

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Service quality is becoming more and more important in today's competitive environment. It has been linked with increased sales, profitability, positive word-of-mouth feedback, customer loyalty, and satisfaction. In the academic sector, universities also face intense international and national competition, and service quality can help them to survive in this competitive environment (Jarvis, 2002). This study aims to find the service quality in higher education in Macao, specifically in the continuing education sector. This study employs the HEdPERF instrument developed by Firdaus (2005) which includes six dimensions, namely Academic, Non-academic, Programme, Reputation, Access and Understanding. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to students of a centre for continuing education. Data collected were used to test the effects of the six HEdPERF dimensions on overall service quality level, satisfaction level and loyalty level of higher education customers.

Results indicated that students are most satisfied with the Academic factor and least satisfied with the Understanding factor. The important dimensions to influence overall service quality are Academic, Non-Academic and Reputation dimensions. The important dimensions to influence satisfaction are Non-Academic, Reputation and Understanding. The important dimensions to influence loyalty are Academic, Programme and Understanding. Results show that Reputation factor is significant to both overall service quality and satisfaction level. Understanding factor is significant to both satisfaction and loyalty levels. Meanwhile, the satisfaction scores for these two factors are low. Therefore, it is suggested that academic institutions should put more resources in these two areas for improvement. Finally, it is recommended that future research should test the HEdPERF model on a larger sample and on other customer groups such as enterprises or government departments which are customers of the academic institution on in-house trainings, conferences and seminars.