by the service provider to know and understand the customer.

The first Servqual model had 22 pairs of Likert-type items, where one part measured perceived level of service provided by a particular organization and the other part measured expected level of service quality by respondent. Further investigations led to the finding that, among these 10 dimensions, some were correlated [80]. After refinement, the above ten dimensions were reduced to five dimensions as below:

- Tangibility: physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel;
- Reliability: ability to perform the promised service, dependably and accurately;
- Responsiveness: willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;
- Assurance: knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence, and;
- Empathy: caring individualized attention that firm provides to its customers.

The aggregated sum of difference between perceptions and expectations from the five dimensions forms the global perceive quality construct [81]. Following this view, customers' expectations were met through the outcome dimension (reliability) and exceed it by means of the process dimension (tangibility, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy) [82].

Other researchers saw the need of additional components of service expectations that are functional and technical dimensions [83]. The idea was that consumers make service evaluations based on the technical dimension that is what is delivered and on the functional dimension that is how, why, who, and when it is delivered [84]. Although the elements listed in Servqual model have been proven to be the main method for evaluating service quality from the consumer's perspective, drawbacks in using Servqual L in measuring service quality has been the reason that the Servperf scale was proposed by Cronin & Taylor after they called into question about the conceptual basis of the Servqual and their findings

led to confusion with service satisfaction [66].

These researchers discarded the 'E' for 'expectation' claiming instead that 'P' for 'performance' alone should be used [67-69]. They meant that higher perceived performance entails higher quality service [70]. Unfortunately, during this past century, customers have changed their behaviors in ways that do not suit organizational behavior [71-74]. Till date, it is unclear as to which of Servqual and Servperf is superior in measuring service quality [71, 72]. Laroche et al. made an assessment of the dimensionality of should and will service expectations.

They used a survey measuring customers' post encounter expectations and vis-à-vis a well-known airline with a sample of 363 [75]. They examined the existence of hypothesized functional and technical dimensions of should and will expectations and determined the casual relationships between two types of expectations and hypothesized dimensions [76]. They tested their dimensions in the context of the turbulent airline industry [77].

This study measured service quality with other service quality dimensions such as technical and functional dimensions proposed by Grönross [78]. Hence, it was proven that the Servqual model must not be used in evaluating service quality in all organizations. This could mean that different industries might require different measurements for service quality [79].

Another author stated in his theory that "definitions of consumer satisfaction relate to a specific transaction (the difference between predicted service and perceived service) in contrast with 'attitudes', which are more enduring and less situational-oriented."

This is in line with the idea of Zeithaml et al. Regarding the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality, Oliver first suggested that service quality would be antecedent to customer satisfaction regardless of whether these constructs were cumulative or transaction-specific [80]. Some researchers have found empirical supports for the above mentioned viewpoint, where customer satisfaction came as a result of service quality.

It has been proven from past researches on service quality and customer satisfaction that these two parameters are related from their definitions to their relationships with other aspects in business [81]. Some authors have agreed to the fact that service quality determines customer satisfaction [82]. Parasuraman et al. proposed in their study that the higher perceived service quality will lead to increase in customer satisfaction [83]. Some other authors did comprehend with the idea brought up by Parasuraman and they acknowledged that "customer satisfaction is based upon the level of service quality that is provided by the service providers." By relating it to these authors' views, it is evident that definition of customer satisfaction involves predicted and perceived service, since service quality acted as one of the factors that influence satisfaction. More evidence of this relationship has been proven by past researches [80-85].

As a result of the definition of customer satisfaction presented by Lewis, Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt used a national random telephone survey of 542 shoppers to examine the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and

store loyalty within the retail department store context [83, 84]. One of the results was that service quality influences relative attitude and satisfaction with department stores [85]. They found out that there is a relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality [85].

In line with the findings of Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, Su et al. performed a study on the customer satisfaction and service quality and concluded that these two variables are related, confirming the definitions of both variables which have always been linked [77-85]. They also stated that service quality is more abstract because it may be affected by perceptions of value or by the experiences of others that may not be so good than customer satisfaction which reflects the customer's feelings about many encounters and experiences with service firm [77-85].

In addition to what the other researchers have found out from customer satisfaction and service quality, some other authors, e.g., Wang & Hing-Po, went into details to bring in customer value in the study of the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality [77]. Their study used Servqual model in measuring service quality in China's mobile phone market, but with modification on the basis of focus group discussions and expert opinions to reflect the specific industry attributes and the special culture of China [77, 78]. Then, the study focused on the dynamic relationships among service quality, customer value, customer satisfaction and their influences on future behaviors after the key drivers of customer value and customer satisfaction were identified [79]. All of them were based on the development of structural equation models by using PLS-GRAPH Package [80].

This investigation blended the studies of customer satisfaction and service quality with customer value which added more weight to the linkage between customer satisfaction and service quality because value is what customers look in an offer [81].

Past studies on the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality which included Servqual dimension have been published from 2003 to 2010; the research on this topic dropped from 2004 to 2006 and was stable, between 2008 and 2009 [82]. There has not been any study on this field that treated the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality with Servqual dimension [83]. However, research on this topic increased rapidly during 2010 [84].

