Service Quality of Information System Center Evaluated by Revised Gap Analysis

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Abstract

This gap model is adopted widely to measure service quality, however several authors have argued that service encounters not be involved properly. This study aims to develop a revised gap model involving the service encounter by deposition of service activities to enhance the indicating in contributing to the extent of gap between customers' expectation and perception. Via a case of information system center is conducted, the results show that manager should constant contact with students, in order to gain first-hand knowledge of students' expectation, thus, spend more time interacting with students and experiencing real service delivery. Thus, conduct regular investigation to assess the problems of contact employees why unable to perform the service quality at the level required to meet students' expectation. It also indicates the revised gap model is a meaningful and appropriate way to identify the gaps between expectation and perception of customers and management as well as service encounters involved measurement.

Keywords Gap model, Gap analysis, PZB model, Service Quality.

1. Introduction

At present, many service organizations to face increasing competition and a changing environment. Service quality has come to be recognized as a strategic tool for improving business performance and attaining efficiency and profit, hence, the measurement of service quality is an important link in the cycle of service provision. The gap model was developed by Parasuraman *et al*. (1985), it is based on interpretation of qualitative data generated through a number of in-depth executive interviews and customer focus groups, and shows the interaction between key activities and identifies the linkages among the activities of the service organization that are pertinent to the delivery of a satisfactory level of service quality. This gap model is adopted widely to measure service quality in many studies in the pass years.

Several authors have argued that service encounters frequently operate on their own, face to face with customers, and it is difficult for management to monitor their behavior (Schneider and Bowen, 1995). It has been demonstrated that the behavior of service encounters affects the customers' perception of the service. Service encounters may face hundreds of customers each day and customers'

expectation may differ, it is possible that they may also misjudge exactly what most customers' expectation (Luk and Layton, 2002), because they gain only limited information on the managerial action that is needed to select and train their service encounters, thus the information through their daily interactions with the customers that can be used by the organization to improve service and make decisions. Hubbert *et al*. (1995) found a significant gap between the customers' expectation and service encounters' perception. It seems reasonable to conclude that accurate service encounters understanding of customers enable both the service encounters and the organization to adjust appropriately to customers' needs. However, previous research correlating customer and service encounter views is spare and offers mixed conclusions. The interaction between customers and service encounters provides a potential means by which an organization can improve service quality. Service encounters are able to display a positive emotional effort characterize by special attention to the customers. These relational cues influence customer judgment about services (Butcher *et al*., 2001). In fact, the display of positive emotions by service encounters is positively related to customers' positive affect and to their evaluations of services, and can achieve true customer loyalty (Bove and Johnson, 2000).

Since, service encounter is actual service provider, so it is also important to understand the service encounters' perceptions in relation to the customers' perceptions and understand the service encounters' perceptions in relation to the management's perceptions. In a majority of cases, although management were charged with the principal responsibility of knowing and understanding customers' expectation, traditionally they had the least contact with customers and were not able to assess customers' needs accurately. Against these backgrounds, this research proposed a revised gap model involved service encounter, then, a case of information system center is conducted, the result indicated this revised model was definitely suitable used.

2. Gap model

Parasuraman *et al*. (1985) proposed the five gaps model, five gaps were identified when measuring overall service quality, these gaps as identified, include: Gap 1 is the discrepancy between customers' expectation and management's perceptions of customers' expectation; Gap 2 is the discrepancy between management's perceptions of customers' expectation and service quality specifications; Gap 3: is the discrepancy between service quality specifications and the service actually delivered; Gap 4: is the discrepancy between service delivery and what is communicated about the service to customers; Gap 5 is the discrepancy between customers' expectation on the service and their perceptions of the service performance. Amongst these gaps, gap 5 would be a function of the other four gaps, it imply that the Gap 5 can not decompose to each gap, in other words, it do not indicate the combination of gaps and the deposition of service activities, and it is not convenience to be identified.

