INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT & MANAGEMENT

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      OBJECTIVES

      HYPOTHESES

      RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

      RESULTS & DISCUSSION

      FINDINGS

      RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

      CONCLUSIONS

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- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

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- Schemenner, R.W., Huber, J.C. and Cook, R.L. (1987), "Geographic Differences and the Location of New Manufacturing Facilities," Journal of Urban Economics, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 83-104.

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IMPACT OF ANTECEDENTS OF BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION OF STUDENTS' IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the impact of antecedents of behavioural intention of students' in higher education. The constructs service quality, overall satisfaction of students, attitude towards the institution and their behavioural intention was measured using structured questionnaire among 180 post graduate students pursuing MBA programme in Coimbatore city. Service quality was measured based on SERVQUAL (Parasuramanan, 1985) and other constructs such as overall satisfaction, attitude and behavioural intention were measured using items derived from previous studies by Cronin et al., (2000), Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), Athiyaman (1997) and Zeithaml et al., (1996). Non-probability convenience sampling was used in selecting the respondents. It is found from the study that service quality influence the satisfaction of students, satisfaction influence the attitude, attitude influence the behavioural intention. Further the analysis also reveals that the relationship between attitude of students' and behavioural intention is stronger than any other constructs. Focusing on the results concerning to behavioural intention, our study indicates that by ensuring a high level of service quality, administrators of the institutions will be able to trigger positive customers' reactions that are key for the sustainable development of the higher educational institutions. Findings of this study provide administrators an insight into the service quality of B-Schools by which they can attract the students towards their institutions.

KEYWORDS
Service quality**,** Students' Satisfaction, Attitude, Behavioural intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction has been considered as a central issue in the marketing literature (Churchill and Suprenant, 1982). Academicians and practitioners have studied and developed various strategies to maintain strong relationships with customers, as satisfied customers usually result in customer retention and customer loyalty (Zeithaml, et al., 1996). One such strategy is to offer high quality products and this strategy commonly results in competitive advantage that leads to success for many organisations (Sureshchander, et al., 2002). Crosby (1991) maintains that providing a high level of quality lowers costs and retains satisfied customers, and ultimately generates higher profit margins for an organisation.

The service sector has grown immensely since 1970s, and this growth has attracted researchers and encouraged them to study service quality and customer satisfaction issues in service industries (Rust and Oliver, 1994; Sureshchander et al., 2002). However, because services exhibit several exclusive characteristics, identified as intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, perishability and lack of ownership (Clemes et al., 2000, DeShields et al., 2005), researchers have difficulty in defining and measuring service quality and customer satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Giese and Cote, 2000). The higher education sector has also faced reduced subsidies and intense global competition. In response, the sector has shifted its focus to market-related marketing mechanisms as like many other service industries (DeShields et al., 2005). The higher education sector needs to deliver a high quality of service and satisfy its customers to achieve sustainability in a competitive market environment (DeShields et al., 2005).   Past research (Parasuraman et al., 1990; Cronin and Taylor 1992) has shown the importance of understanding what the customer expects which will help the organisation to achieve the first step in delivering service quality and satisfaction. Now, more than ever, higher education institutions have embraced the marketing concept and the idea of the student as consumer, the customer who is involved in the purchase of higher education programs and services (Kotler and Levy 1969). Today's students search for institutions that will provide them with unique, memorable, and personal educational experiences. Also, he/she is a customer, seeking an educational program that will prepare him/her for a successful career and gainful employment. A satisfied customer might well become a regular buyer and also spreads positive word of mouth communication which might result in creating new customers and negative word-of-mouth communication leads to reduction in customer satisfaction (Richins, 1983)

Service quality in the service setting is one of the major aspects of customer satisfaction. On the other hand for this issue, there is some disagreement, as whether customer satisfaction is a precursor of service quality. One of the ideas refers service quality as a comprehensive evaluation, regarding service category in a specific establishment (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In 1985, a research conducted by Parasuraman, Ziethaml and Bitner, exemplified cases where respondents were impressed to some extent but the service did not meet their expectations because most events of customer satisfaction narrate a specific assessment of a service experiences, customer's pleasure is analyzed as it relates to a particular transaction (Howard and Sheth 1969; Hunt 1979; Singh 1988). From this perspective, customer satisfaction is mere a minor aspect, it's the service quality that counts most. Responsiveness of the service is a major issue including staff being prompt, courteous, knowledgeable, and neat in appearance, helpful and attentive to customers' needs.