With regards to the above statistics, Kuo conducted a research on service quality of virtual community websites with the purpose of constructing an instrument to evaluate service quality of such websites and to have a further discussion of the relationship between service quality dimensions and overall service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty [85]. The researcher used Factor analysis, t-test, and Pearson correlation analysis to analyze the data collected from college students of three major universities in Taiwan [79]. One of the results was that "on-line quality and information safety is positively related to the overall service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, but the service quality level of this dimension was the poorest."

The study of Bennett & Barkensjo stated that "the hypothesis elements of Servqual model (Tangible, assurance, etc.) were scientifically associated with the service quality construct"

[80]. It could be interesting to test SERVQUAL model with the five dimensions and service quality assuming that expectations is included to see if it will be significantly associated [81-83].

In support of the use of Servqual in the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality, Ahmed et al. conducted a mediation of customer satisfaction relationship between service quality and repurchase intentions for the telecom sector among university students, with 5 dimensions of this model (i.e. tangibility, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and reliability) to measure the service quality [84, 85].

To crown the fact that customer satisfaction and service quality are important variables in business research on customers, Gera investigated the link between service quality, value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions in a public sector bank in India and one of their results states that "service quality was found to significantly impact on customer satisfaction and value perceptions."

The outlines of researches findings so far in this area are as following:

- It has been demonstrated that there is a relationship between customer satisfaction and service qualities.
- It has been found that service quality could be evaluated with the use of Servqual model.
- It has been shown that service quality could be evaluated by other dimensions of service quality, i.e. functional and technical dimensions, and not necessarily Servqual model.
- Some researchers even tested service quality and service quality dimensions.

What is lacking is the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality dimensions [84]. Among all the recent articles that I could reach, none of the studies had tested the five dimensions of Servqual and customer satisfaction and service quality at the same time to confirm this relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality [85].

2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The current study seeks to determine what influences the decisions to purchase portable word processor gadgets of selected UE colleges and graduate school students to achieve product brand awareness and customer satisfaction(Y), base on all following variables: age, gender, nationality, monthly income, study program, brand popularity, functionality, quality, after-purchase-service and price.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study has been designed with the objective of studying the bases in reaching to product brand awareness and customer satisfaction for a purchase decision, in terms of the portable-word-processor gadgets' popularity and functionality, by the selected college's students of the University of the East. The study will also attempt to examine the selected collage's students of the University of the East bases for product brand awareness and customer satisfaction in terms of the portable-word-processor gadgets' popularity and functionality, considering also the different respondents' ages, gender, monthly income, nationality and degree program (graduate

and undergraduate). Lastly, it aims to examine whether or not, there is equal influence by each of the various independent variables upon product awareness and customer satisfaction on portable-word-processor that exist among these different groups of respondents.

Portable-word-processor vendors can more accurately target the appropriate value proposition that will be of importance to the intended client. The better the vendors can send the right message to the right audience, the better the likelihood it will result in increased sales.

UE professors and student council can realize the UE students' concept for product brand awareness and customer satisfaction. It is possible for UE student council to arrange some seminars to enhance the knowledge in this field. The professors can share their opinions and suggestions in the seminar.

Customers can benefit from the results of this study because brand does play an important role during the product brand awareness and customer satisfaction of portable-word-processors gadgets. A brand that has strong equity has positive effect on consumer buying behavior based on its four components including brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association with self-image and brand loyalty. Customers can get some ideas and considerations from the results of this study for their portable-word-processor purchasing behavior.

Other people can benefit too. An understanding of the UE students' awareness from the product brand and customer satisfaction on portable-word-processor would help them to realize their attitude toward technology using, and to investigate if there is a significant difference in terms of several indicators.

4 CONCLUSION

The respondents of this study are students of selected UE colleges and graduate school. There are four selected UE colleges in the UE:

College of Business Administration
College of Computer Studies and System
College of Engineering
College of Graduate School

Respondents will be students of selected UE colleges, Filipinos and foreigners as well. In this research, the selection of the survey location has limitation. Only students of selected UE colleges' student will be selected for the study. Therefore, the result would be representative of the users of the specific area rather than the population in other universities. Coopers' criterion-validity test as performed on the pilot sample reveals that at least two-out-of-twenty-one independent variables based on the questionnaire do predict values of the dependent variable. Hence, Coopers' criterion-validity test permits the testing of the null hypothesis.

5 FUTURE STUDIES

Future researchers can get some ideas from the results of this study. Understanding the circumstances and conditions of UE students' technology-usage would be the topic of future re-

searchers.

The researcher can realize the influence on the UE students' product brand awareness and customer satisfaction on portable-word-processor gadgets' popularity, functionality, or self-image match of the brand, in terms of differences in gender, monthly income, nationality and degree program as whether graduate (masters or doctorate) and undergraduate. This can be a base for the researcher's future study.

On the other hand, a deep understanding of whether the portable-word-processor gadgets' popularity and functionality will lead to successful sales can then lead to retaining or attracting consumers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to acknowledge the guidance and support of Hossein Mohammadpour, Golzar Heidari, Habib Mohammadpour, and Amirhossein Mohammadpour.

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