Parasuraman *et al*. (1988) then, stressed that it would be mandatory for service marketers to control and, ideally, close these gaps, thus, the process of developing an instrument for quantifying customers' assessment of service quality performance. *SERVQUAL*, a multiple

item instrument designed to measure service quality along the five dimensions of service. *SERVQUAL* is a concise multiple item scale that contains 22 pairs of Likert-type items, where each item is recast into two statements. One half of these items are intended to measure customers' expectation about organizations in general within the service categories being investigated, and the other 22 matching items are intended to measure their perceptions about the particular organization, whose service quality is being assessed. The items are presented in a seven-point response format with anchors strongly agree and strongly disagree. Service quality is then measured by calculating the ''difference scores'' between corresponding items. It contains five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Zeithaml *et al*. (1988) then, identified a reasonably exhaustive set of factors potentially affecting the magnitude and direction of four gaps on the market's side of their service quality model. The theoretical constructs were derived from the organizational behavior and marketing literature. The extend model shows the various organizational constructs and their relationships to the service quality gaps. Furthermore, the *SERVQUAL* is further refined by Parasuraman *et al*. (1991) based on lots of queries by researchers, they modified the *SERVQUAL* into "revised *SERVQUAL*". The refinements involve making two changes in the original *SERVQUAL* instrument. The first refinement pertains to the use of a "should" terminology in the instrument. In the original *SERVQUAL* instrument, the expectation statements use a "should" terminology. The second refinement also involves a change in the wording of the instrument, they change all the negatively worded items to a positively worded. Both *SERVQUAL* and revised *SERVQUAL* are identical in nature — the perceptions minus expectations model service quality as the difference between customer perceptions of performance and expectations.

3. A Revised Gap model

Most of the research of service quality is based on the service provider's perspective. Service encounter is actual service provider, so their service delivery and perception between management's perception and customers' perception are very important. More research is needed to investigate the impact of services on customers' perceptions of service quality, as well as management's. Through our study, we attempt to overcome some of the inherent problems. We believe that management could better understand the quality of their services if they also paid attention to the difference in expectations or perceptions, such as customers; service encounters and themselves, so that, to design; improve and manage the service quality. Through PZB model, the purpose of *SERVQUAL* is used to measure Gap 5 which discrepancy from customers' perception and expectation. Although, it was used to measure Gap 1 to Gap 4 in some studies as well. Gap 5 is just a function relationship with Gap 1 to Gap 4 in PZB model. Individual measurement of gap can not be shown the combination of gaps. The structure is as following figure 1:

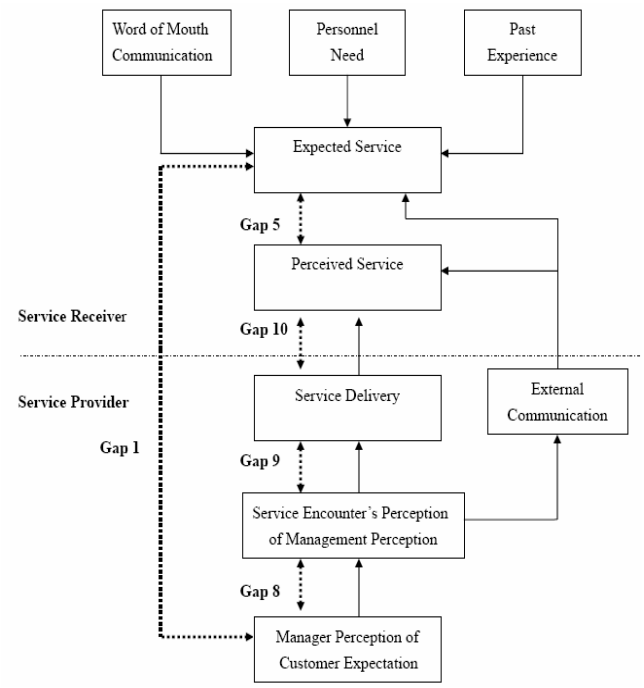

Figure 1. Revised Conceptual Model

The definition of Gap 5 and Gap 1 are same as PZB model, Gap 5 is the discrepancy between customers' perception and expectation. Gap 1 is the discrepancy between management's perception and customers' expectation.

Gap 8 is the discrepancy between management's perception of customers' expectation and service encounters' perception of management's perception. After management understanding customers' expectation, they will establish the specification and system to meet customers' expectation. Management probably via some methods to let service encounters understand, such as training and communication, however, the discrepancy would have existed, "Does employee really understand completely?" hence, measurement of the gap is necessary.

Gap 9 is the discrepancy between service encounters' perception of management's perception and service delivery. This gap represents the gap of service perception through the service delivery process. The discrepancy would have existed, "How much doing under understanding about employee?" hence, this gap must be measured.

