Measuring Customer Demand for the Marketing Research Firm: A Study on Bangladesh

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Research organizations are the emerging and very prominent field of business which always had to work hard to occupy a satisfactory position in their customers' mind. In this challenging market place, clear understanding and insight to the dynamics of customers are essential to excel. This research is focused on the factors which customers expects when selecting a research firm in Bangladesh. A quantitative research was used to study the customer expectations on different service quality dimensions. The objective of this study is to examine the expectations of the customers towards the services rendered by research firms. The study has been conducted in Dhaka city of Bangladesh. This study concluded that among multiple reasons clients of research firms emphasizes on quality and amount of experience while selecting a research firm. The study highlights implications for marketers in research industry for more focus on what customers expect and improvement in delivery of service quality.

Field of Research: Service Marketing

1. Introduction

In Bangladesh, the trend of marketing research started in the mid 80s. There were only some companies who used to conduct research in some limited extent. But, the endeavor to step ahead was always there. As a result, within a little period of time, more research firms, including some of world's best research organizations tried to expand their business in this area of the world. They have been successfully operating in the neighbor countries and later, they also became interested in the research industry in Bangladesh. Today, the research field is one of the most prominent fields of services in Bangladesh. Day by day with the increased complications and competition in business is pushing various organizations to depend on the research outcomes of the research firms.

Many researches have has been conducted to understand customer perception or expectations from a core service firm like research firms. But this study specifies the factors that clients or customer mostly expect when selecting a research firm. The objective of this paper is to focus on the level of customer expectation from a research firm and service factors rendered by the research industry in Bangladesh.

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1.1 Problem Statement

This paper provides a brief review of some of the relevant approaches that have been used for the measurement of customer expectation. The problem statements for this research are:

a. To identify the factors that customers focus for service quality of a research firm.
b. To find out the level of customers' expectation of service Quality Value Analysis.
c. To identify the dimension, among the five dimensions of SERVQUALS, that is/are most important for the customers of the research firms.

The problem statement is generated from the consideration that the customers will favor those firms which have more options available. For that purpose the service quality should be improved to an optimum level to retain a loyal customer base. The companies should be careful about customers point of views and evaluate own position accordingly. This type of strategic approach for measuring and managing customer needs and expectations can provide directions for optimizing resources to build and maintain customer loyalty and commitment.

The research questions for this study are:

a. What are the factors of Quality Value Analysis on which customers emphasizes when selecting a research firm?
b. Which dimensions of SERVQUALS is/are most important for the customers?
c. What are the customers' most preferred criteria for selecting a research firm?

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The analysis has been conducted to discover the expectations that the customers have when choosing a service organization like research firm. Our study has been conducted to focus on various tangible and intangible factors of customer expectation. The objectives of this study are:

a. To focus on the factors of Quality Value Analysis on which customers emphasizes when selecting a research firm.
b. To identify which dimensions of SERVQUALS is/are most important for the customers.
c. And, finally, to assess customers' most preferred criteria for selecting a research firm.

1.3 Structure of the Paper

The text is divided into six parts:

Part One, 'Introduction', introduces to the importance of knowing customer expectation from a research firm; as it is a key tool by which customers evaluate the quality of the firm. This enables the company itself to understand the customer's evaluation criterions and they can develop their service quality at the best possible level. The background of the problem was

given briefly in this part; followed by Problem Statement, Objective of the Study of this research.

Part Two, The 'Literature review', has been executed in two phases; it discusses, firstly, about the industry; secondly, the customer expectations and related customer demand measurement possibilities

Part Three, 'Methodology', explains the research design, questionnaire design and the framework for the factors concerning the research

Part Four, 'Data Analysis and Findings', discusses the results of the study. As the result of the study calculated by Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), Regression Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis for calculation, the presentation of data in the findings part is considered easier to understand.

Part Five, 'Conclusion', concludes the research result. In addition, the research result is concluded with the implication for research organizations as well as the limitation of the research.

