



Factors Influencing Educational Perceived Service Quality In International Programs In Vietnam National University, Ha Noi

Minh Thai Thi¹ and Ngoc Luu Thi Minh^{2*}

¹ Faculty of Economics and Management, International School, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam

² Faculty of Economics and Management, International School, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam

*Corresponding author: ltmngoc@vnu.edu.vn

Abstract

Research purpose:

The research aims at considering the perceived service quality quality of service can be enhanced by concentrating the three determinants with the highest impact from functional quality. The research also suggests critical implications for both managers and researchers in the education sector, particularly in VNU's international program quality.

Research motivation:

The sector of services marketing has seen a rise in the importance of service quality. The study proposes an extended model that incorporates crucial service components and permits the evaluation of quality variables.

Research design, approach, and method:

Data were obtained from 202 students enrolled in the international transnational program at Vietnam National University, Hanoi, via an online questionnaire survey. The process of analysis indicates that the perceived service quality of international programs is positively correlated with Functional quality; Technical quality and University image.

Main findings:

The perceived service quality quality of service can be enhanced by concentrating the three determinants. Functional quality has the strongest impact on perceived service quality; Technical quality is the second and the slightest one is university image.

Practical/managerial implications:

Theoretical implications: The research also suggests critical implications for both managers and researchers in the education sector, particularly in VNU's international program quality. Suggest an expanded SERVQUAL model to analyze service quality and highlight the importance of functional and technical quality.

Keywords: Service quality, Vietnam National University, SERVQUAL, functional quality, technical quality, perceived service quality, university image, Vietnam, Hanoi.

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

One method for helping student enhance their skills is education. If students are consistently trained in their skills, they will accomplish. A location for learning is necessary for the process of enhancing students' abilities (Nurabadi et al., 2020). Because the majority of student activities at school, the importance of university program or curriculum is emphasized with the development of new knowledge. Besides, the global landscape of education and training has evolved significantly, with international programs becoming increasingly prevalent. These programs offer unique opportunities for individuals to expand their horizons, acquire specialized skills, and gain cultural experiences with or without leaving their home country for study. International joint programs or international program are collaborative educational initiatives offered by two or more higher education institutions located in different countries. These programs typically involve jointly developed curriculum: The participating institutions work together to create a curriculum that integrates the best aspects of their respective academic programs; Shared faculty: Instructors from both institutions may teach courses or supervise student research; Student exchange: Students may spend time studying at one or more of the participating institutions and Dual or multiple degrees: Upon successful completion of the program, students may earn degrees from all participating institutions. These characteristics pave the way for better development of international students with knowledge provided from numerous regions towards the learner's home country.

However, the success of these programs hinges on the service quality of the training services provided. Education service quality refers to the overall satisfaction and perception of students, parents, and other stakeholders regarding the educational services provided by an institution. It encompasses various aspects of the learning experience. Scholars have indicated there are numerous factors influencing the educational service quality. Moreover, in the new era, universities in particular and educational facilities in general are concentrating more on service quality as they aim at recruiting more students who spend money for "educational service". This makes the students more become "customers" and highly emphasized on the importance of service quality. Firdaus (2005) claims that the quality of educational services provided by universities is a multifaceted concept that is frequently examined using a variety of metrics. The quality of academic resources, teaching quality, administrative service quality, and quality of student support services are the dimensions that have been consistently applied in higher education, despite the lack of agreement on what makes an educational service quality (Manzoor, 2013; Voss & Gruber, 2006). According to Firdaus (2006), the dimensions have a significant role in the conception of the quality of higher education services and student satisfaction. Kara et al. (2016) argues that a fuller knowledge of the educational service quality aspects that students embrace and how those dimensions affect students' satisfaction in certain higher education contexts may be gained by exploring the dimensions. Siswanto and Hidayati (2020) confirmed that infrastructure and facilities referring to the availability and quality of physical facilities, such as classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, are essential for effective learning.