Gap 10 is the discrepancy between service delivery and perceived service. Service encounter cognize how excellent they delivery is probably different with customer and how much they taken. "Does customer have same feeling as employee?" hence, this gap must be measured.

According to above description, the function relationship can be expressed as follow:

Gap 5= Gap 1+ Gap8+ Gap9+ Gap10

The function relationship has great advantage, it indicates the combination of gaps and the decomposition of service activities, it is convenience to be identified. Thus, the service quality can be clearly measured through these gap scores. It is better than PZB model for offering direction to develop and to improve service quality.

4. Case study

4.1 Research design

A case of information system center in certain high school at Taiwan is presented. Three questionnaires are designed, first parts of questionnaire is explored students' expectation and perception, and there is total of 315 questionnaires were distributed and 294 were returned. Of those questionnaires returned 6 were incomplete. The remaining 288 questionnaires were useful for data analysis. The response rate was 91.43%. There were 82 females and 206 males totally. 48 subjects were grade one; 142 were grade two and 98 were grade three. Second parts of questionnaire for manager is just one questionnaire only. Third parts of questionnaire for employees are totally

of five questionnaires.

4.2 Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to test validity and reliability of the modified *SERVQUAL* for evaluating service quality with sample. The data acquired from both collections were organized into a table for easy readability and analysis with SPSS 10.0 for windows.

4.3 Validity

In this pilot study, the modified *SERVQUAL* was first validated by two experts. Content validity was guided by the following question: Is the substance or content of this measure sufficiently representative of the content of the construct to be measured? The result of the two experts' agreement of the modified *SERVQUAL* was .913

4.4 Reliability

The Cronbach's alpha for the first data collection was .843. The alphas for "item deleted" ranged from .826 to .864, which showed each item was equally important to every dimension. The intraclass reliability between the first data collection and the second was .736.

4.5 Result

Gap 5

As shown in Table 1, a comparison of students' actual perceptions of service quality their expectations. It shown all attributes are negative score, and existed the significant discrepancy. The result indicated that, overall, the information system center was not doing a good job in meeting students' expectation. The biggest gaps was on attribute 1 "*They provide up-to-date hardware and software* (-0.305)", and second was attribute 20 "*They understand the specific needs of users* (-0.284)". Those attribute were the most serious shortfalls and will requires significant attention by manager in terms of making improvement efforts. And overall Gap 5 was -0.254 which would indicated that the overall service quality provided below students' expectation.

Gap 1

As shown in Table 2, for the most part, manager believed that students' expectation more than the students themselves expectation except attribute 10 "*They will tell users exactly when services will be performed* (-0.029)". In addition, the overall Gap 1 score was 0.137, which would indicated that the manager tend to have a reasonably good understanding of student expectations. However, from the results of positive Gap 1 score and not big difference, it can be concluded that Gap 1 did not seem to a major problem of service quality in this case.

Gap 8

As shown in Table 3, a comparison of manager's perception for students' expectation and contact employees' perception. The result indicated that, 17 of 22 attributes had positive mean score gap, and 5 of 22 attributes had negative mean score gap, however, only attribute 4 "*Their appearance of the physical facilities will be in keeping with the kind of services provided* (0.200)", attribute 6 "*When users have a problem, they will show a sincere interest in solving it* (0.200)" and attribute 10 "*They will tell users exactly when services will be performed* (0.233)" revealed a bit of difference, it can be concluded that manager did a good job to train or to communicate the employees for understanding students' expectation. Hence, Gap 8 did not seem to a major problem of service

quality in this case as well.

Gap 9

As shown in Table 4, a comparison of employees' perception for manager's perception and service quality delivery by themselves. The result indicated that, all differences of attributes were very tiny, no matter what positive, negative even zero mean score gaps. Thus, from the overall mean score -0.009, it can be concluded that contact employees had high confidence to delivery enough service quality to meet manager's requirement, even students' expectation. Hence, Gap 9 did not seem to a major problem of service quality in this case as well.

Gap 10

As shown in Table 5, the mean score gaps along each of 22 attributes was calculated for perception of both students and contact employees. It showed the significant difference, all 22 attributes were negative and very big. The range from attribute 9 "*They will insist on error-free records* (-0.387)" to attribute 1 "*They provide up-to-date hardware and software* (-0.506)" was not big variation, and from the overall mean score gaps, it can be concluded that Gap 10 seem to a major problem of service quality in this case. The result indicated that contact employee perceived their service quality delivery as being higher than student perceived it to be.