Part Six, 'References', provide the lists of full bibliographical details.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Industry

Bangladesh entered to the arena of marketing research during the mid 80s. There were only some companies who used to conduct research in some limited extent. But, the endeavor to step ahead was always there. MRCB was the first ever company to start operating in this country. Within a little period of time, more research firms, including some of world's best research organizations tried to expand their business in this area of the world. They have been successfully operating in the neighbor countries and later, they also became interested in the research industry in Bangladesh. After some time, MRCB was merged with the Indian company MODE and became the first ever multinational research firm in Bangladesh. In recent time there are many research firms are actively working in Bangladesh, such as: SOMRA Ltd, ORG Quest Research Ltd, Nielsen Company Bangladesh Ltd, Sirius Marketing and Social Research Ltd, MRC MODE etc. Thus, the marketing research industry has come a long way from the telegrams of 1895. As of 2006, the industry is trying to find creative ways to research consumers using methods such as: Telephone Interviews, Mall Intercepts, Web Interviews and Multimode Methods. To constantly learn and grow and stay on the cutting edge, modern research techniques like- Meta- research (research about how to do research) is being practiced by research firms now a days.

2.2 Customer Satisfaction Analysis

In this complex business world, increasing competition (whether for-profit or nonprofit) is forcing businesses to pay much more attention to satisfying customers. Usually, Customer

Satisfaction is the consumers' fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption- related fulfillment. In other words, Customer Satisfaction is a business term and is a measure of how products and services supplied by a company meet or surpass customer expectation.

Organizations are increasingly interested in retaining existing customers while targeting non-customers; measuring customer satisfaction provides an indication of how successful the organization is at providing products and/or services to the marketplace.

Measuring customer satisfaction is subjective – it tells the firms what customers say they like and don't like about a particular product or service. But it will tell whether they are happy or not, when they used the product or service, how likely they are to return, whether they'll recommend it to others, and much more.

Many agencies use online customer satisfaction surveys, focus groups, and email feedback forms to gauge customer satisfaction and expectations. Some agencies have developed their own surveys, sometimes using a contractor to compile and analyze the data. Others purchase commercial satisfaction surveys that use a standard methodology across multiple websites.

Customer satisfaction is an ambiguous and abstract concept and the actual manifestation of the state of satisfaction will vary from person to person and product/service to product/service. The state of satisfaction depends on a number of both psychological and physical variables which correlate with satisfaction behaviors such as return and recommend rate. The level of satisfaction can also vary depending on other options the customer may have and other products against which the customer can compare the organization's products. Because Satisfaction is basically a psychological state, care should be taken in the effort of quantitative measurement, although a large quantity of research in this area has recently been developed.

2.3 Quality Value Analysis

Work done by Berry (Bart Allen) and Brodeur between 1990 and 1998 defined ten 'Quality Values' which influence satisfaction behavior, further expanded by Berry in 2002 and known as the ten domains of satisfaction. These ten domains of satisfaction include: 1) Quality, 2) Value, 3) Timeliness, 4) Efficiency, 5) Ease of Access, 6) Environment, 7) Inter-departmental 8) Teamwork, 9) Front line Service Behaviors, and 10) Commitment to the Customer and Innovation.

These factors are emphasized for continuous improvement and organizational change measurement and are most often utilized to develop the architecture for satisfaction measurement as an integrated model. The theory has been followed till 2013.

2.4 The SERVQUAL Approach

Work done by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (Leonard L) between 1985 and 1988 provides the basis for the measurement of customer satisfaction with a service by using the

gap between the customer's expectation of performance and their perceived experience of performance. This provides the measurer with a satisfaction "GAP" which is objective and quantitative in nature. This is known as- SERVQUAL, a service-quality framework that has been incorporated into customer-satisfaction surveys to indicate the gap between customer expectations and experience. Based on Parasuraman et al. (1988) conceptualization service quality, the original SERVQUAL instrument included 22 items. The data on the 22 attributes were grouped into five dimensions:

a. Tangibles: Reputation of the Supplier, Well maintained records, clear explanation manual, modern technological support.
b. Reliability: Kind & Amount of Experience, Provide services when promised.
c. Responsiveness: Maintenance of Time Schedule, Researchers attention in solving problems, full service, promptly errors correction.
d. Assurance: Quality of work, Confidentiality, data security, responsible and helpful researchers.
e. Empathy**:** Researchers search for solutions, Word of Mouth.

Although there has been criticism from some other researchers to SERVQUAL instrument (Johnston 1995), yet SERVQUAL is the instrument most utilized for its confirmatory factor analyses in most cases. Thus, up to date, SERVQUAL has proven to be a parsimonious model that has been used in various service organizations and industries to measure service quality including banks (Mc Alexander et al. 1994; Cowling & Newman 1996; Levesque & Mc Dougall 1996; Caruana et al. 2000; Caruana 2002; Sureshchandar et al. 2002; Paswan et al. 2004; Seth et al. 2005; Lymperopoulos et al. 2006).

