

ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF AN MBA PROGRAM:
AN APPLICATION OF SERVQUAL

ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

As the decade of the nineties unfolds, business schools are becoming increasingly concerned about the quality of their MBA programs. Nationwide demand for this degree has declined as firms eliminate layers of management and offer their own internal training programs. Competition for the MBA student is also increasing. To meet these challenges, a growing number of colleges are evaluating their programs in terms of total quality management. A useful model called SERVQUAL was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry for assessing perceived service quality of service firms. This model measures the differences between service quality expectations and performance. Allen and Davis adapted this model to an MBA context. Their analysis revealed four important MBA service quality dimensions which were consistent with those of Parasuraman et al and it appeared that the modified SERVQUAL instrument was useful in an educational setting. Further verification of this application is warranted. The purpose of the present study is to replicate the use of SERVQUAL in an MBA context. The results may be used to improve the quality of MBA programs. This paper presents the findings from one university.

METHODOLOGY

A nonprobability sample of 127 full and part-time graduate business students were surveyed. This represented 36% of the currently enrolled students. Data was gathered using a 22 item questionnaire based on the SERVQUAL model which tapped the five separate but interrelated dimensions of service quality including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Demographic information was also obtained on the survey.

RESULTS

The data suggest that the five-factor model does not fit well. This may be due to the conversion of negatively worded items to a positive format. There were some interesting correlations between the five dimensions and student satisfaction and overall service quality judgements. Regression analysis suggested that empathy and reliability have the greatest impact on student satisfaction. Empathy was most influential in judging overall service quality. Overall the results suggest that while SERVQUAL can serve as a useful starting point for assessing students' perceptions of the quality of MBA programs, considerable adaptation of the basic model may have to be made.