This study attempts to analyse the relationship between service quality, students' satisfaction, attitude and behavioural intention constructs hoping to shed new light on the research question: Is there a significant relationship between service quality, students' satisfaction, attitude and behavioural intention in higher education?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 SERVICE QUALITY AND STUDENTS' SATISFACTION

The most important features of the service firm that drive customer satisfaction is service quality. Bitner et.al, (1990) defines service quality as the individual's general attitude towards the service firm. Delivery of higher levels of service quality is the strategy that is increasingly being offered as a key to service providers, efforts to position themselves more effectively in the market place (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). It is fact to accept that service quality is a matter that has engaged academics leading to extensive debate over its conceptualization. As a result, in service literature similar views are expressed by many authors and numerous studies are seen addressing the diverse issues related to service quality in education (Donaldson and Ruciman 1995, Cook 1997, Mai 2005, Abdulla 2006, Barnes 2007, Nadiri et al 2009, Quinn et al 2009). Owing to the unique characteristics of services, namely intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability, service quality cannot be measured objectively (Patterson and Johnson, 1993). Hence service quality in education is measured by "students' perception of service quality". Service quality literature shows that in most of the studies, service quality of higher education is measured either by SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et at., 1998) or SERVPERF (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) measuring instruments. It is interesting to identify about the applicability of SERVQUAL to education sector. Numerous studies have adapted this measurement in higher educational institutions (HEI) such as service quality in business schools and other higher educational institutions (Cuthbert, 1996; Soutar and McNeil, 1996; Saaditul et.al., 2000).

The service quality is mostly recognized by the cooperation of the administrative staff and academic staff of the institution. Majority of the students' get de-motivated if they found that the staff is not compassionate and kind. Spooreen et.al, (2007), posited a view that the organizational harmony, teachers' intellectual ability, professional development, transparency in students' evaluation, feedback and training are the important features that mentally develop the students. According to Hasan et.al., (2008), for quality assurance an institution must train its staff members in a way that it may create a sense of facilitation by means of coordination, cooperation, compassion and empathy.

The traditional service quality research had been further enhanced through work in the domain of customer satisfaction (Spreng et al., 1996; Oliver, 1997). Kotler and Clarke (1987) define satisfaction as the expected outcome of a task or job that pleases one's esteem. According to Zeithaml (1988), satisfaction is the resultant outcome of an institution's administrative as well as educational system's coherent performance. Student satisfaction refers to the favorability of a student's subjective evaluation of the outcomes and experiences associated with education (Oliver and DeSarbo 1989). The availability of other academic facilities like intellectual faculty, advisors, carrier counseling department are the features that an institution needs for its students' better performance and satisfaction (Bolton and Drew, 1991).

Student satisfaction is being shaped continually by repeated experiences in campus life. Moreover, the campus environment is seemingly a web of interconnected experiences that overlap and influence student's overall satisfaction (Elliott and Shin 2002). In general, perceived service quality is an antecedent to satisfaction (Spreng and Mckoy, 1996). Thus, a proper understanding of the antecedents and determinants of customer satisfaction can be seen as to have an extraordinarily high monetary value for service organization in a competitive environment (Lassar et al., 2000). High service quality results in higher customer satisfaction which results in high customer loyalty and eagerness to advice to others (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Boulding, 1993; Rust, 1994; Nadiri and Hussain, 2009). Oliver (1993) argued that customers must have some experiences of quality in order to decide whether they are satisfied or not. In this line, service quality is akin to the concept of appraisal, and satisfaction becomes an affective concept. That is, appraisal functions as the antecedent, or cause, of affective reactions (Oliver, 1989). Likewise, most studies have considered service quality as the antecedent of customer satisfaction (e.g. Anderson et al., 1994; Cronin et al., 2000; Fornell, 1992; Fornell et al. 1996).