SERVQUAL model has many restrictions in practical implication. But its frameworks have been implemented in various studies as a guide. Some of the mentionable sectors are: banks, repair and maintenance services, telephone companies, physicians, hospitals, hotels, academic institutions and retail stores (Parasuraman Zeithaml & Berry 1988, Carman 1990, Boulding, Kalra, Staelin & Zeithaml 1993, Kouthouris & Alexandris 2005). In fact, Siddiqi (2010) concluded in his recent study that the SERVQUAL model is still suitable as an assessment tool to measure the service quality perceptions. In Bangladesh, the SERVQUAL model has been used by some researchers to measure the service gap, such as in private universities (Chowdhury, Iqbal & Miah 2010), in advertising agencies (Khan 2010), in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and in retail banking (Siddiqi 2010, Nazia Nabi 2012), in hospitals (Siddiqui & Khan-daker 2007), etc.

The usual measures of customer satisfaction involve a survey with a set of statements using a Likert Technique or scale. The customer is asked to evaluate each statement and in terms of their perception and expectation of performance of the organization being measured. But the technique had a drawback of miscalculation or misrepresentation of facts.

3. Methodology

This article has been prepared on the basis of experience gathered from group discussion from the organizations, in- depth interviews from various clients.

3.1 Research Design

The identification of variables was done based on adopting certain exploratory research methods, such as- secondary data analysis and literature review. Now the study will be carried out the Descriptive Research with Single Cross- Sectional Approach. Target population will consist of the clients (elements) of the Market Research Firms, in Dhaka City (extent), both private and public firms (sampling unit) from whom the necessary data will be collected to conduct the required analyses. In case of this project, the total number of samples will be 50. Judgmental Sampling will be adapted to carry out the survey. The customer lists provided by the marketing research firms will be the sampling frame.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire contains a combination of structured and unstructured questions. It has three segments in it. The first part of the questionnaire contains various multiple choice options for the convenience of the respondents. The second part has a 9- point Likert Scale to measure the independent and dependent variables. It will also be used for measuring ANOVA, ANCOVA Regression and Multiple Regression Analysis. The last part of the questionnaire aims to collect recommendations of the respondents. It contains an open ended question based on their experience and personal opinions. The collected data's are analyzed in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The identification of the respondents are extremely confidential and the collected information's are only for the research purpose.

3.3 Framework of the Factors

For this purpose, the Dependent Variable is to Measure the Customer Satisfaction of the Marketing Research Firms in Bangladesh.

And the Independent Variables are:

1. Reputation of the Supplier,
2. Maintenance of Time Schedule,
3. Quality of Work,
4. Kind & Amount of Experience,
5. Word of Mouth.

With the combination of these factors Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), Regression and Multiple Regression is being executed to focus on the most preferred factor. The implication of the study can make a significant change in activities of a research firm and focus on the specified factor of customer perception.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Three-way analysis:
One way of analyzing the three-way interaction is through the use of tests of simple main-effects, the effect of one variable (or set of variables) across the levels of another variable. Here, the research shows how the customer satisfactions of marketing research firms vary with different levels of Reputation, High quality and different level amount of experiences.

Table 1: Customer Satisfaction Variables.

Between-Subjects Factors

		Value Label	**N**
Reputation	1	**High**	20
	2	**Medium**	9
	3	**Low**	1
High quality	1	**High**	4
	2	**Medium**	23
	3	**Low**	3
Kind and amount of experience	1	**High**	14
	2	**Medium**	16

Table 2: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	57.652(a)	9	6.406	2.011	.093
Intercept	195.362	1	195.362	61.324	.000
Reputation	9.531	2	4.765	1.496	.248**
High Quality	15.925	2	7.963	2.499	.107**
Experience	24.634	1	24.634	7.733	.012**
Reputation * High Quality	10.115	1	10.115	3.175	.090
Reputation * Experience	3.810	1	3.810	1.196	.287
High Quality * Experience	6.503	2	3.251	1.021	.378
Reputation * High Quality * Experience	.000	0	.	.	.
Error	63.714	20	3.186		
Total	1007.000	30			
Corrected Total	121.367	29			

**main effect
a R Squared = .475 (Adjusted R Squared = .239)

Degrees of freedom within

Interpretation:

From the table we illustrate the three-way analysis of variance procedure using a computer program. The results of conducting the same analysis by computer are presented in the previous table.