Vietnam National University (VNU) is a prestigious higher education institution in Vietnam, renowned for its academic excellence and contributions to the country's development. Established in 1956, VNU is a comprehensive university system consisting of multiple campuses and specialized faculties across Vietnam. According to statistics, until 2024, VNU possess over 20 international programs co-operating with hundreds of foreign universities. In order to prosper expansionary in the future, educational service quality must be considered as an impetus for development. Therefore, it is important to create a measurement or perception investigation about VNU service quality. University service quality, in general, refers to the overall satisfaction and perception of students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders regarding the services provided by the institution. Within the case of VNU, service quality should be uniquely considered. The research topic of **"Factors influencing educational perceived service quality in international programs in Vietnam National University, Hanoi"** is conduct to provide a better insight about the university service quality.

SECTION 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Service quality

The importance of service quality to a company's performance is becoming more widely acknowledged (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Over the past few decades, a lot of research has been done on the subject of measuring service quality. Service quality, according to Parasuraman et al. (1985), is an organization's capacity to either meet or beyond the expectations of its clients. Ten factors that are indicative of high-quality services that may be applied to any kind of service were named by Kitchroen (2004). These factors include tangibles, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, and understanding. SERVQUAL is a multiple-attribute model that was created in 1990 by Parasuraman et al. to measure the quality of services provided. Five different dimensions are used in this approach to quantify service quality; these dimensions may be thought of as indicators of the construct of perceived service quality.

2.2 University service quality

The terms 'service quality' and 'quality in education' are difficult to define. Perceptions of service quality frequently vary depending on the needs of the service's particular consumer. In the educational context, one client may see a certain class, program, or university as providing a high-quality educational experience, whilst another may regard the same experience

as mediocrity (Quinn et al., 2009). In the academic field, students, faculty, and staff are the primary consumers of higher education services. Among these, students, as the direct recipients of educational offerings, have garnered the most attention. Universities provide a range of services to students, including registration, course selection, and others (Bahadori et al., 2011). To assess the quality of university services, it's crucial to gauge the alignment between students' expectations and their perceptions. A smaller gap between these two indicates higher quality. Identifying and addressing the discrepancy between expectations and perceptions is key to enhancing service quality and satisfying students (Nurabadi et al., 2020). By understanding students' expectations and perceptions, universities can pinpoint areas of strength and weakness within their systems. This knowledge can then be used to implement strategies that bridge the quality gap and meet students' needs more effectively.

The second part consisting of the paper body must be edited in double column format. The top-level heading, usually called section, numbered in Arabic numerals, shall appear centered with Times New Roman capital bold 10pt. The numbered level-two heading starts from the left in Times New Roman bold 10pt font. The main text uses Times New Roman 10pt font with Single spacing (1.0) and justified throughout.

2.3. Service quality dimension

SERVQUAL is a widely used tool for assessing service quality in various sectors, including higher education. This popularity can be attributed to its proven reliability and validity across different industries (Alfy and Abukari, 2019). SERVQUAL is a survey tool designed to measure the gap between a customer's expectations and perceptions of a service. It consists of multiple items that assess both these aspects for various service attributes. Due to its versatility and reliability, SERVQUAL is a popular choice for measuring service quality in many industries, including higher education (Fuchs and Fangpong, 2021). More precisely, SERVQUAL measures service quality using five key dimensions: reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. These dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating the quality of services provided by organizations, including universities. Service quality is subjective and can vary depending on individual perceptions. Different services may prioritize different factors based on the specific context or activity. Measuring the quality of service operations can be challenging due to their intangible nature (Legcevic, 2009). The quality of education is a complex and multifaceted concept that is shaped by a variety of factors, including societal trends, economic conditions, and institutional practices. One of the key challenges in ensuring high-quality education is the identification of appropriate constructs to measure service quality. While service quality and customer satisfaction are distinct concepts, they are positively correlated. Institutions that provide excellent services are more likely to have satisfied students. Mahmood et al. (2014) demonstrated this relationship, finding that student satisfaction with service quality is linked to increased motivation to learn. Student satisfaction is influenced by a range of factors, including the quality of services provided, the learning environment, and the overall campus experience. Repeated interactions with the university can shape students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Class size, atmosphere, and individual learning styles can also impact students' overall experiences.