Rust and Oliver (1994) suggested that quality is subordinate to satisfaction; quality is one specific service dimension consumer's factor in their satisfaction judgments. Bigne, Moliner and Sanchez (2003) found that the overall service quality have a significant relationship with satisfaction at R= 0.66. Ham and Hayduk (2003) have confirmed that, even in the higher educational settings, there is a positive correlation between perception of service quality and students' satisfaction, and analyzing upon the relationship based on each of the dimension of service quality, reliability (R=0.547; sig. = 0.000) has the strongest relationship followed by responsiveness and empathy (R=0.5431; sig. = 0.000), assurance (R=0.492; sig. = 0.000) and tangibility (R=0.423; sig.= 0.000). In this study, we adopt most of the arguments and findings of the various prior studies (e.g. Anderson et al., 1994; Cronin et al., 2000), and take quality of service to be a determinant of customer satisfaction. We, therefore, suggest that:

H1: Service quality has a positive influence on students' satisfaction towards the institution.

2.2 STUDENTS' SATISFACTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE INSTITUTION

According to Seymour (1993), developing many happy satisfied customers, whether they are students, parents of students, alumni, or industry employer, should be a primary goal of higher education. Thus, focusing on enhancing the customer satisfaction at colleges and universities is crucial in developing customer value. Burton et al., (2001) argued that "a consumer's overall attitude derived from the totality of their beliefs should be dependent on their total satisfaction, which will in turn be influenced by evaluations based on both direct experience and information received from external sources or cues". In relation to consumer satisfaction and attitudes, it has been found that satisfied consumers develop positive brand attitudes and brand preferences (Roest and Pieters, 1977; Oliver,1980; Bolton, 1998) towards the object they are satisfied with. When satisfaction is treated as a post purchase constructs, the literature supports the argument that the liking or relative favourable attitude of the consumer will be developed on the basis of cumulatively satisfying usage occasions of the service (Bearden and Teel, 1983; Dick and Basu, 1994; O'Cass and Grace, 2004). According to Oliver (1981), customer satisfaction is relatively transient and is consumption specific, whereas attitudes are relatively enduring. Oliver (1980) found that satisfaction derived from past experience precedes and influences post purchase attitude. Bolton and Drew (1991) treated attitudes as a consequence of satisfaction; and Suh and Yi (2006) had established the same inference. In a subsequent empirical validation, Bitner (1990) treated perceived quality and attitude as synonyms and successfully validated the direct positive affection of satisfaction on perceived quality (attitude).

Students' attitudes will be expressed either as positive or negative (Keaveney, 1999) based on how far students' expectations on the delivery of the services have been met by the institution. If a negative attitude is formed it will be difficult to achieve overall satisfaction and could result in complaints, decreasing loyalty and negative word of mouth (WOM) promotion (Kau and Loh 2006, Maxham 2001). Based on the previous studies (Bitner, 1990; Bolton and Drew, 1991) students' satisfaction is considered as an antecedent to attitude in this study. Therefore, the hypothesis is framed as

H2: Students' satisfaction has a positive influence on attitude towards the institution.

2.3 ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE INSTITUTION AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION

Consumer decision-making process is a complex and comprehensive process. Consumers not only evaluate the quality they receive. They develop attitudes based on the satisfaction felt by the services received. Further, in consumer behaviour there is a general consensus that attitudes impact consumer's behavioural intention (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Mackenzie and Lutz, 1989, Sudharani and kalpana, 2011). The underlying assumption for most of the previous attitude behaviour research is that the development of positive attitude will provide corresponding behaviour associated with the attitude object (Griffin and O'Cass, 2004) It has been shown that attitude formed through personal experiences are more likely to predict behaviour than attitudes formed through indirect marketing communication (Fazio et al, 1989; Grace and O'Cass, 2005).