4.6 Discussion

Gap 5 analysis is critical because it may prove to be an extremely useful tool for manager to identify the service problems or service fall points. The result of Gap 5 analysis showed that students' perception was consistently lower that their expectation. These negative gaps indicated that the delivered service quality was falling below student expectation in this case. The larger the gaps, the more serious the service quality shortfall, from the point of view of students. According to the findings of this study, the biggest gaps related to "*They provide up-to-date hardware and software*" and "*They understand the specific needs of users*" Manager should in attempting to narrow Gap 5 and study the other gaps (Gap 1,Gap 8, Gap9 and Gap 10) which contribute to the extent of Gap 5. In all likelihood, the causes of Gap5 may be found in one or more of remaining gaps.

The result of overall Gap 1 score for this study was 0.137, which showed that manager have a reasonably good understanding of students' expectation. The result of overall Gap 8 score was 0.061, which showed that manager did a good job to train or to communicate the employee for understanding students' expectation. The result of overall Gap 9 score was -0.09, which showed contact employees had high confidence to delivery enough service quality to meet manager requirement, even students' expectation. Generally, it might be concluded the Gap 1, Gap 8 and Gap 9 are probably not the major problem in contributing to the extent of Gap 5.

The result of overall Gap 10 score was -0.443, which showed that contact employees perceived their service quality delivery as being higher than student perceived it to be. It might be concluded that Gap 10 is one of the major causes in contributing to the extent of Gap 5. Therefore, the necessary first step in improving the service quality is for manager in the information system center in certain high school to acquire accurate information about the driving

forces behind Gap 10. Several factors might be contributing to the existence of Gap 10. First, one of the major manager's responsibilities is constant contact with student, in order to gain first-hand knowledge of students' expectation, thus, spend more time interacting with students and experiencing real service delivery. In addition, manager's correct perception for student expectation is not sufficient for achieving service quality delivery at desired level. However, some past studies have similar result. Second, manager should conduct regular investigation to assess the problems of contact employees, such as poorly qualified employees, insufficient capacity to serve and over self-confidence which unable to perform the service quality at the level required to meet students' expectation.

5. Conclusion

The result of this study show that the revised gap model is a meaningful and appropriate way to identify the gaps between customers' and management's expectation and perception as well as service encounters involved evaluation. While management's perceptions most directly affected the design, development and delivery of the services offered, customers' perceptions more directly determined the evaluation of the services consumed. Hence it is important to better understand the management's perceptions in relation to the customers' expectation and perception. Meanwhile, service encounters are actual service provider, so it is also important to understand the service deliver of service encounters' perceptions in relation to the customers' perceptions and understand the service encounters' perceptions in relation to management's perceptions. Identifying these gaps can provider management with a clear direction on how to address the shortfall by the proposed revised gap model.

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Table 1. Gap 5

Questions	1st questionnaire for CE (Mean)	2nd questionnaire for CP (Mean)	Gap 5 CP-CE
1.They provide up-to-date hardware and software	0.666	0.361	-0.305
2.Their physical facilities will be visually appealing	0.632	0.366	-0.266
3.Their employee will be well dressed and neat in appearance	0.649	0.375	-0.274
4.Their appearance of the physical facilities will be in keeping with the kind of services provided	0.665	0.400	-0.265
5.When they promise to do something by a certain time, they will do so	0.656	0.402	-0.254
6.When users have a problem, they will show a sincere interest in solving it	0.642	0.427	-0.215
7.Their employee is dependable	0.672	0.427	-0.245
8.They will provide their services at the times they promise to do so	0.666	0.433	-0.233
9.They will insist on error-free records	0.674	0.413	-0.261
10.They will tell users exactly when services will be performed	0.696	0.433	-0.263
11.Their employee will give prompt service to users	0.677	0.428	-0.249
12.Their employee will always be willing to help users	0.664	0.429	-0.235
13.They will never be too busy to respond to users' requests	0.645	0.418	-0.227
14.Their employees' behavior will instill confidence in users	0.656	0.416	-0.240
15.Users will feel safe in their employee transactions with them	0.663	0.409	-0.254
16.Their employee will be consistently courteous with users	0.653	0.414	-0.239
17.Their employee will have the knowledge to do their job well	0.682	0.440	-0.242
18.They will give users individual attention	0.661	0.417	-0.244
19.Their employee will give users' personal attention	0.673	0.411	-0.262
20.They understand the specific needs of users	0.690	0.406	-0.284
21.They have the users' best interest at heart	0.675	0.411	-0.264
22.They will have operating hours convenient to all their users	0.702	0.428	-0.274
Average	0.666	0.412	-0.254

