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Measuring Customer Satisfaction

Case: Master IELTS Language Training Center

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<p>Although English is not the most widely spoken language in the world, it is undeniably the most widely used language of all time. As a result, teaching and studying English has become useful, beneficial, and popular in most of nations where English is either a second language or a foreign language. Furthermore, international programs such as Cambridge, TOEFL, TOIEC, and IELTS are commonly used to assess learners' language abilities. However, among the others, the IELTS test has recently become the most popular.</p> <p>The goal of this thesis was to look at the current level of customer satisfaction with Master IELTS – a language training school providing tailored IELTS training programs – and identify any potential areas for improvement. This study explored and evaluated the aspects that determine customer satisfaction and assisted the case company in reviewing the present situation and identifying any existing difficulties with their services.</p> <p>The theoretical background of this thesis covered service, service quality and customer satisfaction. Quantitative research was the chosen method used to proceed the survey for data collection of the thesis. The questionnaire was delivered and conducted for one month and a half with the great assistance and cooperation of all staff, teachers and students of Master IELTS.</p> <p>As the result of the research, the level of customer satisfaction towards the services and the training products of Master IELTS was positive. However, in order to perform more efficiently and productively, the case company needs to complete the team with a position of head teacher, a salesperson. Improving and diversifying teaching materials is the most crucial job to gain competitive advantages of the case company compared to other competitors in the market. Employee's training also helps staff in improving their working skills to better serve customers.</p>		
<u>Key words</u> service, service quality, customer satisfaction		

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1 INTRODUCTION

Master IELTS Language Training Center, Bien Hoa, Dong Nai, Vietnam, was selected as the case company for this study. Until coming to Finland for the degree program in International Business in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, the author worked as a teacher for the mother company of this mentioned center within two years. Then, the author had an opportunity to fulfill his internship at Master IELTS Language Training Center beginning in June 2019, which was how he discovered the subject for the thesis.

Master IELTS Language Training Center is one of the educational institutions that provides language training services, especially the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) program. The center is a member of the mother company's ecosystem – Dai My Viet Educational Ltd., Co – and has been running since February 2019 in Bien Hoa city, Dong Nai province, in southern Vietnam.

In terms of the structure of this thesis, the first chapter is the introduction, which includes the study background and a case company. The second chapter discusses the problem setting which mentions the intent and goal of the project; the research questions as well as limitations and boundaries. The service definition along with the characteristics itself are the primary contents in chapter 3. Chapter 4 covers the gaps model of service quality which brings an overview and perfect approach of service in a structured order. Besides that, five determinants of service quality, which is identified based on the gaps model of service quality, are also mentioned in this chapter. Chapter 5 provides the information of customer satisfaction including vital knowledge about the importance of customer satisfaction, customer segmentation using relationship strength and disposition strength, and the factors that determine customer satisfaction. The research methodology is the main point revealed in chapter 6. Chapter 7 is an important aspect of the thesis since it applies many of the hypotheses to the empirical study, including the SWOT tool, data collection and interpretation, and recommendations. The thesis is summarized in the final chapter.

2 PROBLEM SETTING

2.1 Research problem and sub-problems

The primary aim of this thesis is to measure the current degree of customer satisfaction at Master IELTS, a language training center which offered the author a great chance to serve his internship. This project is also an important and obligatory process leading the author to the completion of the degree program in International Business with specialization in service design in Satakunta University of Applied Sciences. Moreover, the result of this project is not only to provide a useful data base of customer expectations helping the company owner in improving and developing better services in the future, but also to lend the author an opportunity of applying theoretical knowledge to a real workplace. As a former employee of the company, the outcome of this project acts as a big thank you to the employer who helped and encouraged the author during the old period of time working there.

Identifying the levels of customer satisfaction to gain a clear comprehension of the clients at any organization is extremely important. Thus, the company is able to maintain or develop its services based on the customer database.

Research questions are:

1. How satisfied the customers are with the services at Master IELTS Training Center?
2. What are the existing problems of the service at Master IELTS Training Center?

There are several strong competitors operating in the same area. Hopefully, this study will be able to give Master IELTS a hand in understanding their clients and the center itself as well as developing their business based on the result. The research was designed to conduct in a way that it will be possible to repeat in the future. The further information of the thesis scale would be mentioned in the limitation and boundary's part below.

Finally, this thesis will discuss and analyse the factors that influence the levels of customer satisfaction and assist the case company to find out the present situation as well as the possible existing problems, thereby improving the quality of services.

2.2 Limitation and boundaries

Within the scope of the thesis, it primarily focuses on providing the theoretical background of service, service quality, customer satisfaction, and measurement of customer satisfaction level at Master IELTS Training Center and then suggesting some solutions from the author's perspective. However, this thesis will not cover the stage of implementation for improving the current quality of the service at the center. It stops at the measurement of the current customer satisfaction level at the center. Therefore, the cost of the solution implementation and other financial issues will not be mentioned in this research.

2.3 Conceptual framework

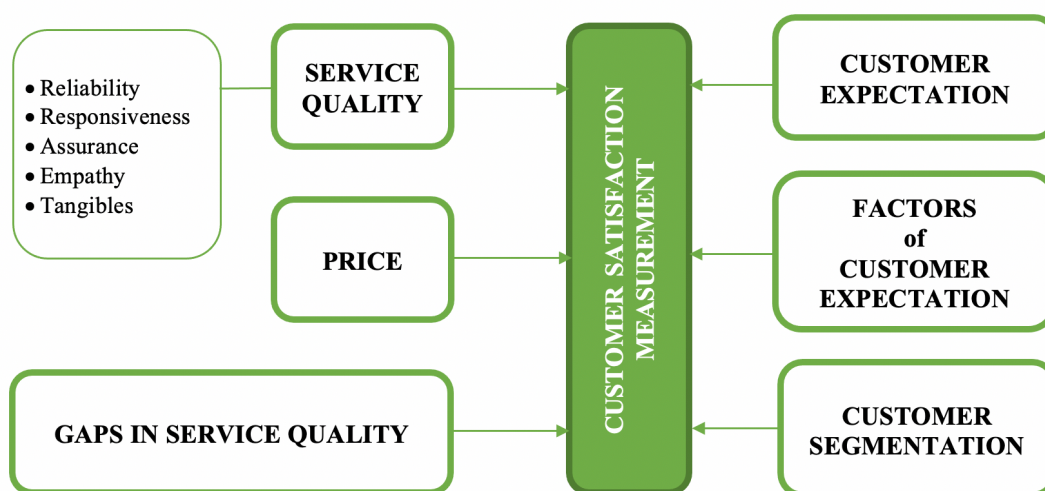


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of theoretical background of the thesis (Author of the thesis 2021)

The graphic illustrates all the areas of theory in this thesis and how they are linked with each other. With the concepts of the theoretical review covered in the thesis, the reader should be able to have a comprehension of service, service quality, and cus-

customer satisfaction. The four characteristics of services namely intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability, which would bring the readers at least the general aspect of service. In addition, people working in service businesses have long time been confused about how to access service marketing effectively, gaps model of service quality is an ideal solution of this complicated issue. And based on that, five dimensions of service quality determine the quality of customers' experiences to the service of a company. Moreover, the topic of customer satisfaction will start with the premise of the importance of customer satisfaction at the beginning of chapter 5. In this chapter the author continues to bring the reader several main concepts: customer expectations of service, pricing, customer segmentation that helps to understand quickly what is going on with the customers of the company and factors that affect customer satisfaction. Finally, this mentioned stable and suitable theoretical background would be a great foundation for the actual implementation of customer satisfaction measurement of the case company at Master IELTS Training center.

3 SERVICE

3.1 What is a service

Today, services are everywhere, and in the role of customers, we use them on a daily basis; however, it is not easy to find a good definition. According to Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary, service is defined in several ways: "a system that provides something that the public needs, organized by the government or a private company" or "a business whose work involves doing something for customers but not producing goods; the work that such a business does."

Sauming Pang (2009, 7) defines service as "something a business or person provides to customers of which the most important elements are often intangible, and the quality of the service is subjective and cannot be measured easily."

Moreover, a service most frequently "has been described as an act, a process and a performance" also services can be more "described as economic activities that create

‘added value’ and provide benefits for customers (customers or organizations).”

Audrey Gilmore (2003, 9)

A service is both intangible and ephemeral or perishable. It is an event or procedure that is created and used at the same time or approximately at the same time. Although the customer cannot keep the service after it has been made, the effect of the service may be retained. (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons 2006, 4)

3.2 Characteristics of service

There are four distinctive characteristics of service namely intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability according to Kotler, Bowen, Makens and Baloglu (2017, 37-39)

Intangibility: intangible items, unlike actual products, cannot be seen, tasted, sensed, heard, or smelled before being bought. A restaurant customer will no longer know how delicious the food is right after consuming it. Likewise, a student does not know how intensive an IELTS training course is until he or she joined and experienced the class. One consequence of experiential goods is that we just take our impressions with us. The aim is to build interactions that lead to positive outcomes.

Inseparability: physical goods are made, then stored, then sold, later still can be stored then finally consumed. Service goods, on the other hand, are sold first, and produced and used simultaneously. Many providers require both the service provider and the customer to be present for the transaction to take place. Inseparability implies that both the employee and the buyer are frequently a part of the product.

The quality of an English course may be outstanding, but if the staff approaches the customer with poor attitude or provide inattentive service, customers will not be satisfied. Another implication of inseparability is that customer (students at an English center) and the staff (English center) must understand the service-delivery system because they are coproducing the service. Students must acknowledge their goals/ purposes when enrolling an English course or an IELTS training course in particular so that they enter the right course that they expect. For example, if a group of qualified students

would love to take part in and IELTS in 4 months so an intensive 3-month course is the right choice instead of a normal 6-month or 12-month course.

Variability: the quality of services varies greatly. Their consistency is determined by who delivers them, as well as where and when they are delivered. Service instability can be attributed to a number of factors. Services are generated and consumed at the same time, limiting quality control. During high demand, it is impossible to produce stable goods due to fluctuating demand. Because of the high level of interaction between the service provider and the guest, quality accuracy is dependent on the ability and performance of the service provider at the time of the exchange. A guest can receive excellent service one day and mediocre service the next from the same individual. In the case of mediocre operation, the service staff may not have been feeling well or may have had an emotional problem. Service variability is often caused by a lack of communication and a wide range of guest preferences.

Perishability: service cannot be stored. An English center with the capacity of 10 rooms that occupied 07 rooms for 07 classes for a particular 72-hour course cannot inventory 3 unused rooms and then save 13 rooms in total for the next course. Revenue lost from not fulfilling those 03 rooms is gone forever. Due to service perishability, English centers would not refund the deposit if students fail to attend classes during the registered course; or airlines and some hotels charge guests holding guaranteed reservations when they do not show up.

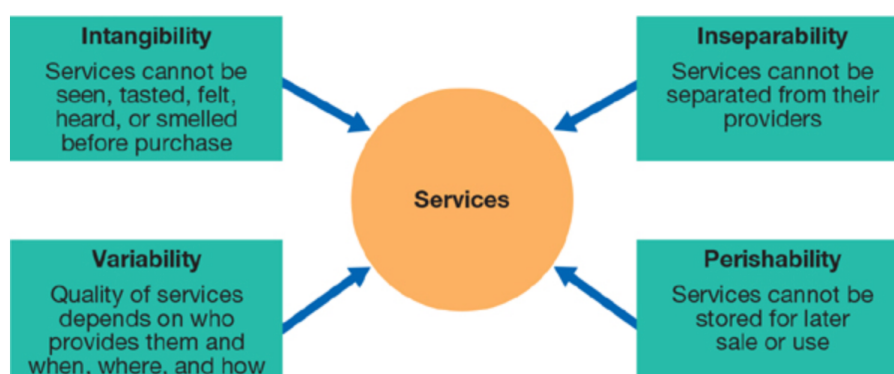


Figure 2. Four service characteristics (Kotler et al. 2017, 37)

4 SERVICE QUALITY

4.1 Gaps in service quality

It is a complex job with many different strategies, skills and tasks to produce an effective service marketing. And it is much harder to approach this complicated issue in an ordered structure. However, the gaps model of service quality provides a perfect view of services in a structured, and integrated way (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 35). It is also the way to measure customer satisfaction by focusing on the differences between customer expectations and performance perceptions (Hernon, Dugan, & Matthews 2013, 83).

As figure 3 shows, there are two main separate parts written in capitals: CUSTOMER and COMPANY (or also PROVIDER), therefore there are *customer gap* and *provider gap*.

The *customer gap* is the difference between customer expectations and perceptions. Customer expectations are standards or reference points that customers usually bring into experiencing services whereas customer perceptions are subjective evaluation of actual service experiences (Zeithaml & al. 2017, 35). And, the expected service is shaped by word-of-mouth communication, personal needs and past or current experiences. (Hernon, Dugan, and Matthews 2013, 84) as well as the marketer-controlled factors like pricing, advertising, and sales promises (Zeithaml & al. 2017, 35). Closing this gap is critical to delivering quality service as well as to the competitiveness of organizations. Therefore, a clear comprehension of customers is the must at first.

In order to close the customer gap, the gaps model also proposes that four other gaps belonging to the *provider gap* need to be closed. These gaps include:

Gap 1: The listening gap

Gap 2: The service design and standards gap

Gap 3: The service performance gap

Gap 4: The communication gap

Gap 1 – the listening gap – refers to the difference between customer expectations of service and company understanding of those expectations. It causes the customers' expectations are not met since most service providers lack a proper understanding about exactly what customers want. This gap can be closed by improving customer research and increasing interactions between service managers and customers.

Gap 2 – the service design and standards gap – highlights the difference between company understanding about customer expectations and the development of customer-driven service designs and standards because it is not easy to translate customer expectations into service quality specifications that employees can comprehend and proceed properly. One of the most essential ways to prevent this gap is to build services that are neither oversimplified, incomplete, or subjective. Furthermore, technological advancements and improvements are assisting in decreasing this gap.