The output box which runs three separate ANOVAs: the main effects for each of two variables, and the interaction effect between the variables. Each of these is shown on a different row, with the variable names; it gives the degrees of freedom-between, F-value and p-value. The next line, labeled "Error," gives the degrees of freedom-within. Here, the three ways analysis is not significant for either main effect, but is significant for the interaction.

The test statistics for the significance of the overall effect is 2.011, with 9 and 20 degrees of freedom, which is somewhat significant at the 0.05 level. The test statistics for the significance of the interaction effect of (Reputation * High Quality) is 3.175, with 1 and 20 degrees of freedom, which is significant at the 0.05 level. The test statistics for the significance of the interaction effect of (Reputation *Experience) is 1.196, with 1 and 20 degrees of freedom, which is not significant at the 0.05 level. The test statistics for the significance of the interaction effect of (High Quality * Experience) is 1.021, with 2 and 20

degrees of freedom, which is not significant at the 0.05 level. The test statistics for the significance of the three interaction effect of (Reputation * High Quality * Experience) has no variance from the average mean. Because the interaction effect of three variables is not significant to capture. The significance of the main value can be evaluated.

The significance of main effects of Reputation is 1.496, with 2 and 20 df, which is not significant. The significance of main effects of High Quality is 2.499, with 2 and 20 df, which is not significant. The significance of main effects of Experience is 7.733, with 1 and 20 df, which is significant.

Thus, the higher Amount of Experiences of research firms results in higher satisfaction of corporate clients. Also, the different levels of High quality are varying with customer satisfaction and they are quite different. If this were a large and representative sample, the implications can be more realistic and rational.

4.2 Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)

Here, we determine the effect of Reputation, High quality and amount of experiences on customer satisfaction while controlling the effect of word-of-mouth.

Table 3: Effect between Subject Factors.

Between-Subjects Factors

		Value Label	N
Reputation	1	High	20
	2	Medium	9
	3	Low	1
High quality	1	High	4
	2	Medium	23
	3	Low	3
Kind and amount of experience	1	High	14
	2	Medium	16

Table 4: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	61.631(a)	10	6.163	1.960	.099
Intercept	1.586	1	1.586	.504	.486
Word-of-mouth (Covariate)	3.978	1	3.978	1.265	.275
Reputation	8.191	2	4.096	1.303	.295
High Quality	12.889	2	6.444	2.050	.156
Experience	24.812	1	24.812	7.892	.011
Reputation * High Quality	11.156	1	11.156	3.548	.075
Reputation * Experience	4.158	1	4.158	1.322	.264
High Quality * Experience	8.283	2	4.141	1.317	.291
Reputation * High Quality * Experience	.000	0	.	.	.
Error	59.736	19	3.144		
Total	1007.000	30			
Corrected Total	121.367	29			

a R Squared = .508 (Adjusted R Squared = .249)

Interpretation:

From table, the sum of squares attributable to the covariate is (3.978) with 1 df resulting in an identical value for the mean square. The associate d F value is 1.265, which is not significant at the 0.05 level.

Thus, the conclusion is that the affluence of the word-of-mouth does not have an effect on the customer satisfaction of marketing research firm's services.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Formulate Bivariate Regression Model

Y=a+bx1

Y= Dependant Variable (Satisfaction level of research firms customer)
X= Predictor (High quality service of research firms.)

Table 5: Summary of Model

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.517[a]	.268	.241	1.782

a. Predictors: (Constant), High quality

Table 6: Model Summary of ANOVA

ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.483	1	32.483	10.233	.003[a]
	Residual	88.883	28	3.174		
	Total	121.367	29			

a. Predictors: (Constant), High quality

b. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Table 7: Model Summary of Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.187	1.367		.868	.393
	High quality	.827	.259	.517	3.199	.003

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Interpretation:

Test for significance:

The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between x and y. The alternative hypothesis is that there is positive or negative relationship between x and y.

The estimated equation is that:

Satisfaction (Y) = 1.18+.82(x1)

The standard error .259 estimated and the value of t statistics 3.2. The critical value of t with 28 degrees of freedom and $\propto$= .05 is 2.048 for a two tail test. Because calculate value is larger than critical value so null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant relationship and high quality service. The positive sign of coefficient indicates relation is positive. The more quality work, the more satisfied is the customer.

Determine the Strength and Significance:

The strength of association is measured by r2. Here the r2 is .268. It signifies the portion of total variation in y that is accounted for by the variation in X.