Besides SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, Kang and James (2004) proposed a research model suggesting that service quality consists of two primary dimensions: technical and functional. Technical quality refers to the objective attributes of the service, such as its performance, reliability, and accuracy. Functional quality, on the other hand, relates to the subjective aspects of the service, such as how it meets customer needs and expectations. In this study, the authors also provided that service quality is a complex concept with multiple facets. To better understand its structure, we can create a framework that outlines its different dimensions and components. This framework would include identifying both the technical and functional aspects of service quality. While the technical dimension is widely recognized as important, specific elements that define it have not yet been fully identified by researchers.

2.4. Relationship between university image and perceived quality

An university reputation or the university image is how others perceive it, even if they have not interacted with it directly. These perceptions can come from sources like advertising and word-of-mouth. This concept originates from the definition of brand image which is a collection of ideas and feelings associated with a brand. It is how consumers perceive a brand based on the things they link to its name in their minds (Alhaddad, 2015). There is clearly a connection between the university image and perceived quality. Hysi and Shyle (2015) supported this, saying that an institution's image is shaped by these factors, along with past experience and found that students try to gather information to make informed decisions when choosing a university. According to Homer (2008), perceived quality and image are similar to the distinction between competence and character in human perception. Generally, quality or perceived quality is more factual and logical, while image is more emotional and subjective. Therefore, quality and image should influence attitudes in a way that aligns with the idea that people's feelings are influenced by image, while their practical decisions are influenced by quality.

SECTION 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research model

Inherent to the work of Kang and James (2004) with several more SERVQUAL research from Abbas (2020); Fuchs, K., & Fangpong (2021) and Quinn (2009), the authors would like to propose a research model for the topic as follows:

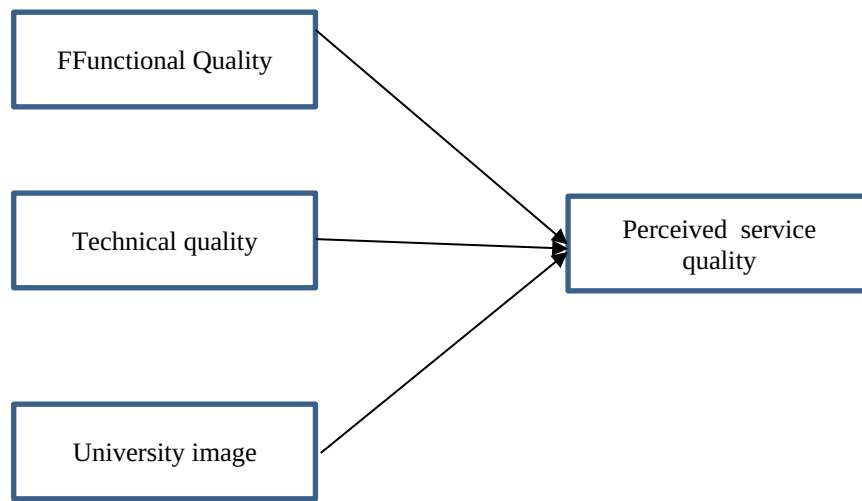


Figure 1: The proposed research model

3.2 Hypothesis development

3.2.1. Functional quality

Functional quality refers to how well a product or service meets its intended purpose and concerns about the core features, performance, and reliability of a product (Kang and James, 2004). From another aspect, functional quality relates to the ability of a product to do what it has been designed to do which is highly emphasized on the consistency and dependability of the product or service. In essence, functional quality is about delivering on the basic promises made to the customer (Babic-Hodovic et al. 2017). Research has indicated the relationship between the functional quality and the perceived quality. Functional quality is necessary but not sufficient for achieving high perceived service quality. To create a positive customer experience, businesses must focus on both the core functions of their services and the overall service experience (Abbas, 2020).