Gap 3 – the service performance gap – reflects the difference between the development of customer-driven service standards and the actual service performance by company employees. This is due to a variety of reasons including customers and company management conflict, poor employee selection, inadequate technology, lack of teamwork. Closing this gap by making it easy for employees to recognize the value of their duties, offering technical training, training interpersonal skills for employees to deal with difficult customers, encouraging teamwork and ensuring that services meet the standards of services.

Gap 4 – the communication gap – shows the difference between actual service delivery and the service provider's external communication. This occurs for several reasons like overpromising in advertising or personal selling, inadequate coordination between operations and marketing, and differences in policies and procedures across service outlets. Narrowing this gap by effectively integrating services marketing communications.

The key to closing the customer gap is to close provider gaps 1 to 4 and keep them closed (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 35-45)

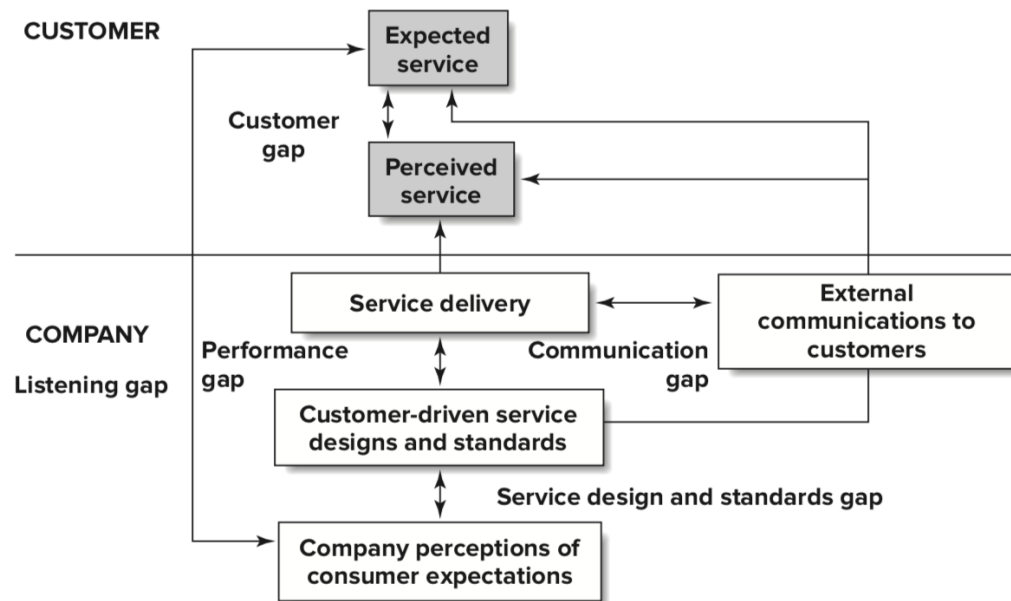


Figure 3. Gaps model of service quality (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 45)

4.2 Determinants of service quality

Based on the service-quality model, researchers identified five determinants of service quality, in descending order of importance:

1. Reliability – The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
2. Responsiveness – The willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
3. Assurance – The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
4. Empathy – the provision of caring, individualized attention to customers.
5. Tangibles – The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, staff, and communication materials.

(Kotler & Keller 2016, 442)

Table 1. Determinants of service quality (Kotler & Keller 2016, 442)

Reliability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing service as promised • Dependability in handling customers' service problems • Performing services right the first time • Providing services at the promised time • Maintaining error-free records • Employees who have the knowledge to answer customer questions 	Empathy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving customers individual attention • Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion • Having the customer's best interests at heart • Employees who understand the needs of their customers • Convenient business hours
Responsiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping customer informed as to when services will be performed • Prompt service to customers • Willingness to help customers • Readiness to respond to customers' requests 	Tangibles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern equipment • Visually appealing facilities • Employees who have a neat, professional appearance • Visually appealing materials associated with the service
Assurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees who instill confidence in customers • Making customers feel safe in their transactions • Employees who are consistently courteous 	

Source: A. Parasuraman, Valerie A. Zeithaml, and Leonard L. Berry, "A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implications for Future Research," *Journal of Marketing* (Fall 1985), pp. 41–50. Reprinted by permission of the American Marketing Association.

4.3 Service quality vs customer satisfaction

Table 2. Customer judgement of service quality and customer satisfaction (Williams & Buswell 2003, 60)

Service quality	Customer satisfaction
Evaluated using specific clues	Evaluated more holistic
Based on perceptions of 'excellence'	Based on needs
Cognitive	Emotional

Service quality and customer satisfaction have their own research background and theory development, it seems to be considerable debate between those concepts.

Crompton and Mackay (1989) stated "Satisfaction is a psychological outcome emerging from an experience, whereas service quality is concerned with the attributes of the service itself.". Gilmore (2003, 27) mentioned "Service quality is defined in the literature as the ability of an organization to meet or exceed customer expectations. Customer expectations have been defined as the desires or wants of consumers or what they feel a service provider should offer.". Oliver (1997) showed the differences in how customer judge service quality and customer satisfaction. (Williams & Buswell 2003, 59)

5 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

5.1 What is customer satisfaction

There is a variety of different definitions of customer satisfaction. Richard L. Oliver in his book of satisfaction, he notes that satisfaction comes from the Latin *satis* meaning enough and *facere* meaning to do or make. Hence, satisfying products and services have the ability to offer what is desired to the point of sufficiency. Moreover, the related Latin words *satiatio* and *satiety* also indicate the point that satisfaction implies a filling or fulfilment (2015, 6).

” Satisfaction is the consumer’s fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product/service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under- or overfulfillment ” (Oliver 2015, 8)

According to Peter Herson, Robert E. Dugan and Joseph R. Matthews (2013, 83) customer satisfaction is the attitude that consumers have toward a company, its goods, or services when their expectations have been fulfilled or surpassed during a lifetime of use or their experience with that company, its goods, or services on a specific occasion.

5.2 The importance of customer satisfaction

Sheldon D. Goldstein (2009, 25) also quoted a saying from W. Edwards Deming “profit in business comes from repeat customers, customers that boast about your product or service, and that bring friends with them”. It shows how important a satisfied customer can be to a company. If a consumer is happy with the goods or services of an organization, first he or she becomes a regular one and moreover he or she will give positive comments about the products and services to his friends and bring them to the organization. It helps generate company profits.

Ajit Rao and Subhash Chandra noted that (2012, 7-8) that customer satisfaction scores or service quality is a leading indicator of business outcomes. The American Customer

Satisfaction Index (ACSI) illustrated the vital connection between customer satisfaction and business results quite well (Fornell, 2009). Therefore, it is simply to believe that customer satisfaction is crucial in building sustainable loyalty and profits for an organization.

The most fundamental foundation of customer engagement is customer satisfaction or service efficiency. Any loyalty of customer that is built in the absence of good service quality is fleeting and cannot be sustained in the long run. Customer loyalty can be achieved by cutting prices, promoting, and offering rewards. However, building deep loyalty and sustaining it over time necessitates high service consistency. (Ajit & Subhash 2012, 11-12)

Moreover, customer satisfaction is a direct serious factor in customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction is believed to be a feeling, but customer loyalty is a behaviour. This is measured by satisfaction, willingness to repurchase, and willingness to recommend to others. On the other hand, when consumers are confident to stand behind the reference of recommending the service or products to their relatives based on prior experience which would be a response about their satisfaction and introduce a future relationship. (Goldstein 2009, 28-29)

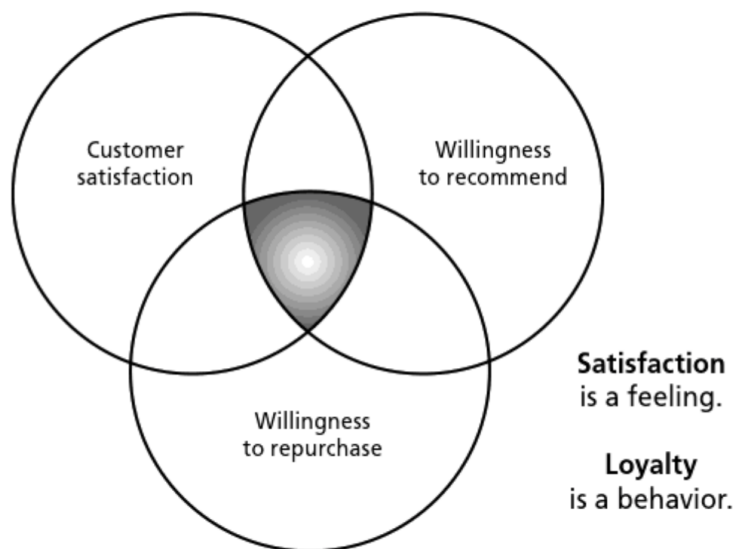


Figure 4. Customer Loyalty (Goldstein 2009, 28)

5.3 Customer expectations of service

Service expectations are reference points against which service delivery is compared. The level of expectations can vary widely depending on the reference point the customer holds. Most people have an intuitive sense of what expectations are, although a clear definition of expectations is needed to comprehend, measure, and manage them.

The figure below indicates possible levels of customer expectation in a particular case of planning to go to a restaurant. On the left side, there are different types of levels of expectations from top to bottom. On the right side of the figure, there are transcriptions of the type of expectation at each certain point level (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 52). The figure makes it simple to understand different forms of customer expectations.

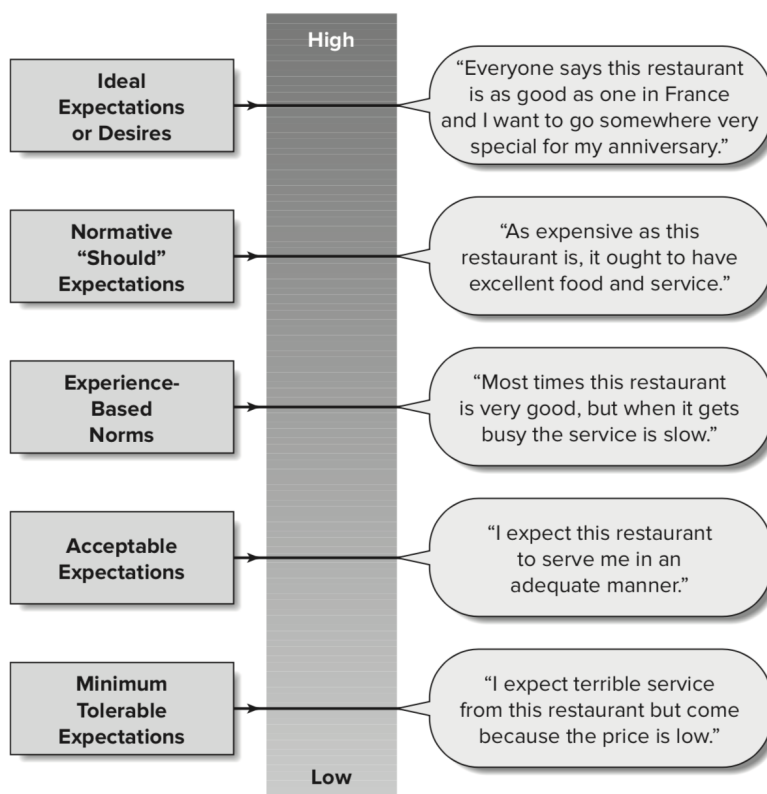


Figure 5. Possible levels of customer expectation (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 52)

In terms of types of expectations, the two standards of expectation as the upper and lower boundaries for customer expectations are the *desired service* (what customers consider as the level of “can be” and “should be”) and *adequate service* (the minimum degree of service can be accepted by customers). In addition, the gap between two standard boundaries is named the *zone of tolerance* within which services that are performed will be accepted by customers. And if the service is above the desired service level, customers will be happy; however, customers will be disappointed since the performance is below the adequate level of service expectation (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler 2017, 53-56)



Figure 6. The zone of tolerance (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 56)

5.4 Customer segmentation using relationship strength and disposition strength

In order to have a quick understanding of what is happening to the customers, one helpful method is to segment customers using relationship strength and loyalty ratings from a survey provided by customer satisfaction measurement. It is called customer segmentation based on relationship strength and disposition strength.

- Customers with strong relationship strength and satisfaction are obviously important assets or “Green” for the service provider, and this is the category that any company would prefer to see most often.

- Many companies, on the other hand, would prefer to see a few clients in the low partnership intensity and low satisfaction quadrants. These such segmentations named “Reds” who are a “Liability” for the service provider and are expected to go to another service provider in the near future.
- There is another user group that the service provider should be concerned with. There are consumers who are dissatisfied with their interaction with the service provider but are likely to continue using it. This is the vulnerable or fuzzy underbelly, and these consumers will sour and ruin the satisfied customers by bad mouthing the service provider. They are laying in the Blues.
- Finally, when these consumers are more than pleased, there is a great potential in the category known as rich or (happy customers but may not stay) to get them to not only continue using the service provider but also to use more services. There are "Yellows" - "Greens" are good to go.