The value of F statistics is 10.233 with 1 and 28 degree of freedom the calculate F statistics exceeds critical value 4.20. Therefore the relationship is significant.

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis:

Table 8: Model Summary of Predictors

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.521a	.272	.218	1.809

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reputatition, High quality

Table 9: Model Summary of Predictors and Dependent Variable

ANOVA(b)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.967	2	16.484	5.035	.014(a)
	Residual	88.400	27	3.274		
	Total	121.367	29			

a) Predictors: (Constant), Reputation, High quality
b) Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

Table 10: Model Summary of Coefficients

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.644	1.828		.899	.376
	High quality	.863	.278	.540	3.099	.005
	Reputatition	-.092	.240	-.067	-.384	.704

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

The estimated regression equation is that:

$$1.64+.863(x1) - .09(x2)$$

145

The equation predicts that high quality work is the only attribute to make client satisfied. Reputation has no contribution for satisfying customer.

The R2 is .272 which is higher than bivariate analysis of r2. But the R2 in multiple regressions is lower than the square of the simple correlation between reputation and satisfaction level of customer (which can be estimate .3)

The adjusted R2 is .218 which close to R2 about lower than r2 for bivariate case. It suggests that addition of second independent variable does not make contribution in explaining variation in satisfaction level towards research firms.

4.5 Possible Quality Value Analysis Expectations of Clients

The final part of this study is to specify the desired service expectations as well as the adequate service expectations of customers, that is, what they aspire more when selecting a research organization. For this purpose, we have taken observations from our respondents from which we have identified that clients prefer quality of the work more than any other factor which belongs to the first factor of Quality Value Analysis.

4.6 The SERVQUAL Approach Implication

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that customers' expectations from a research firm depends mainly on the Assurance, Reliability, and Responsiveness among the five SERVQUALS instruments. The reasons are as follows:

Assurance: Assurance is important for customers as they feel the necessity of quality work from a research firm. It also signifies the researcher's knowledge and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.

Reliability: Reliability is very important to clients because it assures them about the promised service and its genuine accuracy. This can be a result of experience.

Responsiveness: Responsiveness is the timely reaction towards the clients' needs. Customers expect Employees full service and maintenance of time schedule. The customers prefer or recommend those firms who are willing to help and provide prompt service ti its clients.

5. Conclusion

We moved a long way from the time when only a few research works were done in Bangladesh to some limited extent. Over time, the old concepts, attitudes and methods in the research arena have undergone a marked change all over the world. Modern research is an outcome development driven by the changing market conditions and lifestyle. Bangladesh has not lagged behind. Many research organizations are required to participate in the activities and acts as the partners in progress for bringing about socioeconomic changes.

What has been found from this report is really something surprising that, the corporate houses who are the clients of the Marketing Research Firms in Bangladesh the corporate houses who are the clients of the Marketing Research Firms in our country are divided into two groups regarding their satisfaction toward the services they get. Even, clients who are satisfied, have variance in their level of satisfaction.

Some firms provide quality work, but, take too much time. On the other hand, some experienced firms, such as, the SOMRA Ltd, Sirius Marketing & Social Research Ltd, MRC MODE and ORG Quest Research Ltd. lack in their quality of provided services. Also, many firms, such as- SRG Bangladesh and Social Behavior & Marketing Research Limited provide quality of services although they are new and inexperienced in this field.

For the clients, Quality is the first and most important factor for being satisfied. Then comes the Kind and Amount of Experience of the Supplier and later, there are the Reputation and Maintenance of Time Schedule. The research organizations should focus on quality aspect to satisfy more customers. With time new dimensions can be added to improvise new techniques to satisfy customers.

The study might be a avenue opener for further research in this field of interest. The survey for the study was conducted only in Dhaka (Bangladesh). Future studies can be conducted outside Dhaka city to explore new dimensions. The results of the study could be different in different geographic locations. There is scope for classifying the variables for further facts. Some of the variables have multiple dimensions and relationships with other aspects. Further research can look into those specific areas. This type of study can also be implemented on other service organizations.

5.1 Limitations of the Research

This paper attempts to focus on the factors that a client would consider when selecting a research firm. However this study has some limitations. This study did not take into consideration the samples from different or separate geographical locations. So, organizations from different locations may have a different expectation. The reason behind it could be different corporate culture and unique requirements. The findings cannot be generalized. This study has successfully examined the major factors expected by the organizations and which are based on respondents' perception. Future research may have focusing on more factors that might be implemented with more variables.

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