H1. Functional quality is positively related to the perceived service quality

3.2.2. Technical quality

Technical quality refers to the tangible or observable aspects of a service. It's about the outcome or result of the service, rather than the process of delivering it. In other words, it's what the customer receives after the service is complete (Kang, 2006). Wu and Ko (2013) studied previous research and suggested three aspects of technical or outcome quality: (1) Sociability -The number, type, and behavior of people involved in the service; (2) Valence - Customers' feelings about whether the service outcome was good or bad and (3) Waiting time: How long customers waited for the service.

H2. Technical quality is positively related to the perceived service quality

3.2.3. University image

Nguyen and LeBlanc (1998) found that customers who consistently receive good service have a positive impression of the company or the corporate image should play an important part in influencing perceived quality. Hu et al. (2009) suggested that a company's image is strong if customers think they get a good deal when they buy from it. However, some researchers believe that a company's image can influence how customers perceive and feel about the industry as a whole. Customer satisfaction is a judgment based on a specific service experience. The study from Ali et al. (2024) found that student satisfaction, university image, and the difficulty of switching to another university all significantly affect student loyalty. Universities may implement policy gaining their reputation or image before getting higher perceived quality.

H3. Technical quality is positively related to the perceived service quality

3.3 Questionnaire design

The study was conducted based on data from students enrolled in international programs at Vietnam National University, Hanoi. The authors collected data using a questionnaire designed on Google Forms and processed the data using SPSS 24 software.

The measurement model includes 3 independent variables and 1 dependent variable. Specifically, the Functional Quality (FQ) scale includes 15 observed variables, the Technical Quality (QT) scale includes 9 observed variables, the University Image (UI) scale includes 5 observed variables, and the Perceived Service Quality (PS) scale includes 5 observed variables. These scales were inherited and developed from the scale of Kang and James (2004); Ali et al. (2017); Abbas (2020).

3.4. Sampling and data collection

This study shall employ quantitative research to assess the correlation between independent variables and perceived service quality of foreign programs at VNU, Hanoi. Quantitative research approaches are ideal for statistical enquiries in the social and natural sciences, aiming to identify relationships among the examined variables (Saunders et al., 2018). Only large samples should be considered in this regard (Bradley, 2016). The main study sample comprises students who participated in the foreign programs at VNU, Hanoi. This sample may ensure the validity and reliability of the study while minimizing the incidence of irrelevant replies from inexperienced participants.

The survey will be administered online to gather extensive information from students enrolled in the foreign program at Vietnam National Universities, Hanoi. Researchers may disseminate questions using open access channels, like the Internet, social media platforms, or research exploratory sources, to optimize respondent participation (Saunders et al., 2018).

SECTION 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Research results

4.1.1 Demographic analysis

The demographic analysis is shown in Table 2, indicating that the sample characteristics are balanced in terms of gender and residential area. Consequently, this sample size is enough for quantitative analysis due to its dependability and validity.

Table 2: The demographic analysis

Demographic Variables	Category	Total sample	Percentage
Gender	Female	99	49%
	Male	103	51%
	Total	202	100%
Residential area	Ha Noi	82	40,6%
	Other cities (except for Hanoi)	79	39,1%
	Rural areas	41	20,3%
	Total	202	100%

4.1.2 Descriptive analysis

Descriptive statistics can yield the mean and standard deviation for several dimensions affecting perceived service quality in international programs at Vietnam National University, Hanoi. The means of the four criteria exceed 3, and the standard deviation is rather low; thus, the majority of respondents express modest to strong agreement with all claims.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Functional quality	180	1.00	5.00	3.3828	.62720
Technical quality	180	1.00	5.00	3.8198	.69834
University image	180	1.00	5.00	3.4330	.93204

Perceived service quality	180	2.00	5.00	3.8278	.89750
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4.1.3. Reliability analysis and Exploratory factor analysis

Reliability analysis is conducted by computing Cronbach's alpha and the item-total correlation coefficient. Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.6 and adjusted item-total correlations over 0.3 are deemed acceptable (Pallant, 2016). Consequently, the reliability analysis is sufficiently robust for subsequent testing.