There are usually 70 % or so of customers fall into Greens or Reds quarters (Ajit & Subhash 2012, 16-17)

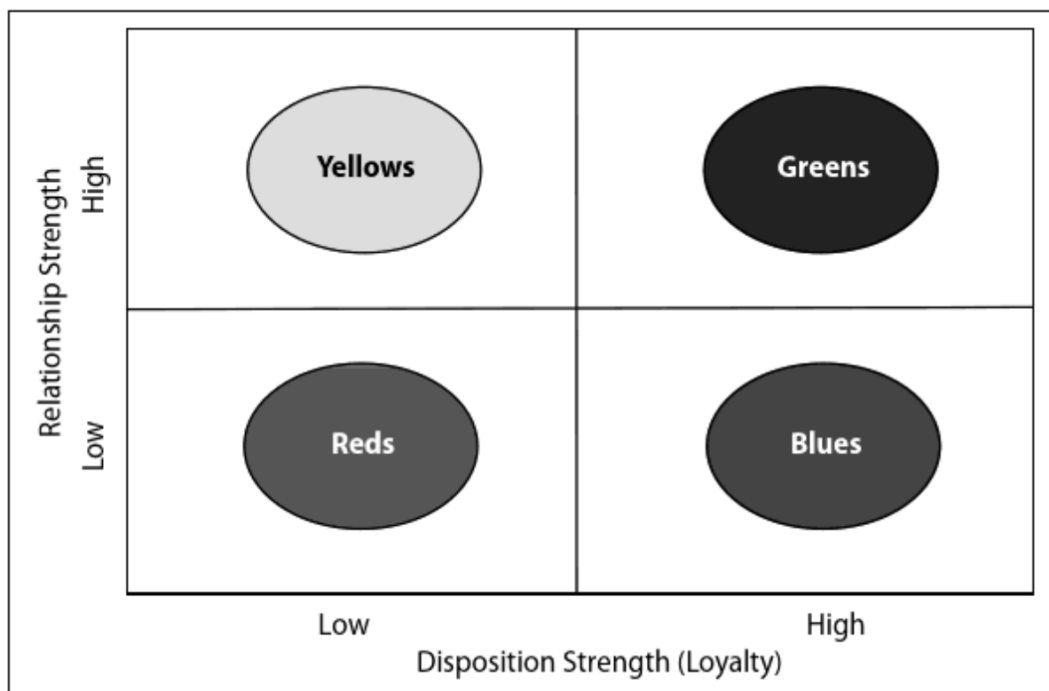


Figure 7. Customer segmentation – Using relationship strength and disposition strength (Ajit & Subhash 2012, 37)

5.5 Factors that determine customer satisfaction

The figure below demonstrates that customer satisfaction is affected by particular product or service features, perceptions of product and service quality, and price. Moreover, personal factors such as customer's emotions and situational factors like family member opinions also affect satisfaction

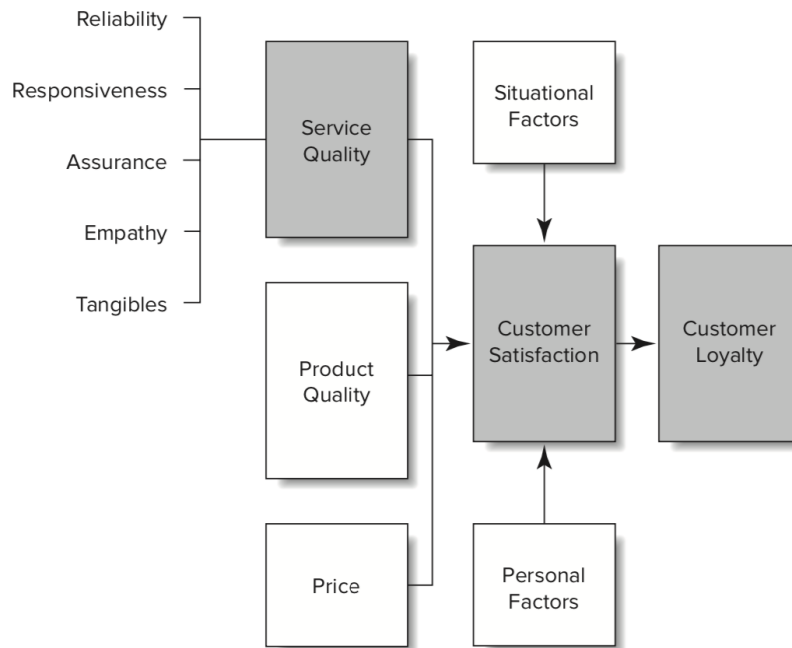


Figure 8. Customer perceptions of quality and customer satisfaction (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 79)

5.5.1 Product and service features

It is obvious that the evaluation of product and service features from customers have a significant effect on customer satisfaction. Those features in service businesses could be excellent and modern facilities, the helpfulness and courtesy of staff, the comfort and privacy, and so on. Therefore, it determines the importance of product and service features toward the satisfaction of customers. (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 81)

5.5.2 Pricing

In terms of price, consumers normally consider pricing as an indicator of the costs of service and the quality of service. When the quality of service is obviously accessible, when brand names prove the reputation of the company, and when the degree of advertising convey the company's belief in the brand, customers may prefer to use those cues instead of price. However, when it is hard to notice the service quality or when it is varied in quality or price within a kind of services, consumers may believe that price is the best indicator of quality.

Service prices must be set carefully since price has a strong influence upon customer expectations of quality. Aside from covering costs or matching competition, the price must be chosen to send the proper quality signal. Customers may have doubts about the service quality if the price is too low. If the price is too high, the customer's expectations may be too difficult to meet in terms of service delivery. (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 453)

5.5.3 Personal factors

Customer emotions which can be stable, pre-existing emotions are able to affect customer satisfaction with products or services. It is not deniable that when people are in good mood, they feel positive about the service they are using. On the contrary they may carry the negative feelings during experiencing the service when they are in bad mood.

Perceptions of equity or fairness is also a possible effect upon customer satisfaction. They ask themselves: have I been treated fairly compared with others? Did other customers get better treatment, better prices, or better-quality service? and so on.

Other people's opinions, feelings and beliefs also play a significant role in customer satisfaction. What family members or co-workers discuss the service, feel about it, use it would affect customer satisfaction. (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler 2017, 81-83)

5.6 Expectations do not change very often, standards do

Customers have always desired and continue to want safe products, delicious food, quick and easy services, positive interactions with employees, and so on. In this regard, standards have not changed significantly, however what has improved is the standards for fulfilling those requirements.

In survey, expectations are typically the statements in the questionnaire that the customer is required to rate. One method for effectively capturing expectations is to ensure that the service provider's promise is well captured in the survey questionnaire's questions or statements.

The gap between expectations and standards is crucial for improving service quality. If one looks at what new demands consumers have, the company will have to wait a long time. However, if the organization tracks how the value of the different requirements changes, they will be able to fulfill those demands effectively and on time. (Ajit & Subhash 2012, 39-42)

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research design

Collis and Hussey (2014, 4) classify research by its purpose into four different types namely exploratory research, descriptive research, analytical research or predictive research. Exploratory and/or descriptive research methods are often used by undergraduate students. Researchers at the postgraduate or doctoral level is much more likely to be theoretical or predictive. The table below depicts the grouping of study in increasing order of complexity, as well as examples.

Table 3. Examples of research classified by purpose (Collis & Hussey 2014, 4)

Type of research	Example
Exploratory	An interview survey among clerical staff in a particular office, department, company, group of companies, industry, region, and so on, to find out what motivates them to increase their productivity (that is, to see if a research problem can be formulated).
Descriptive	A description of how the selected clerical staff are rewarded and what measures are used to record their productivity levels.
Analytical	An analysis of any relationships between the rewards given to the clerical staff and their productivity levels.
Predictive	A forecast of which variable(s) should be changed in order to bring about a change in the productivity levels of clerical staff.

Exploratory research is carried out on a research topic or problem where there are few or no previous studies to which the researcher may apply for evidence about the issue or problem. Rather than testing or proving a hypothesis, the aim of this form of research is to search for patterns, ideas or hypotheses. The aim of exploratory analysis is to focus on achieving insights and familiarity with the subject matter in preparation for more serious study later. (Collis & Hussey 2014, 4)

Descriptive research is used to explain phenomena as they now exist. It is used to classify and gather information about the characteristics of a certain problem or issue. Descriptive research investigates a topic more thoroughly than exploratory research when it seeks to identify and explain the characteristics of the relevant problems. (Collis & Hussey 2014, 4)

Analytical or explanatory research is a continuation of descriptive research. The researcher moves beyond simply defining the characteristics to analyze and explain whether or how the phenomenon under study occurs. Thus, explanatory research seeks to comprehend phenomena by discovering and measuring casual relations between them. (Collis & Hussey 2014, 4)

Predictive research goes even further than explanatory research. The latter provides an explanation for what is occurring in a certain situation, while the former predicts the probability of a likelihood of a similar situation happening elsewhere. Predictive research focuses on generalizing from analysis by forecasting specific phenomena based on hypothesized, general relationships. (Collis & Hussey 2014, 4)

This thesis discusses how current clients are satisfied with the service at Master IELTS Training Center, and how possible existing problems can be identified via a survey. As a result, descriptive analysis is the research type that the author would like to execute in the study.

6.2 Research method

The quantitative approach is a method that involves numerical data as well as replies on numerical evidence to draw conclusions. Moreover, the quantitative data also help establishing baselines for performance and compare performance year to year. (Goldstein 2009, 8)

The quantitative method can be sub-divided into inferential, experimental, and simulation approaches. In this case company - Master IELTS Training Center, the inferential way is the chosen method. The aim of the inferential approach to analysis is to provide a database from which to infer population characteristics or relationships of population. This typically refers to survey studies, in which a sample of a population is examined (questioned or observed) to determine its characteristics, and it is then assumed that the whole population has the same characteristics. (Kothari 2004, 5)

The main purpose of this thesis is to collect information of customer satisfaction levels from the case study in order to find out the existing elements that need to be improved. In this case company, the target customer group would be students who enrol the IELTS courses at the center (Master IELTS Training Center); therefore, it could be a large number of a group of people. That is the reason why the author adopted a quantitative method in this thesis. The table below demonstrates the attributes of the quantitative approach in detail.

Table 4. Guidelines for using quantitative research methodologies (Goldstein 2009, 10)

Quantitative research methods are appropriate when decision makers or researchers are:

- Validating or answering a business problem or opportunity situation or information requirements.
 - Obtaining detailed descriptions or conclusive insights into the motivation, emotional, attitudinal, and personality factors that influence marketplace behaviors.
 - Testing theories and models to explain marketplace behaviors or relationships between two or more marketing constructs.
 - Testing and assessing the reliability and validity of scale measurements for investigating specific market factors, consumer qualities (for example, attitudes, emotional feelings, preferences, beliefs, perceptions), and behavioral outcomes.
 - Assessing the effectiveness of their marketing strategies on actual marketplace behaviors.
 - Interested in new-product/service development or repositioning current products or service images.
 - Segmenting and/or comparing large or small differences in markets, new products, services, or evaluation and repositioning of current products or service images.
-

6.3 Population and sample

In order to obtain answers or solutions to certain research questions or objectives, researchers must conduct evaluations in their research projects. It is normally difficult to collect and analyse data from every potential case or group member, which is called census. Hence, researchers usually select data from a smaller group of people due to the limitation of time, money and often access. And the subgroup is known as sample. Some research questions will require sample data that can allow people to generalize statistically about all the cases from which the sample has been selected. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill 2019, 294)

Population is the whole set of cases from which a sample is. In sampling techniques, the term ‘population’ is not used in its normal meaning, it generally refers as the total number of members of the study object including individuals, organizations, manufacturers, items, or events. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill 2019, 294)

Becker (1998) noted that when selecting a sample to study, it should represent the population from which it is taken in a way that is meaningful and which we can justify

in relation to answering our research question and meeting our objectives (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill 2015, 294). In this case company, the population is all students who are studying that Master IELTS Training Center and sample is a large group of students. However, owing to the serious effect of Covid 19 pandemic at the present time, which is a huge challenge to collect data in both online and offline method, the author was trying to reach as many respondents as possible. It was expected to access from 60% to 80% of the population.

6.4 Making the questionnaire

Questionnaires are typically not suitable for exploratory or other research that need a high number of open-ended questions. As a result, questionnaires are typically applied in descriptive or explanatory research. Descriptive research, which employs attitude and opinion questionnaires, allows researchers to identify and explain the variety in many phenomena. Questionnaires may be optimized by carefully designing individual questions, creating a clear and appealing visual presentation, providing a clear explanation of the goal, conducting pilot testing, and carefully planning and executing the delivery and return of completed questionnaires. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill 2019, 505)

In this case of company, the questionnaire was made with the cooperation between Master IELTS Training Center and the author to obtain the final survey which could access the objectives of the research that to measure the degree of customer satisfaction and to find out the possible existing problems of the service at Master IELTS. Therefore, the questionnaire was planned to be divided into three parts: customers' background information, service and customer satisfaction measurement, and expectation or suggestion from students at Master IELTS. The questionnaire was designed and approved by the supervisor within one month. Then, the attempt of conducting the survey lasted from the middle of August to the end of September using Google form via the social media platforms and chat rooms of Master IELTS.

To ensure the validity as well as the quality of the research, the design of the questionnaires was carefully considered in this thesis. Each question was logically and technically linked to the key research questions. In terms of the reliability of this research, all of the data was gathered from a reputable source that received all of the information and input from students at Master IELTS Training Center, and a reasonably tight link between the research results and research questions were established through regular literature analysis.

6.5 Data collection procedure

The students at the center are usually young adults and teenagers who are planning to enter the IELTS exams for their work and studies purposes. The author was permitted to conduct the research of customer satisfaction by Ms. Nguyen Hoang Dung – director of Dai My Viet Educational Company who is also the owner of Master IELTS Training Center. Due to the serious impact of Covid 19 epidemic the number of students dropped from around 200 students to approximately 100 students enrolled in different courses at Master IELTS Training Center at the time the survey was conducted. In this research, the target was to reach about 80 percent out of the total number of the students. The author sent the final questionnaires to academic staff so he or she assisted to collect students' feedbacks and opinions with one and a half month. However, there were 55 responses received meaning the valid response rate was about 55 percent. After obtaining the approval of the thesis supervisor about the valid answers of the survey, the author was able to continue with the phase of data analysis.