Note:
CE: Customer Expectation
CP: Customer Perception

Table 2. Gap 1

Questions	1st questionnaire for CE (Mean)	3th questionnaire for MPCE (Mean)	Gap 1 MPCE-CE
1.They provide up-to-date hardware and software	0.666	0.833	0.167
2.Their physical facilities will be visually appealing	0.632	0.833	0.201
3.Their employee will be well dressed and neat in appearance	0.649	0.833	0.184
4.Their appearance of the physical facilities will be in keeping with the kind of services provided	0.665	0.667	0.002
5.When they promise to do something by a certain time, they will do so	0.656	0.833	0.177
6.When users have a problem, they will show a sincere interest in solving it	0.642	0.667	0.025
7.Their employee is dependable	0.672	0.833	0.161
8.They will provide their services at the times they promise to do so	0.666	0.833	0.167
9.They will insist on error-free records	0.674	0.833	0.159
10.They will tell users exactly when services will be performed	0.696	0.667	-0.029
11.Their employee will give prompt service to users	0.677	0.833	0.156
12.Their employee will always be willing to help users	0.664	0.833	0.169
13.They will never be too busy to respond to users' requests	0.645	0.667	0.022
14.Their employees' behavior will instill confidence in users	0.656	0.833	0.177
15.Users will feel safe in their employee transactions with them	0.663	0.833	0.170
16.Their employee will be consistently courteous with users	0.653	0.833	0.180
17.Their employee will have the knowledge to do their job well	0.682	0.833	0.151
18.They will give users individual attention	0.661	0.833	0.172
19.Their employee will give users' personal attention	0.673	0.833	0.160
20.They understand the specific needs of users	0.690	0.833	0.143
21.They have the users' best interest at heart	0.675	0.833	0.158
22.They will have operating hours convenient to all their users	0.702	0.833	0.131
Average	0.666	0.803	0.137

Note:
CE: Customer Expectation
MPCE: Manager Perception for Customer Expectation

Table 3. Gap 8

Questions	3th questionnaire for MPCE (Mean)	4th questionnaire for EPMR (Mean)	Gap 8 EPMR-MPCE
1.They provide up-to-date hardware and software	0.833	0.933	0.100
2.Their physical facilities will be visually appealing	0.833	0.900	0.067
3.Their employee will be well dressed and neat in appearance	0.833	0.900	0.067
4.Their appearance of the physical facilities will be in keeping with the kind of services provided	0.667	0.867	0.200
5.When they promise to do something by a certain time, they will do so	0.833	0.900	0.067
6.When users have a problem, they will show a sincere interest in solving it	0.667	0.867	0.200
7.Their employee is dependable	0.833	0.900	0.067
8.They will provide their services at the times they promise to do so	0.833	0.867	0.034
9.They will insist on error-free records	0.833	0.933	0.100
10.They will tell users exactly when services will be performed	0.667	0.900	0.233
11.Their employee will give prompt service to users	0.833	0.867	0.034
12.Their employee will always be willing to help users	0.833	0.900	0.067
13.They will never be too busy to respond to users' requests	0.667	0.833	0.166
14.Their employees' behavior will instill confidence in users	0.833	0.967	0.134
15.Users will feel safe in their employee transactions with them	0.833	0.900	0.067
16.Their employee will be consistently courteous with users	0.833	0.867	0.034
17.Their employee will have the knowledge to do their job well	0.833	0.867	0.034
18.They will give users individual attention	0.833	0.767	-0.066
19.Their employee will give users' personal attention	0.833	0.767	-0.066
20.They understand the specific needs of users	0.833	0.800	-0.033
21.They have the users' best interest at heart	0.833	0.767	-0.066
22.They will have operating hours convenient to all their users	0.833	0.733	-0.100
Average	0.803	0.864	0.061

Note:
MPCE: Manager Perception for Customer Expectation
EPMR: Employee Perception for Manager Requirement