Table 4: Reliability analysis

	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Functional quality	Cronbach's Alpha = .764	
TG1	.574	.703
TG2	.639	.642
TG3	.583	.703
RE1	.404	.503
RE2	.501	.542
RE3	.505	.603
RP1	.602	.502
RP2	.523	.640
RP3	.614	.673
AS1	.602	.603
AS2	.549	.692
AS3	.503	.701
EM1	.511	.682
EM2	.405	.660
EM3	.529	.673
Technical quality	Cronbach's Alpha = .849	
VA1	.658	.837
VA2	.426	.731
VA3	.571	.702
SO1	.608	.532
SO2	.706	.523
SO3	.501	.639
WT1	.618	.744
WT2	.616	.681
WT3	.571	.696
University image	Cronbach's Alpha = .671	
UI1	.515	.512
UI2	.563	.530
UI3	.629	.467
UI4	.690	.412

UI5	.432	.534
Perceived service quality	Cronbach's Alpha = .842	
PS1	.755	.738
PS2	.719	.770
PS3	.653	.834
PS4	.543	.642
PS5	.633	.634

Furthermore, the EFA analysis was conducted on all variables to generate supplementary variables, many of which had significant correlations. The KMO value is .728, and Bartlett's test yields a result of .000, satisfying the criteria for EFA analysis as established by Pallant (2016) and Bartlett (1954). The rotational component matrix is partitioned into four components, indicating that each factor is associated with a distinct component.

4.1.4. Regression analysis

Ultimately, regression analysis is implemented to ascertain the correlation between the independent and dependent variables. The adjusted R square value in this model is 0.705, indicating that 70.5% of the perceived service quality of international programs at Vietnam National University can be attributed to the University image, Technical quality, and Functional quality. The ANOVA has a significant value of 0.000, which is less than the threshold of 0.05. Consequently, this model is capable of accurately predicting the outcome results. The coefficients of these dimensions are one of the most critical criteria. All three factors have a p-value of less than 0.05. The results can be used to confirm that the perceived service quality of international programs at Vietnam National University, Hanoi is significantly influenced by the technical quality, functional quality, and university image. As a result, the hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are validated.

Table 5: Regression analysis

R: .820		R Square: .729		Adjusted R Square: .705	
ANOVA sig.: .000					
Model	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		.390	.697		
Functional quality	.434	3.474	.001	.860	1.163
Technical quality	.317	.488	.026	.999	1.001
University image	.101	20.804	.000	.860	1.003

As description above, the structural regression equation should be:

$$\text{Perceived service quality} = 0.434 * \text{Functional quality} + 0.317 * \text{Technical quality} + 0.101 * \text{University image} + e$$

4.2. Finding discussion

According to the results, we can highly confirm that Functional quality has the strongest impact on the perceived quality of international programs in VNU. Theoretically, when a product consistently delivers on its promised functions, it significantly enhances customers' perception of its quality. This is because functional quality is a fundamental expectation that customers have. If a product fails to meet these expectations, it can quickly erode perceived quality (Choi and Kim, 2013). The same findings can be found in the research of Babic-Hodovic et al. (2017) who defined functional quality could be explicated as a perception of the way in which a service was provided; it defines a customer's perception of interaction that takes place during the service provision process and relates to the satisfaction that the service recipient feels toward the process or experience of receiving the service. Ali et al. (2017) confirmed that the opinion of overall service quality is significantly influenced by functional quality. A key element in determining how good a service is perceived is the assessment of "how" it is being provided. The current paradigm uses five categories of service to assess functional quality

in service delivery, specifically in the hotel industry. It also emphasizes the significance of functional quality in creating good impressions of overall service. These characteristics, which go beyond the SERVQUAL model's five conventional dimensions, include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, and communications. In particular, from the study, Reliability is the most significant of these five criteria in terms of significance. This refers to the ability of a service provider or the university to perform the promised educational service dependably and accurately, time after time. In essence, reliability is about consistency and dependability. After that, the role of tangibles is highly important. It means that universities need to place a lot of focus on the physical aspects of the university both the outside and inside, as well as the attitudes of the staff and partly the teachers. It is clear that producing physical elements of a high caliber and aesthetic appeal is an important part of the consumer experience.