6.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are the two most critical standards for evaluating and testing the measurement of research, increasing the precision of research findings, and ensuring data consistency. Thomas and his colleagues also state that “fundamental criteria for judging the quality of measures used in collecting research data: validity and reliability” (Thomas, Nelson & Silverman 2015, 359)

Validity is a critical component of effective research. A piece of study is useless if it is invalid, and both quantitative and qualitative analysis need validity. The degree to which the scores from the test, or instrument, measure what they are meant to measure is referred to as measurement validity. In other words, the validity of a study may be interpreted as an indicator of the strength and precision of the researcher's measurement. (Thomas, Nelson & Silverman 2015, 360)

Reliability, which refers to the accuracy or repeatability of a measurement, is an essential component of validity. If a result is not accurate, it cannot be considered legitimate. In other words, if the test is inconsistent – if repeated trials do not produce the same outcomes – then the test cannot be trusted. (Thomas, Nelson & Silverman 2015, 368)

In terms of validity and reliability of this research, the designed questionnaire and the survey method applied in the thesis helped to fulfill the objectives of the research alongside two main parts: questions measuring the level of customer satisfaction with the IELTS courses, and questions measuring the level of customer satisfaction with the services and facilities at Master IELTS. Moreover, the questions mentioned the details about teaching and learning environment, teaching quality, teaching level as well as the employees' attitude, the service quality, the class size, and the expenses of the service. Therefore, the data collected from the survey assisted both the author and the case company to gain knowledge of the satisfaction degree of customers experiencing services of Master IELTS, which determined the validity of this study. In addition, all responses were answered by the current students learning at Master IELTS under a clear instruction from staff or their home teachers as well as all responses were answered based on their own experiences, which indicated that the survey results were reliable. This means the same result or at least an approximate result of this research would be obtained regardless of who conducted the survey. However, the research would have been more reliable if there had been more students joining the survey.

7 RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

7.1 Case company introduction

Mỹ Việt English language training center was the previous name of the center, which represented Mỹ Việt Educational Ltd., Co, which was founded in 2009 in Bien Hoa city, Dong Nai province, in southern Vietnam. It was a privately held corporation operated by Vietnamese executives who had resided in the United States for more than 15 years. As a result, the corporation was dubbed "Mỹ Việt", with "Mỹ" referring to America and "Việt" referring to Vietnam in Vietnamese. At that time, Mỹ Việt was located at R91 – R92 – R93 Vo Thi Sau Street and the second branch was located at F240 – F241 – F242 Vo Thi Sau Street. My Viet provided children and adults with a variety of English training programs, including General English, English for Kids, English for Teenagers, English for Adults, Business English for organizations in local industrial zones, and foreign programs such as Cambridge (Cambridge English Language Assessment), IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, and so on.

The company's name was changed from My Viet Educational Ltd., Co to Đại Mỹ Việt Educational Co., Ltd. The addition of the word "Đại" in front of "Mỹ Việt" expresses the owners' goal for the firm to grow "larger, better, and stronger" as the term "Đại" itself implies.

Due to the competition of the market getting more and more intense, the brand recognition among the others as well as the company's strength of the programs of English for kids and English for teenagers, in 2016 the case company then changed the name of the language training center to Circle G6 English language training center – but being familiar with customers by the name of "English G6".

The case company relocated to LK25 – 26 – 27 – 28 Vo Thi Sau Street, leaving the original place for other businesses of food and beverage of the company. Circle G6 provides English training programs for kids, teenagers as well as commercial enterprises in the local and surrounding areas.

In order to fulfill the gap of training curriculum for international programs as well as to expand the business scope, Master IELTS came into existence in February 2019,

located at R91 – R92 Vo Thi Sau Street (two blocks of the original building of the company) as the first English language training center focusing on IELTS (International English Language Testing System) training program. Master IELTS's objective is to deliver tailored language training programs that will help its students to become effective English users in an international environment.

7.2 SWOT analysis

The aim is to identify the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Master IELTS. The findings will help the language training center in establishing a practical overview regarding the potential of the resource in terms of its optimization.

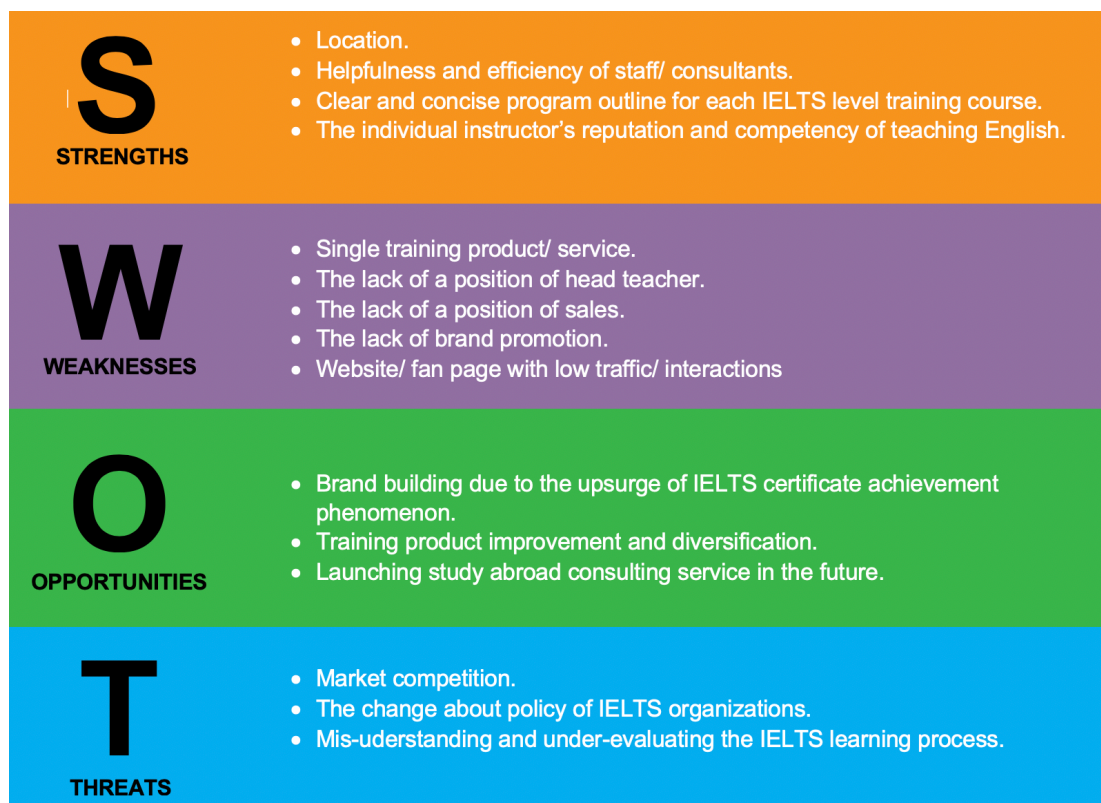


Figure 9. SWOT analysis of Master IELTS (Author of the thesis 2021)

Regarding the internal factors, the case company has an incredibly good business position because it is located on one of the most dynamic and active streets in the city, which is lined by a plenty of commercial stores, offices, several large private schools and an international school, as well as other language training institutions. This location not only serves to attract customers, but it also aids in the creation of brand and

image. Moreover, Master IELTS is always proud of its strong educational team, which includes individual instructors with a reputation and competency of teaching English. Furthermore, a clear and simple program summary for each level of IELTS training course helps clients easily comprehend the services offered by the case company. With the helpfulness and efficiency Master IELTS staff/ consultants usually make customers feel warm, welcomed and satisfied.

However, Master IELTS's single training product is a limitation since it only delivers the IELTS training program and lacks alternative training programs, making it difficult to profit in a competitive market. In terms of the academic department, the company has struggled to find a head teacher in charge of teaching quality control and training program enhancement (this task is currently handled by the center manager, which is a huge effect on his management job). Furthermore, the language center requires personnel who can sell training products to other customers instead of only giving assistance to customers that visit the center. Moreover, branding advertising is another weakness of the case firm, resulting in a very low popular rate of its fan page and website, as a consequence of which not many people are aware of Master IELTS. Finally, a website or a fan page with low traffic is the weakest point of Master IELTS in terms of online activities due to the serious impact of Covid 19 pandemic on conducting offline plans for marketing or advertising the case company's services.

Since 2015, the Ministry of Education and Training has implemented a new policy that exempts high school students with a valid IELTS certificate of 4.0 or higher from the English test in the high school graduation examination. Furthermore, IELTS is becoming increasingly helpful since it is preferred by many colleges throughout the admissions process. In terms of external factors, the increase in demand for IELTS certificate attainment has brought the case company an excellent chance to establish a strong brand as a language school specialized in IELTS training programs. Improving and diversifying the IELTS training products in order to enhance the quality of the company service then attract more customer is the priority of the action plan. This also helps Master IELTS compete other strong competitors in the market. For the long-term goal, the service of study abroad consulting would be a great move and fulfill the educational environment of the case company.

Because Bien Hoa city is a prospective market, more and more language training institutes have increasingly grabbed market share, posing a serious challenge to Master IELTS. Furthermore, changes in the policies of IELTS test organizations like the British Council or IDP would have an impact on the training program. Misunderstanding and under-evaluation of the learning process of a foreign language in general, and the learning process to obtain an IELTS certificate in particular, are the most serious challenges to the language training institution. Learning is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process, but many parents and kids would want to achieve the IELTS certificate in a short period of time without a solid foundation of English.

7.3 General information about customers

Knowing and understanding customer demands is one of the most critical elements to company success. As a result, it is critical for the case company to understand the types of students who are enrolling in courses at Master IELTS in order to give relevant services to diverse clients in the future. Therefore, generic questions regarding consumers' personal information, such as gender, age, educational background, employment, and so on, are listed at the beginning of the questionnaire.

7.3.1 Gender

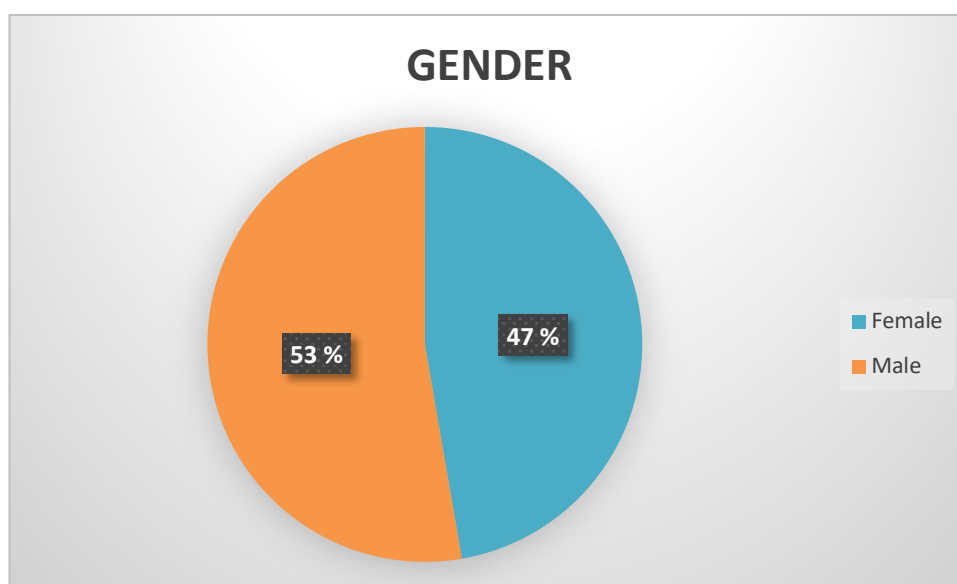


Figure 10. Gender of the survey respondents (N = 55)

The pie chart above shows the ratio between male and female students at Master IELTS. The male students account for 52,7%; and the female students were slightly less than the figure of male, which accounts for 47,3%.

7.3.2 Age

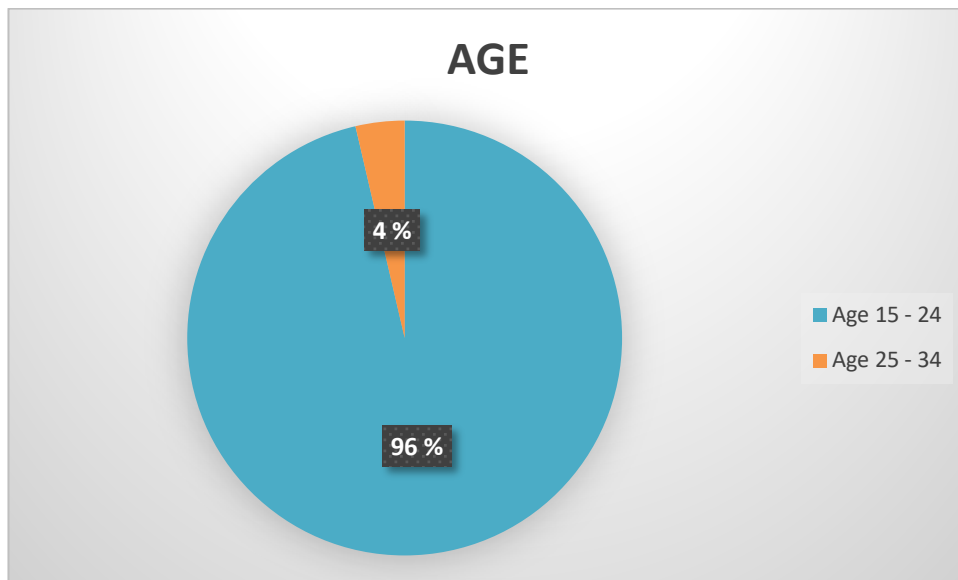


Figure 11. Age groups of the survey respondents (N = 55)

Regarding the age of customers using services at Master IELTS at this moment, a clear majority of respondents were in the 15 – 24 group of age, accounting for 96%. There was a few of them belongs to 25 – 34 age group.