Table 4. Gap 9

Questions	4th questionnaire for EPMR (Mean)	5th questionnaire for EPD (Mean)	Gap 9 EPD-EPMR
1.They provide up-to-date hardware and software	0.933	0.867	-0.066
2.Their physical facilities will be visually appealing	0.900	0.867	-0.033
3.Their employee will be well dressed and neat in appearance	0.900	0.867	-0.033
4.Their appearance of the physical facilities will be in keeping with the kind of services provided	0.867	0.867	0.000
5.When they promise to do something by a certain time, they will do so	0.900	0.833	-0.067
6.When users have a problem, they will show a sincere interest in solving it	0.867	0.867	0.000
7.Their employee is dependable	0.900	0.867	-0.033
8.They will provide their services at the times they promise to do so	0.867	0.867	0.000
9.They will insist on error-free records	0.933	0.800	-0.133
10.They will tell users exactly when services will be performed	0.900	0.833	-0.067
11.Their employee will give prompt service to users	0.867	0.900	0.033
12.Their employee will always be willing to help users	0.900	0.833	-0.067
13.They will never be too busy to respond to users' requests	0.833	0.833	0.000
14.Their employees' behavior will instill confidence in users	0.967	0.867	-0.100
15.Users will feel safe in their employee transactions with them	0.900	0.900	0.000
16.Their employee will be consistently courteous with users	0.867	0.867	0.000
17.Their employee will have the knowledge to do their job well	0.867	0.867	0.000
18.They will give users individual attention	0.767	0.833	0.066
19.Their employee will give users' personal attention	0.767	0.833	0.066
20.They understand the specific needs of users	0.800	0.833	0.033
21.They have the users' best interest at heart	0.767	0.833	0.066
22.They will have operating hours convenient to all their users	0.733	0.867	0.134
Average	0.864	0.855	-0.009

Note:
EPMR: Employee Perception for Manager Requirement
EPD: Employee Perception for Delivery

Table 5. Gap 10

Questions	5th questionnaire for EPD (Mean)	2nd questionnaire for CP (Mean)	Gap 10 CP-EPD
1.They provide up-to-date hardware and software	0.867	0.361	-0.506
2.Their physical facilities will be visually appealing	0.867	0.366	-0.501
3.Their employee will be well dressed and neat in appearance	0.867	0.375	-0.492
4.Their appearance of the physical facilities will be in keeping with the kind of services provided	0.867	0.400	-0.467
5.When they promise to do something by a certain time, they will do so	0.833	0.402	-0.431
6.When users have a problem, they will show a sincere interest in solving it	0.867	0.427	-0.440
7.Their employee is dependable	0.867	0.427	-0.440
8.They will provide their services at the times they promise to do so	0.867	0.433	-0.434
9.They will insist on error-free records	0.800	0.413	-0.387
10.They will tell users exactly when services will be performed	0.833	0.433	-0.400
11.Their employee will give prompt service to users	0.900	0.428	-0.472
12.Their employee will always be willing to help users	0.833	0.429	-0.404
13.They will never be too busy to respond to users' requests	0.833	0.418	-0.415
14.Their employees' behavior will instill confidence in users	0.867	0.416	-0.451
15.Users will feel safe in their employee transactions with them	0.900	0.409	-0.491
16.Their employee will be consistently courteous with users	0.867	0.414	-0.453
17.Their employee will have the knowledge to do their job well	0.867	0.440	-0.427
18.They will give users individual attention	0.833	0.417	-0.416
19.Their employee will give users' personal attention	0.833	0.411	-0.422
20.They understand the specific needs of users	0.833	0.406	-0.427
21.They have the users' best interest at heart	0.833	0.411	-0.422
22.They will have operating hours convenient to all their users	0.867	0.428	-0.439
Average	0.855	0.412	-0.443

Note:

EPD: Employee Perception for Delivery

CP: Customer Perception

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摘要

Gap模型已被廣泛地運用到服務品質之衡量，但許多學者提出其並未適當地納入服務人員之爭議。本研究之目的在提出一修正之Gap模型，其納入服務人員之看法以強化Gap模型之含量。藉由一高中資訊中心之案例驗證，其結果顯示其管理者應時常接觸學生，以獲得第一手學生期望之資訊；更常與學生互動以瞭解真正之服務品質遞送；並且進行深入研究為何其服務人員無法達成學生之期望。最後並驗證了此修正Gap模型是瞭解服務品質內涵之適當且有效之方法。

關鍵字：Gap模型；Gap分析；PZB模型；服務品質。