Technical quality, including sociability, valence and waiting time, also provide considerable influence towards the perceived quality. In contrast to functional quality, which focuses on the process of delivering the service, technical quality focuses on the end result. Both dimensions are important for overall customer satisfaction, but they address different aspects of the service experience (Ali et al., 2017; Abbas, 2020). This finding further emphasizes the significance of technical quality, which is thought to have a slightly smaller impact in the perception of perceived service quality than functional quality. This result emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate technical quality perception into assessments of service quality since, in the absence of it, a crucial component of the evaluation is overlooked.

Last but not least, university image has the slightest impact on perceived service quality. This means that the image can lead to a high perceived quality, but this quality must be established. It seems that the image must be supported by a good quality. The image appears to have a strong relationship with the overall service quality of the university. This may result from the fact that a good image for the staff, can also lead to a better social image. It gives the status of being in college, being an "economics student". And it will also lead to a higher fidelity through the generation of the word of mouth, thus consequently lead to a higher demand for the finest student (Hysi and Shyle, 2015).

SECTION 5. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Theoretical implications

The SERVQUAL model, a widely used framework for measuring service quality, provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the dimensions of education service quality. These dimensions include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. However, in the condition of education program in VNU, there should be additional dimensions for better understanding. Researchers have proposed additional dimensions, such as personalization, innovation, and social impact, to capture the unique characteristics of education services. Moreover, in addition to traditional service quality, the emerging concept of technical quality is also crucial for evaluating service quality. Therefore, managers in the educational service should concentrate on enhancing the final result or the technical services. This will ultimately lead to students perceiving the service as higher quality in education.

5.2. Practical implications

With the abovementioned findings, it should be implied that universities or other educational facilities need to make sure that they deliver on their service commitments in order to foster a pleasant students experience and contentment whereas Reliability is considered as the most influencing factor. This also includes ensuring that teaching staff and teaching facilities is operating as intended. Universities should try to increase student satisfaction by providing well-thought-out, well-maintained services. The ability to communicate, be confident, and be responsive are additional crucial components of functional quality. Students' impressions of staff members' personal attention, knowledge, readiness to help, and friendliness are all included in these three aspects, which are all tied to the staff. In this facet, VNU should divide their staff who interact directly with the students in at least 2 groups: Teaching staff and Administrative staff. The service quality of educational service must be enhanced with both of them. The service quality provided by staff is the second most significant factor affecting student satisfaction with the quality of education. To enhance student satisfaction, the university needs to improve both the skills and attitudes of its staff and its physical facilities, including classrooms, learning equipment, and libraries, to provide students with adequate and diverse resources to meet their learning and research needs. Besides, the results highlight the significant influence of the training program on student satisfaction. To enhance student satisfaction, the university must prioritize improving the quality of its training programs. The programs should be tailored to meet the specific needs of learners, align with the demands of the labor market, and address societal requirements. By fostering strong connections with external companies, the university can ensure that its curricula are up-to-date and relevant, enabling students to develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in their chosen careers.

SECTION 6. CONCLUSION

This paper endeavours to investigate the substantial factors that influence training service quality in international transnational program at Vietnam National University, Hanoi. Service quality has emerged as a critical issue in the field of services marketing. In addition to essential service constructs, the research suggests an expanded model that allows for the consideration of quality factors.

Data analysis indicates that the perceived service quality of international programs is positively correlated with Functional quality; Technical quality and University image. According to research findings, the overall quality of service can be enhanced by concentrating on the assurance and learning content of each curriculum, as well as the staff's responsiveness to student care. The research also suggests critical implications for both managers and researchers in the education sector, particularly in VNU's international transnational area, to improve the number of enrolments and brand image from student's perception.

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