7.3.3 Educational background

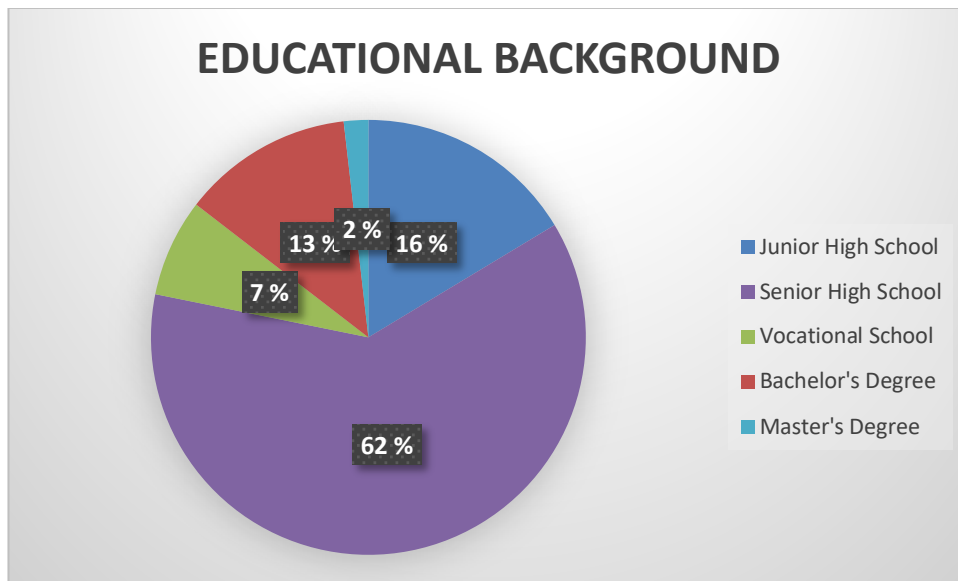


Figure 12. Educational background of the survey respondents (N = 55)

Senior high school in Vietnam is for older children from grades 10 – 12, and this was the biggest group of students with 62%. The following group is children from junior high school, which made up 16%. Customers who are in vocational training program were slightly less than those in group of bachelor's degrees with 13%. The smallest group was the Master' degree with only 1 person. The result reflects that most of students at high school have recently pursued IELTS training program since the IELTS certificate benefits their access to top universities as well as opportunities of studying abroad.

7.3.4 Occupation

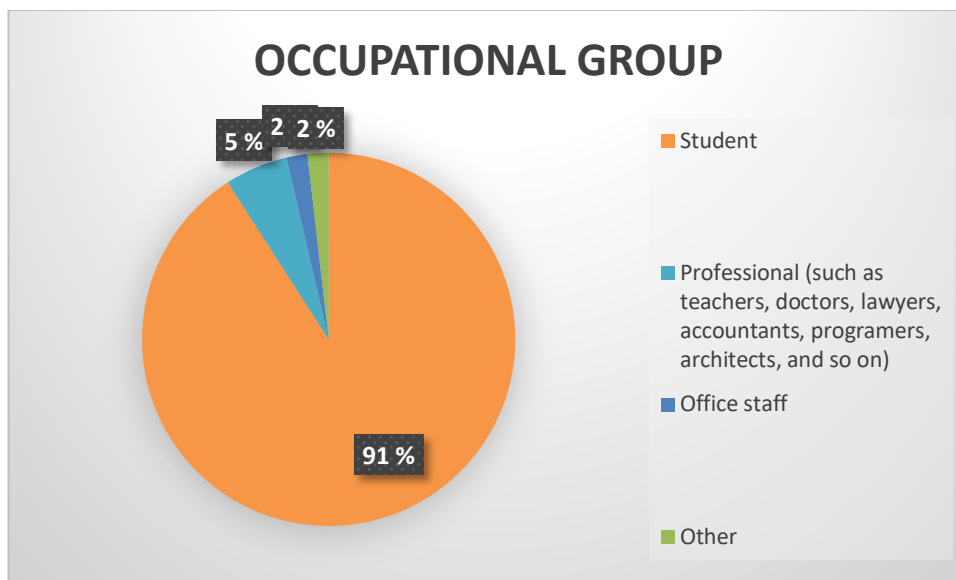


Figure 13. Occupational group of the survey respondents (N = 55)

It is linkable between the chart of age group and occupational group. This obviously can be seen from figure 13 that more than 90% of the customers of Master IELTS were students at high schools, vocational schools and colleges in the city. The rest of the chart belonged to the group of those who are working in a professional industry with more than 5% and the others working in offices.

7.4 Channels that customers find Master IELTS

The purpose of this inquiry was to determine how clients obtain Master IELTS information in order to develop effective strategies for the company's promotion and marketing operations to the right channels in the future. There are three channels: social media (Facebook, website, etc.), friends or acquaintances, and marketing efforts (brochures, leaflets, promotion events).

According to the bar chart below, over half of the respondents learned about Master IELTS through marketing activities, which were the most crucial source for delivering the center's brand to clients. The second most important channel was via a friend or acquaintance, which accounted for around 36% of consumers. Only around 15% of

Master IELTS information came through social media, such as the center's fan page or website, indicating that this was the weakest source of brand promotion.

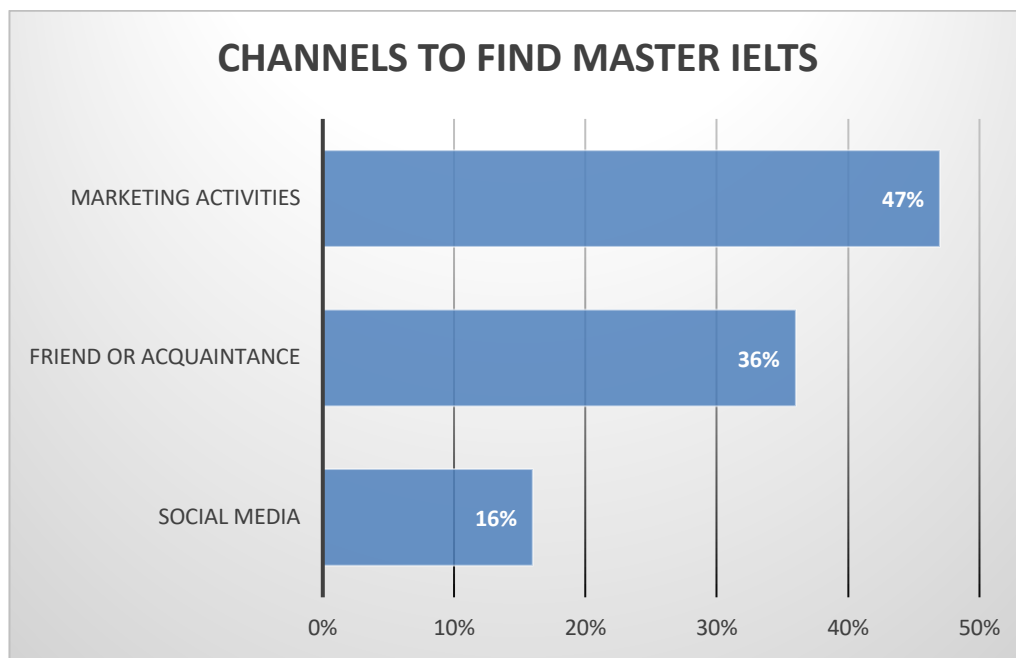


Figure 14. Channels that customers find Master IELTS (N = 55)

7.5 Factors influencing the decisions of customers

“How much the following factors have influenced the decisions of customer to choose Master IELTS?” was the question number 9. This question aimed to identify which one(s) of three factors including “reputation”, “success rate of IELTS achievement” and “teaching quality” would be the most important factor(s) leading to the final decision of customers to choose services of Master IELTS. There were 5 scales for each alternative from 1 means not at all, 2 means little, 3 means neither little nor much, 4 means somewhat and 5 means very much.

7.5.1 Reputation

In terms of reputation, the figure 15 reveals that 27 percent of respondents did not consider a language center's reputation to be a critical element in making selections, and 7 percent did not care about it at all. However, more than half of respondents

considered reputation when selecting Master IELTS to study, with 20% particularly appreciating the company's reputation. Master IELTS was deemed to have a normal reputation in the market by 22% of consumers.

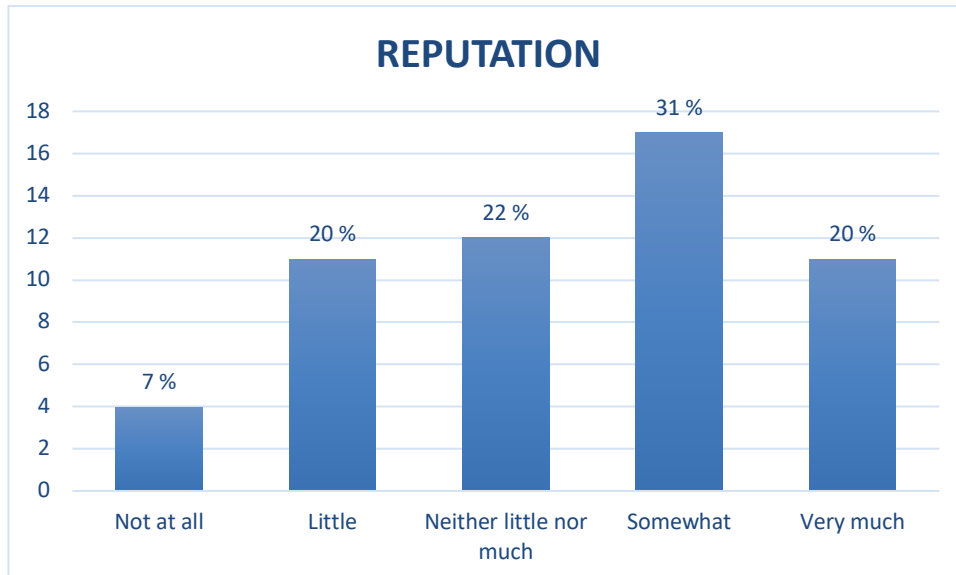


Figure 15. Factor of the reputation of Master IELTS (N = 55)

7.5.2 Success rate of IELTS achievement

When it comes to the success rate of IELTS performance of students at Master IELTS, it was rated the most important element by two-thirds of the total survey respondents, and from which more than 30% of them gave this factor significant attention. Only 7% of respondents considered the success rate of obtaining an IELTS certificate to be an essential issue.

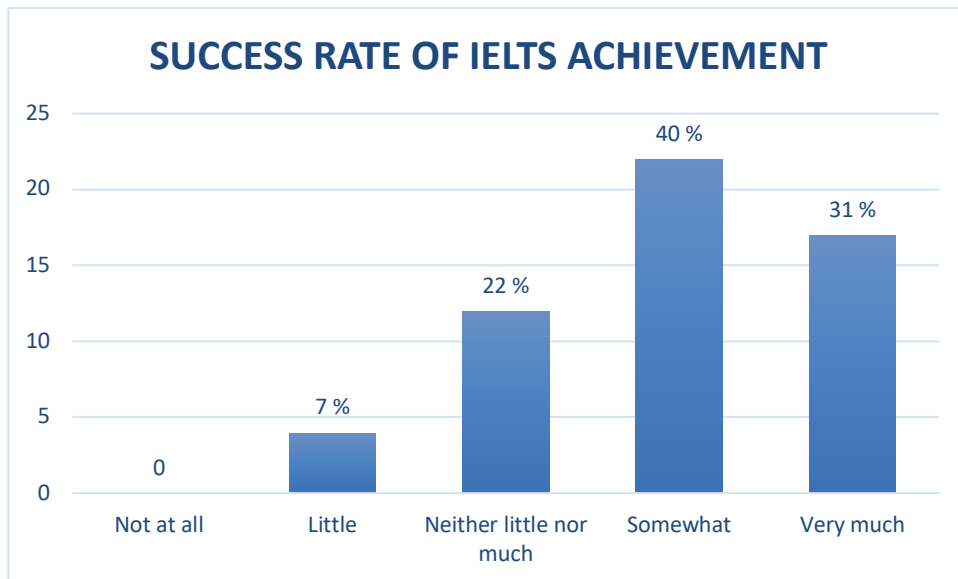


Figure 16. Factor of the success rate of IELTS achievement (N = 55)

7.5.3 Teaching quality

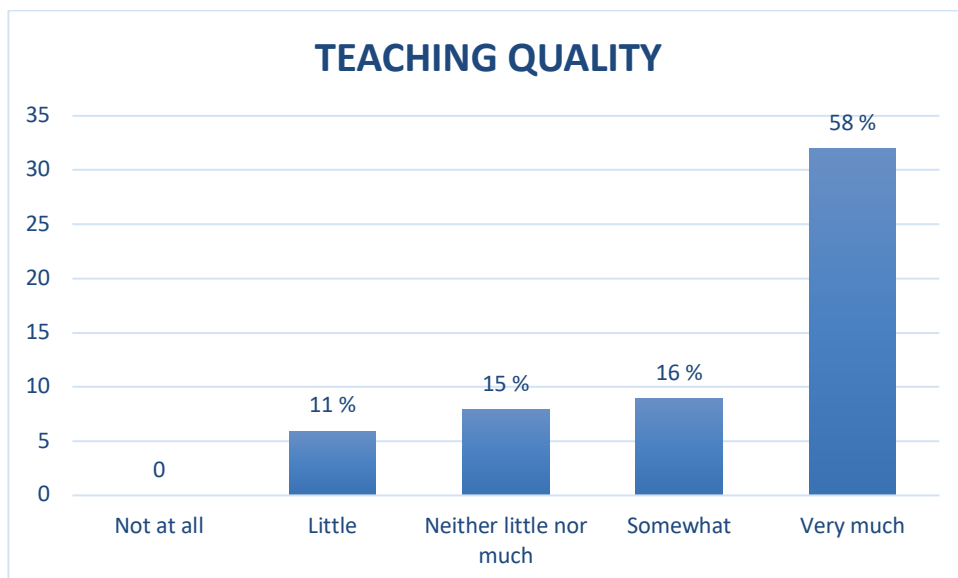


Figure 17. Factor of teaching quality (N = 55)

Regarding teaching quality, almost 75% of the respondents considered how important of this factor is which led them to the final decision of choosing Master IELTS. None of them thought this choice was insignificant in terms of affecting customers' decisions. There were 15% of the responses ended with neutral answers with this issue.

7.6 Customer satisfaction level

7.6.1 Customer satisfaction level with IELTS courses

Question 11 is primarily concerned with the amount of client satisfaction with the training of Master IELTS. The goal of this question is to find out what customers think about five different elements of IELTS courses: teaching and learning environment, qualifications of teaching team, teaching level, teaching materials and class size. There are five scales for each feature, with 1 indicating very dissatisfied, 2 indicating dissatisfied, 3 indicating neutral, 4 indicating satisfied and 5 indicating very satisfied.

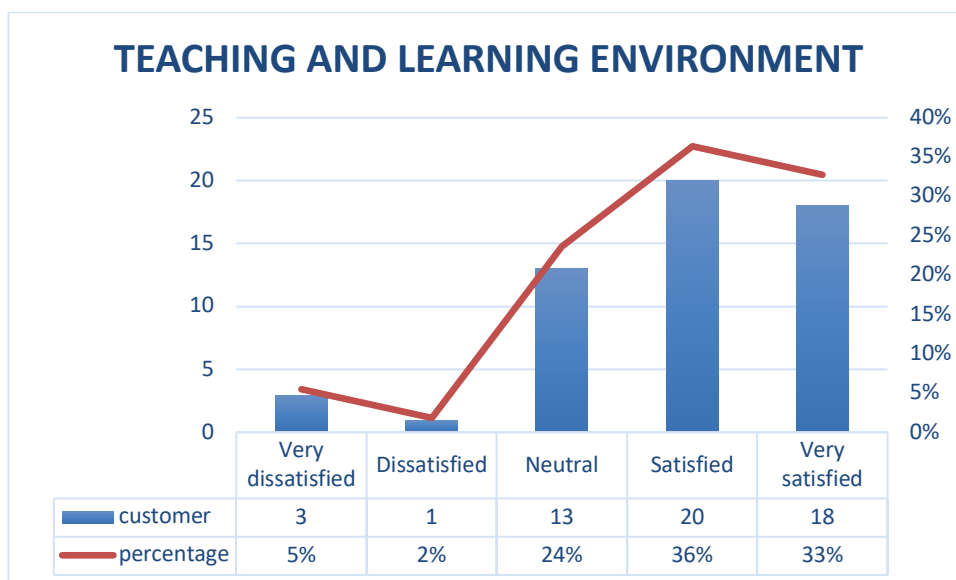


Figure 18. Teaching and learning environment at Master IELTS (N = 55)

The figure 18 shows that about 70 percent of students satisfied with the teaching and learning environment at Master IELTS. This figure was ten times higher than the number of unhappy customers, who accounted for 7 percent of the responses. The number of clients in the neutral category was 24 percent.

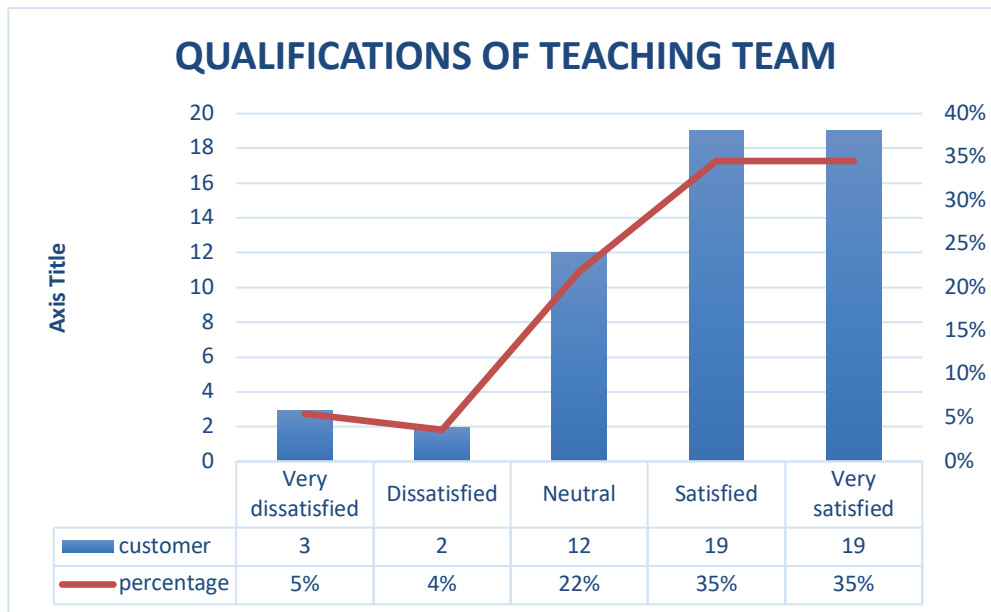


Figure 19. Qualifications of teaching team at Master IELTS (N = 55)

The figure 19 presents that 70 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the qualifications of the teaching team. Only 9% of the customers were not convinced with the teaching team's qualifications. One-fifth of the consumers were unconcerned about this issue.

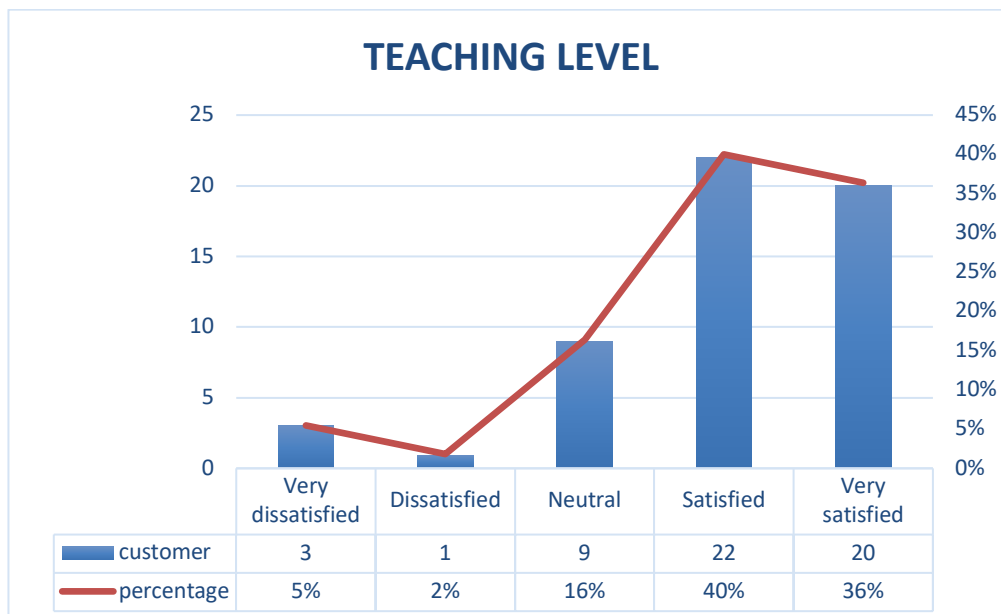


Figure 20. Teaching level at Master IELTS (N = 55)

In terms of teaching level, more than two-thirds of respondents (76%) were satisfied with it. Customers who were unsatisfied accounted for just 7% of the total, while the neutral responses accounted for 16%.

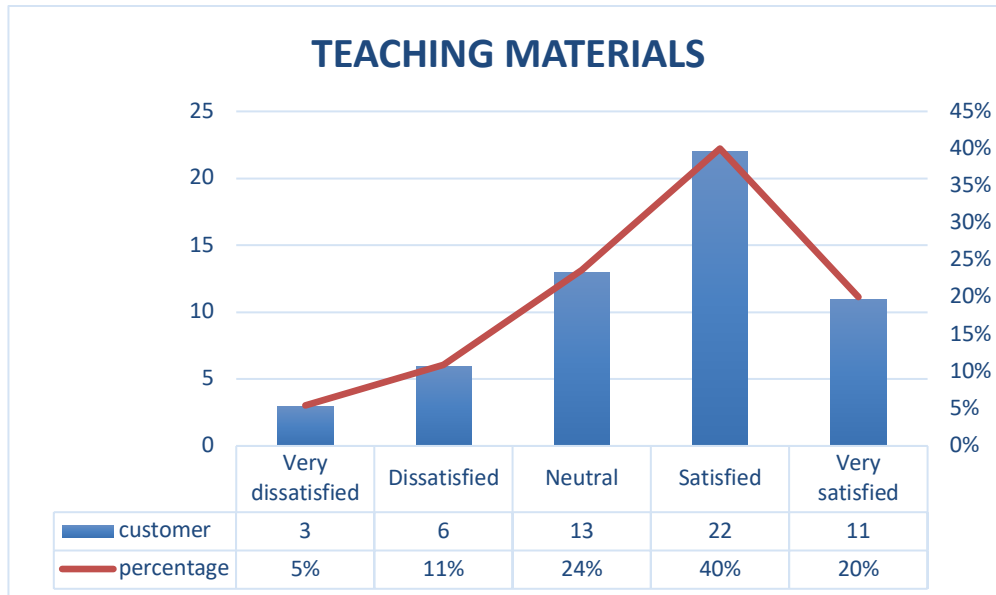


Figure 21. Teaching materials at Master IELTS (N = 55)

As shown in the figure 21, 60% of students were satisfied with the quality of instructional materials such as books, copies, audio files, and so on. 24 percent have no remarks regarding the teaching materials, and 16 percent thought the teaching materials were not up to their expectations. As a consequence, the majority of the students were pleased with the teaching materials.

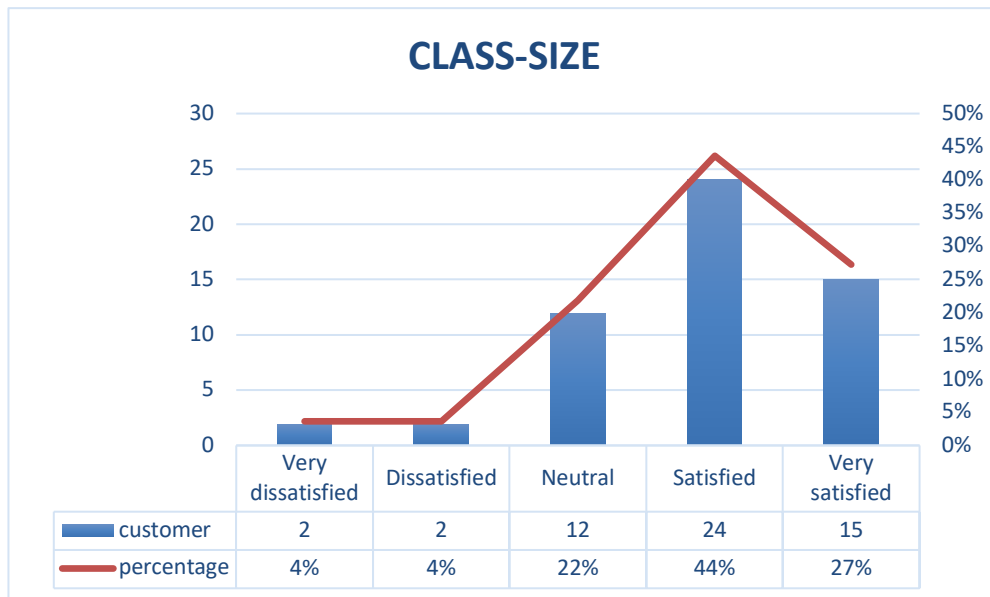


Figure 22. Class-size at Master IELTS (N = 55)

According to the figure 22, the majority of students (more than 70%) were happy with the size of the study group. However, a tiny number of customers, accounting for 8% of the total, were dissatisfied with the class size. And 22% of respondents were unconcerned with the size of the research group. This implies that most of the customers were welcomed and pleased with the class size.

7.6.2 Customer satisfaction level with services and facilities

Question 12 focuses on customer satisfaction with the quality of services and facilities supplied by Master IELTS. Five factors were identified: staff attitude, service quality, service expense, and the quality of classroom facilities such as tables, seats, sound & visual systems, air conditioners, classroom decoration, and so on. Respondents can rate each choice on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating very dissatisfied, 2 indicating dissatisfied, 3 indicating neutral, 4 indicating satisfied and 5 indicating very satisfied.

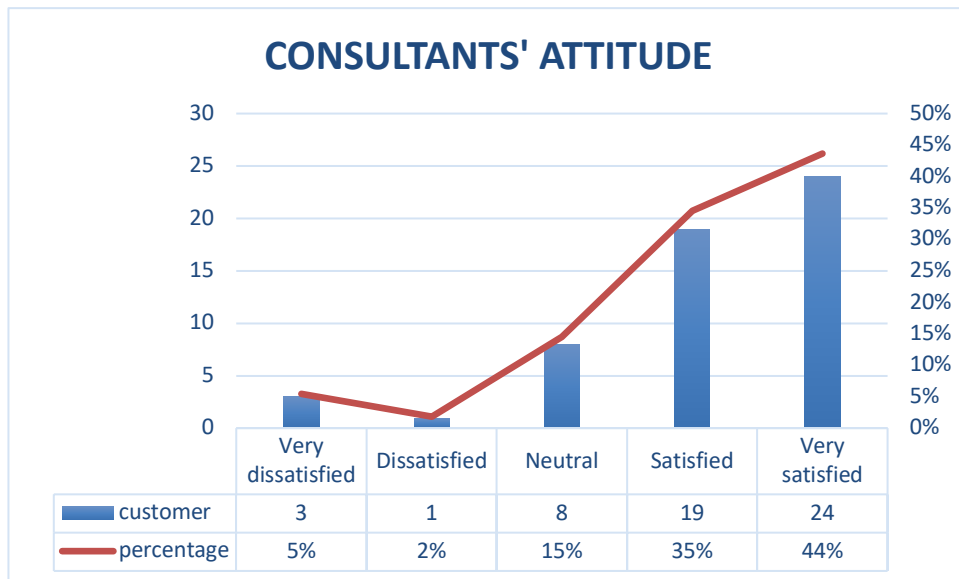


Figure 23. Consultants' attitude at Master IELTS (N = 55)

Figure 23 shows that almost 80% of customers were pleased with the consultants' attitude when experiencing the services at Master IELTS with 44% of them completely satisfied, while 7% of customers were not. And 15 percent of responses had no consideration on this matter. This result reveals how satisfied the customer were toward the friendliness and good behavior of staff during the service process.

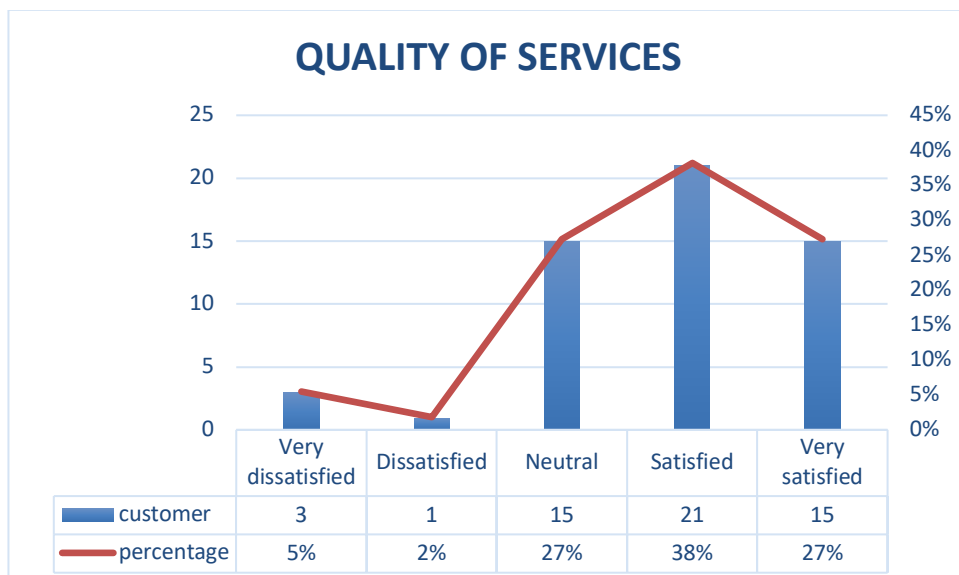


Figure 24. Quality of services at Master IELTS (N = 55)

Regarding to the service quality from the figure 24, 65 percent was the number indicating how much customers satisfied with the quality of services offered by the case company and 7 percent of them were not pleased with it. The neutral answers were 15 which accounted for 27% of the total respondents. It tells the quality of services at Master IELTS is at high average level and improvements are needed to turn 38% of satisfied customers to the 'very satisfied' group and minimum the 'very dissatisfied' group as well.

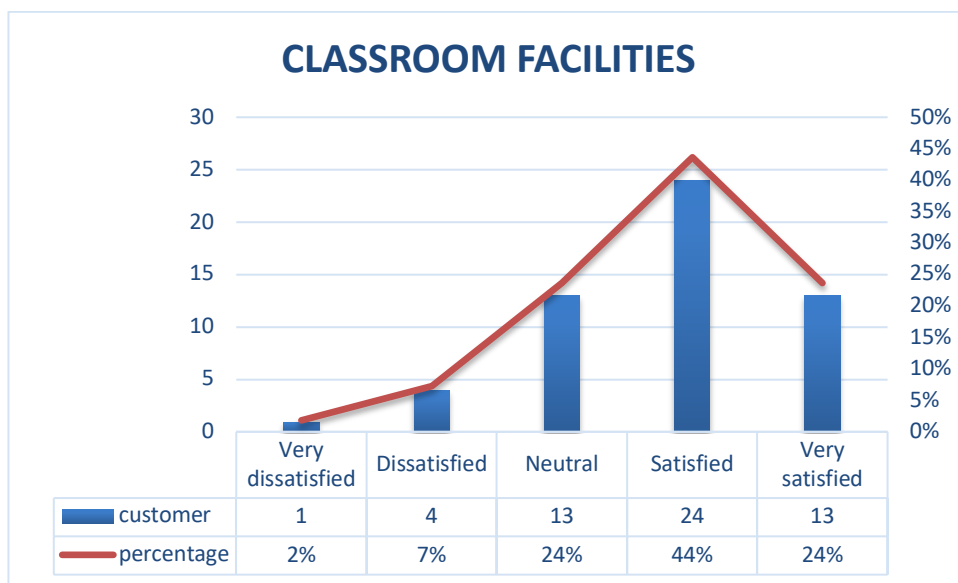


Figure 25. Classroom facilities at Master IELTS (N = 55)

According to figure 25, there has been no severe criticism about classroom facilities, with roughly 65 percent of respondents pleased with the equipment given by the language center and around 10 percent unsatisfied. Twenty-four percent of the responses were neutral.

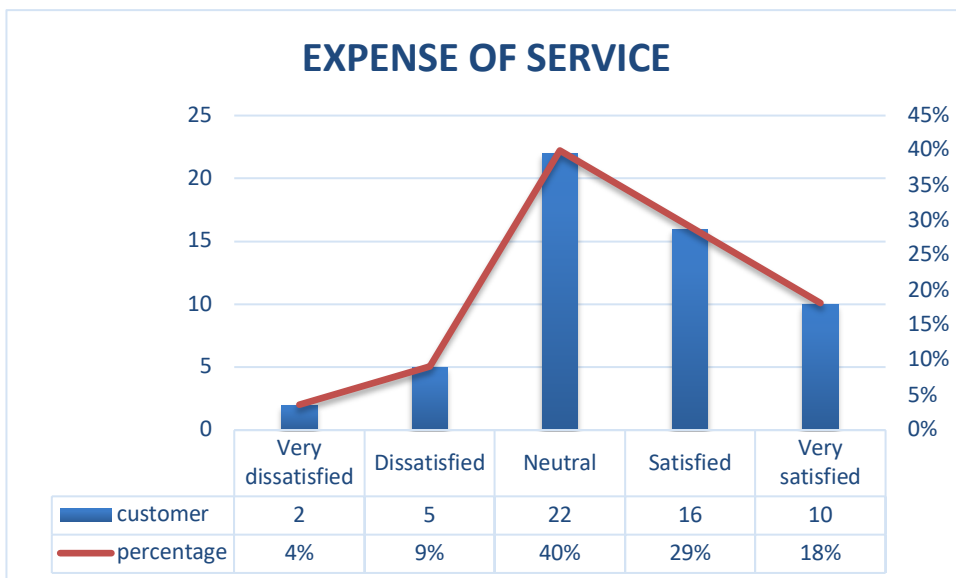


Figure 26. The expense of services at Master IELTS (N = 55)

The figure 26 shows that about half of customers were satisfied with the expense of IELTS courses, while 13 percent of them were unsatisfied. However, there were 40 % of respondents giving neutral answers to this question.

7.7 Additional services

This question investigates the interests of customers in the additional services offered by Master IELTS. There were three alternatives for customers to choose including monthly IELTS mock test, speaking club and study abroad consultant meeting. There were also scales from 1 to 5 with 1 indicating not consider, 2 indicating possibly not consider, 3 indicating neutral, 4 indicating possibly consider, and 5 indicating definitely consider.

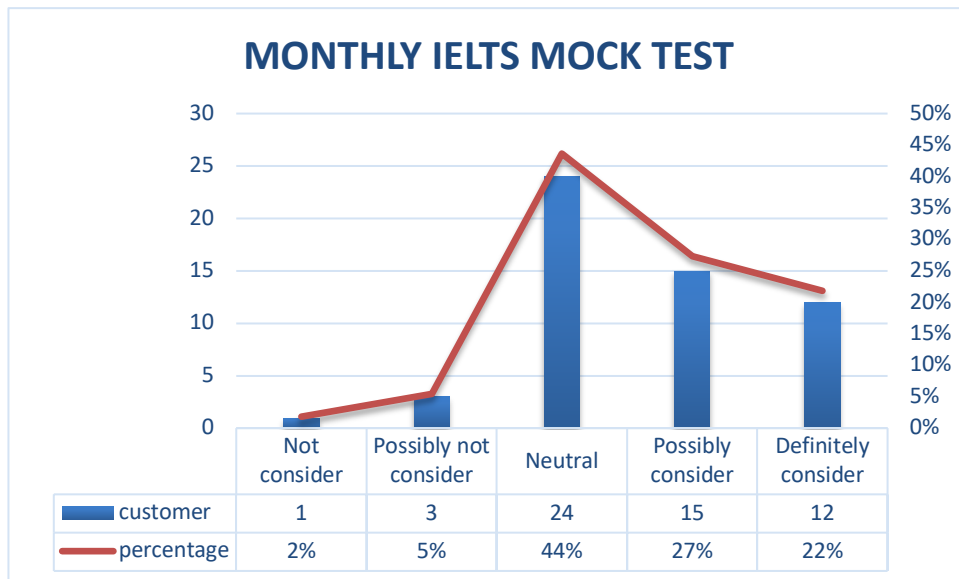


Figure 27. Monthly IELTS mock test (N = 55)

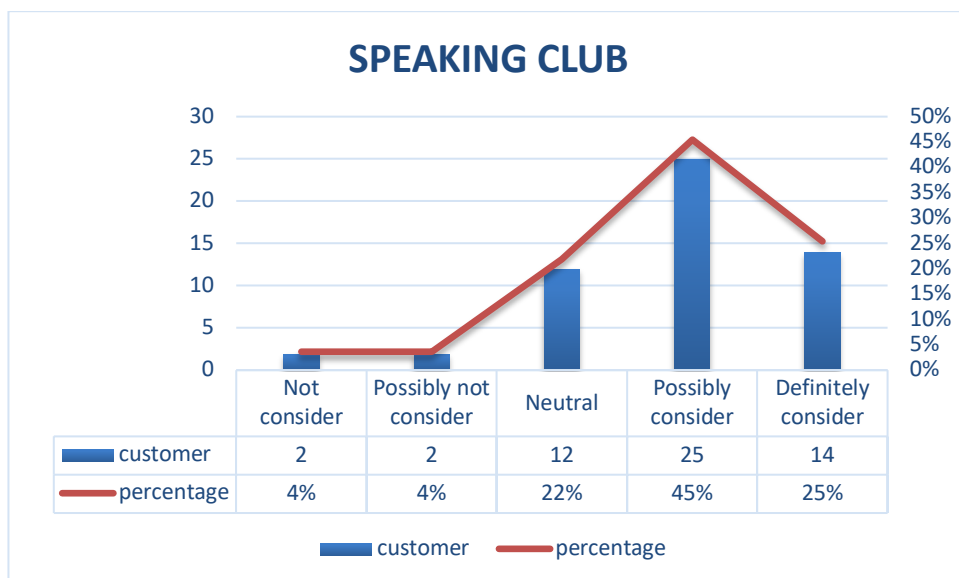


Figure 28. Speaking club (N = 55)

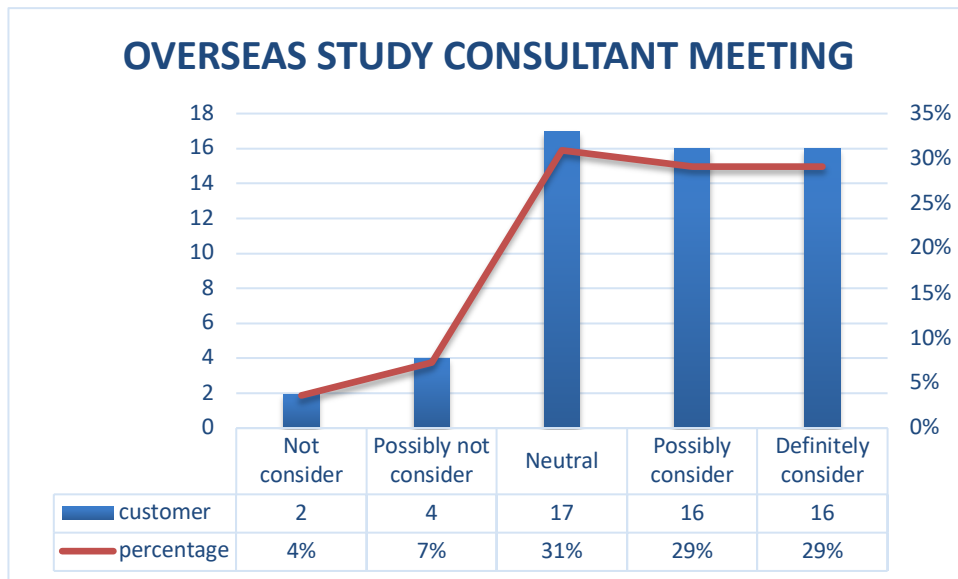


Figure 29. Overseas study consultant meeting (N = 55)

According to the three charts above, speaking club is the most preferred service above the other two services, with 70% of answers. The second most popular option was an abroad study consultant meeting, which accounted for almost 60% of the total. Finally, half of those polled would regard a monthly IELTS sample test as a viable option.

7.8 Recommendation

Recommendation is the question measuring how willing customers are when it comes to whether they would recommend the service of Master IELTS to others. The more customers recommend the service of the case company to other people the more they are satisfied with its services. There are four options of this question namely 'Have recommended several times', 'Have recommended once or twice', 'Not yet, but will recommend', and 'No, will not recommend'.

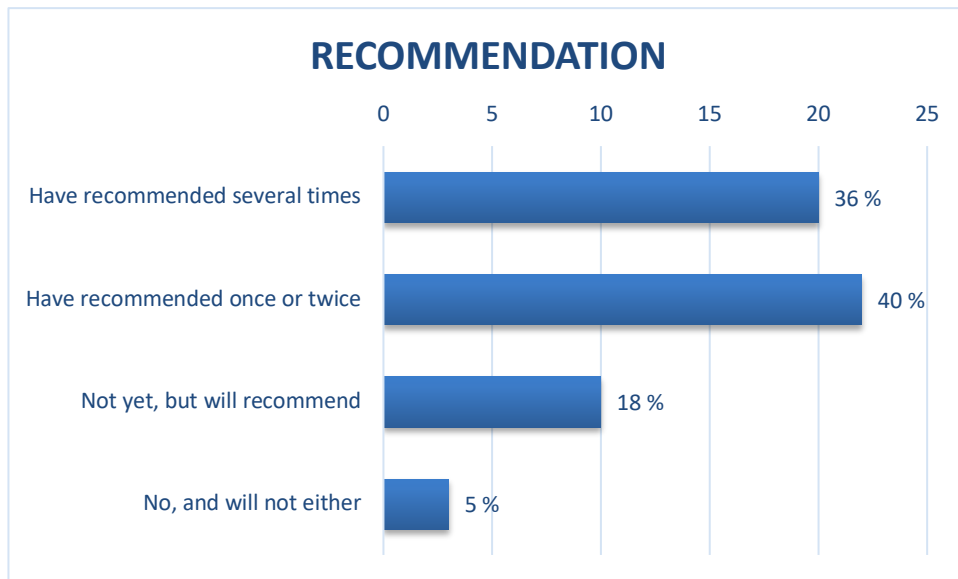


Figure 30. Recommendation (N = 55)

Finally, the results reveal that 36% of customers have referred Master IELTS many times to others and 40% have recommended once or twice, indicating that more than 75% of consumers have recommended the case company's service to others. In addition, 5% of respondents said they would not suggest the language center to friends. According to the chart, the majority of consumers were happy with the service provided by Master IELTS, but the case company has to pay more attention to the group of unsatisfied clients.

8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Summary

Master IELTS was established as the further move in doing business of the owner of the case company in order to expand the business scale as well as to add more options for customers when joining the Dai My Viet company's educational ecosystem. Master IELTS not only offered the author with an interesting job but also with a great opportunity to apply what the author had learned about management and service design at SAMK (Satakunta University of Applied Sciences) in a real-world setting.

Service, service quality and customer satisfaction are the key parts of theory that covered the study, and the theoretical background plays an important role in conducting the practical research of this thesis. Customer research is a crucial job in understanding more about customer's expectations as well as understanding the differences between expected service and perceived service. Moreover, minimizing the distances between customers and providers is the main key to decreasing gaps in service quality, which would become a strong competitiveness if Master IELTS could close these gaps. In addition, customer satisfaction can be assessed by determining whether or not the services meet the consumers' expectations. Customers' expectations are frequently shaped by their previous experiences, the opinions of others, or marketing. As a result, offering care and personalized attention to each customer, as well as keeping commitments, are critical in the service company. Service pricing also influences client expectations and perceptions of service quality, impacting customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, human resources should be the key to any success, and it is not an exception in this case. Building a complete and strong team is the first and necessary job in running a business. Regardless of how advanced the company's tools or software are, projects cannot be completed without the assistance of a team. Master IELTS must cover several crucial jobs such as a head teacher, a salesperson, and, ideally, with the assistance of a marketer and a designer in terms of internet marketing promotion. Furthermore, in such a competitive market of language training providers as Bien Hoa city, building a healthy and friendly working atmosphere is a wonderful way to earn the loyalty of employees and teaching team.

8.2 Conclusions

This thesis was created as part of a customer satisfaction study for Master IELTS. The survey took roughly a month and a half to complete, from the middle of August 2021 to the end of September 2021. This was the first time Master IELTS conducted a detailed survey rather than the typical brief survey at the end of each course. As a result, the author sought to get some basic information from clients while also asking them what they thought of the organization and its services. In general, the case company

received positive feedbacks from most of the respondents of the survey with the following details.

According to a review of the outcomes of customers' background information, typical clients at Master IELTS were males between the ages of 15 and 24, primarily high school and college students. This useful information will assist the case company in improving its service quality in the future to meet the need of those consumer segments.

Regarding the factors influencing decisions of customers to choose Master IELTS's service, teaching quality is the most significant component that most customers consider, followed by the success rate of students getting high band scores on IELTS certifications, and lastly reputation. In other words, the teaching quality would be the primary factor influencing the percentage of students who obtained a high band score on the exam, hence boosting the language center's reputation.

The majority of respondents learn about the language training center via marketing activities or from friends and acquaintances, therefore word-of-mouth appears to be the second most efficient way to convey information in this case. Initially, Master IELTS's customers were primarily students who have finished their training programs at Circle G6. Then, the company's owners would like Master IELTS to become more self-sufficient in terms of customer acquisition. As a result, Master IELTS engaged in several marketing initiatives in schools and universities. This seems to work quite well.

In terms of customer satisfaction level, Master IELTS has provided an excellent teaching and learning environment with a reasonable size of study group as well as high quality teaching level from a passionate and enthusiastic teaching team. This satisfied 70 percent to 80 percent of the total customers. However, consumers were not really satisfied with the training materials, with just 20% of students being truly happy and 40% expressing pleasure with them.

When it comes to the quality of services and facilities, most customers who have visited the language training center have expressed their happiness with the attitude and behavior of the employees at Master IELTS. Aside from that, 65 percent of them were

delighted with the classroom facilities as well as the fast and effective services. However, around 40% of respondents offered neutral replies to the subject of course pricing, indicating that there are still a significant number of clients who are concerned about the cost of services.

In terms of extra services offered by Master IELTS, practically all students prefer speaking clubs or other speaking activities to help them improve their communicative skills. Furthermore, more than 75% of consumers have recommended Master IELTS to friends or family members many times. This proves that the majority of customers are pleased with the services provided by the case company.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The thesis proceeded during the serious impact of Covid 19 epidemic, therefore the author would love to have some recommendations based on the current situation of Vietnam and the local region of Bien Hoa city, Dong Nai province.

Marketing activities would be the main alternative that Master IELTS could reach customers. Moreover, students from high schools and colleges between the age of 15 and 24 are the primary target group of customers that the case company should concentrate its efforts. As a result, marketing activities at local schools and colleges would be prioritized in the marketing department's action plan when the circumstances support offline activities in the near future. However, because of the serious impact of the Covid 19 epidemic, offline advertising activities have been a significant barrier for the case company. As a result, web marketing has been the best solution so far. Although the website and fan page of Master IELTS have a limited number of accesses with customers, delivering messages via those channels is the possible way to interact with customers or customers possibly find more information about Master IELTS or its services through those channels. It is now time to generate more valuable articles and posts about English and IELTS on the website and fan page in order to attract more customers. Furthermore, each class has its own chat room where teachers and students

may discuss and exchange information. In certain circumstances, this is also a wonderful way to engage with consumers and undertake marketing activities.

In terms of customer acquisition during the Covid 19 epidemic, the author would like to recommend a web marketing campaign to help to remain the number of regular students as well as to attract new ones. One-on-one tutorials would be one of the most effective methods to communicate or learn with professors, and no one would turn down such a chance, especially if it was free. A weekly admission campaign with two or three one-on-one free tutorials as a special present during the course for three students who pay for the course initially should be implemented. The outcome will be reported once a week on Sundays until a class of at least 10 students is formed. On one certain day of the week, there will be a timetable with a defined time frame for students to register the one-on-one lesson. With this method, a single teacher may cover this work on just one or two days of a course. Moreover, by asking permission of students and teachers to record some short videos illustrating the one-on-one lesson performances, the case company can use them as marketing contents for publishing on social media to promote and advertise the services of Master IELTS to customers.

Despite the fact that the building's rental and depreciation costs are fixed, there is no usage of classrooms or other facilities, and so on during the lockdown period. In fact, online working and online learning are different from those conducted offline. As a result, the author would like to recommend that the pricing of courses be altered to reflect the current situation and to match consumers' expectations in terms of the cost of services.

When everything returns to normal, the author would like to give a recommendation concerning extra activities. Students anticipate speaking opportunities or other events that will help them improve their communication abilities. As a result, the academic staff must focus on this in order to provide this type of service and diversify Master IELTS offerings.

Concerning the improvement of teaching materials in the absence of a position of a head teacher who plays a significant role in teaching quality control and academic work, the author would like to propose a project of updating teaching materials with the support of the teaching team. Gathering all members of the teaching team, or as

many as possible, to discuss any concerns with teaching books that need to be improved or updated. The tasks will then be carefully organized, with deadlines and milestones to assist manage and achieve the goal successfully. This not only brings members of the teaching team closer together, better understanding each other, and a better understanding of the entire curriculum of the training programs, but it also financially supports the instructors during the difficult period of the Covid 19 outbreak. In other words, this project also helps to create a healthy working environment for all teaching members at Master IELTS as well as to gain the loyalty among the team.

10 FINAL WORDS

During the time I spent working on this thesis, I had a great opportunity to learn more about service quality via the gaps model of service quality and five determinants of service quality as well as to gain more knowledge about customer satisfaction via customer expectations of service and factors that determine customer satisfaction in terms of theoretical background. Moreover, I also learned that measuring the degree of customer satisfaction is a crucial job that service businesses need to perform more frequently to identify the current situation of the firm itself and to understand the expectations of customers thereby carrying out any necessary improvement or adjustment to meet customer's needs.

Master IELTS has founded since 2019, which means the case company is a young and new brand in the market of language training organizations and still in the process of building an operational team as well as improving its services. That was the reason why measuring customer satisfaction had to come first. But, if there had been a chance for me to start over again, I would have made an attempt at identifying or building competitive advantages for Master IELTS. This would have happened in case I had had a supporting team.

However, it is believed that the research and the result itself help the case company to build the first and important database of customers and customer satisfaction. This project serves as a foundation for Master IELTS to conduct customer survey more

frequently and repeatedly in the future, say, once a month or once every two months, to compare the business situation as well as to catch up with customers 'expectations in order to have clues for business plans and then to build a strong brand in the market.

Finally, Master IELTS received the positive outcome regarding to the research result in general. Most of customers fundamentally satisfied with the present status of the case company, especially with the quality of the teaching team and the consultants' attitude. It is strongly suggested that Master IELTS should improve the quality of teaching materials as well as diversify the IELTS training courses such as IELTS Writing and Speaking skills in order to shift a single product or service from the company's weak point to one of its strengths. This is also the first step to form competitive advantages for the case company. Once again, measuring customer satisfaction is the most crucial activity that Master IELTS should conduct more regularly in the future to comprehend customers thereby improving better services.

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APPENDIX 1

Cover letter of customer survey questionnaire

To Whom It May Concern:

It would be great if you spend some time to read this letter.

My name is Vu Do and I am a student at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences in Finland. As my main major is Service Design, I would love to conduct a small project about customer satisfaction measurement for my final thesis. I own Master IELTS and Ms. Nguyen Hoang Dung my gratitude for a permit and support to use Master IELTS as my case company.

I am inviting you to take part in my survey of measuring the level of customer satisfaction with the educational services of Master IELTS. The result collected from the questionnaire will provide an extremely valuable database for improving the customer services of Master IELTS in the future, which also benefits greatly our regular customers as well as our potential customers later.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Yours truly,

Vu Do

Contact information:

Email: nhatvuez@gmail.com

Customer survey questionnaire



CUSTOMER SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

A. GENERAL INFORMATION (Please circle your answer)

1. Gender
 - a. male
 - b. female
 - c. other

2. Age
 - a. under 16?
 - b. 16 – 25
 - c. 26 – 35
 - d. 36 – 45
 - e. over 45

3. Educational background (please circle only the highest education you have)
 - a. Junior High School
 - b. Senior High School
 - c. Vocational School
 - d. Bachelor's Degree
 - e. Master's Degree

4. Occupation
 - a. Student
 - b. Office staff
 - c. Enterprise manager
 - d. Professional (such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, accountants, programmers, architects, and so on)
 - e. Other, please specify

5. Which IELTS test modules are you participating
 - a. Academic
 - b. General Training

6. Reasons for applying IELTS courses
 - a. Overseas study
 - b. Immigration
 - c. Work
 - d. English skills improvement
 - e. Other, please specify

7. Have you participated in any IELTS courses before?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

B. CUSTOMER BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP

8. Where did you find the information about Master IELTS? (Choose all that apply)
 - a. Social media (Facebook, website, and so on)
 - b. Friend or acquaintance
 - c. Marketing activities (brochures, leaflets, promotion events)
 - d. Other, please specify

9. How much have the following factors influenced your decision to choose Master IELTS?

(Please circle the right choice on scale from 1 to 5:

1=not at all 2=little 3=neither little nor much 4=somewhat

5=very much

(Note: Only choose one alternative for each item)

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Reputation of Master IELTS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Success rate of IELTS achievements of students at Master IELTS | | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Teaching quality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Other, please specify | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

10. How long do you plan to study at Master IELTS?
- a. Only one course
 - b. From two to three courses
 - c. 6 months to 12 months
 - d. 12 months to 18 months
 - e. Over 18 months

C. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION MEASUREMENT

11. How satisfied are you with the quality of IELTS courses at Master IELTS?

(Please circle the right choice on scale from 1 to 5:

- 1 = very dissatisfied
- 2 = dissatisfied
- 3 = neutral
- 4 = satisfied
- 5 = very satisfied

(Note: Only choose one alternative for each item)

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Teaching and learning environment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. The qualifications of the teaching team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. The level of teaching | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Qualification of teaching materials
(books and copies) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. The class-size | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. Other, please specify | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

12. How satisfied are you with the quality of the services and facilities at Master IELTS?

(Please circle the right choice on scale from 1 to 5:

- 1 = very dissatisfied
- 2 = dissatisfied
- 3 = neutral
- 4 = satisfied
- 5 = very satisfied

(Note: Only choose one alternative for each item)

a. The friendliness of the staff	1	2	3	4	5
b. The effectiveness/ Fast service	1	2	3	4	5
c. The classroom facilities (such as tables, chairs, sound & visual systems, AC, decorations, and so on)	1	2	3	4	5
d. The price of the IELTS courses	1	2	3	4	5
e. Other, please specify	1	2	3	4	5

13. How satisfied you are with the customer service level of Master IELTS compared to the other centers?

(Please circle the right choice on scale from 1 to 5:

1 = very dissatisfied

2 = dissatisfied

3 = neutral

4 = satisfied

5 = very satisfied

(Note: Only choose one alternative for each item)

a. IELTS Fighters	1	2	3	4	5
b. RES	1	2	3	4	5
c. VMG	1	2	3	4	5
d. VUS	1	2	3	4	5

14. Would you consider trying the following additional services at Master IELTS?

(Please circle the right choice on scale from 1 to 5:

1 = not consider

2 = possibly not consider

3 = neutral

4 = possibly consider

5 = definitely consider

(Note: Only choose one alternative for each item)

a. Monthly IELTS mock test	1	2	3	4	5
b. English speaking clubs	1	2	3	4	5
c. Overseas study consultation meeting	1	2	3	4	5

15. Have you recommended the service of Master IELTS to others?
- a. Have recommended several times
 - b. Have recommended once or twice
 - c. Not yet, but will recommend
 - d. No, and will not either

Finally, we appreciate if you have any comments or suggestions in order to improve our customer service in the future.

Thank you for your cooperation!