Just like customers in the market, students may have favorable behavioral intentions (FBIs) and unfavorable behavioral intentions (UFBIs) toward institution. FBIs could encompasses re-enrollment intention, provision of positive word-of-mouth, and encouraging friends and relatives to apply for admission; and UFBIs could cover intention to withdraw from university, provision of negative word-of-mouth, and discouraging friends and relatives to apply for admission. Boulding *et al.* (1993), in an investigation involving university students, identified strong links between service quality and FBIs; and Ham (2003), in a work involving university students, found a significant correlation between quality, satisfaction and student loyalty intentions / complaints.

In terms of higher education, the main consequences found by some researchers were; loyalty, complaints and word of mouth actions (Athiyaman, 1997). A student loyal to his or her educational institutions must have a positive cognitive and emotional attitude towards the institution, one that provides the underlying motivation for his or her behaviour (Hennig- Thurau, T., et al 2001). Student loyalty is a key objective for many higher educational institutions as the advantages of the student loyalty are not limited to the time that the student spends in the institution. According to (Hennig-Thurau, T., et al 2001) Student

loyalty covers different behavioural intention: (1) word of mouth promotions (2) Repurchasing intention (3) Referral intentions and (4) Alumni-related intentions.

According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), individuals have strong intention to engage in a behavior if they positively assess that behavior and believe that others think they should engage in that behavior. Hence, this study considers attitude towards institution as the antecedent to behavioural intention. We, therefore frame the following hypothesis:

H3: Attitude towards the institution influence behavioural intention.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study have been framed as follows:
1. To study the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, attitude and behavioural intention.
2. To study the impact of service quality on satisfaction of students'
3. To study the impact of satisfaction of students' on attitude
4. To study the impact of attitude of students' on behavioural intention

4. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of studying the objectives and testing the hypotheses, a questionnaire was framed as an instrument to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted of two parts so as to fulfil the objectives of the study. The first part captured the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the second part captured their response towards service quality, overall satisfaction, attitude towards the institution and their behavioural intention. Service quality was measured based on SERVQUAL (Parasuramanan, 1985) and other constructs such as overall satisfaction, attitude and behavioural intention were measured using items derived from previous studies by Cronin et al., (2000), Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), Athiyaman (1997) and Zeithaml et al., (1996). However the questionnaire was subjected to validity and reliability test. Through a process of item validation using a panel of expert judges in the field of higher education, various alterations were undertaken relating to the content of the questionnaire. Further, the experts were requested to offer their feedback on each of the items. The experts suggested a 5-point rating scales for all the items that capture service quality, overall satisfaction, attitude towards the institution and behavioural intention. A few statements were also simplified so as to enable the respondents to understand it better.

The convergent validity of each construct is checked by examining the "Average Variance Extracted (AVE)" values. Constructs which have AVE values greater than 0.5 are said to have convergent validity or unidimentionality. (Chin et al., 2003; Barclay et al., 1995; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). After the data is collected, Reliability of constructs is tested using Cronbach's alpha. (Cronbach,1951). An alpha score larger than 0.7 is generally acceptable as sufficient accuracy for a construct (Nunnally, 1978). Table 1 presents the reliability and validity results by AVE scores and Cronbach's alpha scores on each of the four constructs Service quality, Overall satisfaction, Attitude and Behavioural intention.
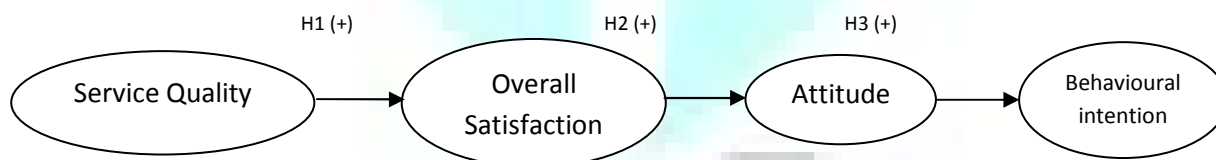
TABLE 1: CONSTRUCT AVE SCORE AND CRONBACH'S ALPHA VALUE

Construct	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
Service Quality	0.686781	0.909407
Overall satisfaction	0.824101	0.920120
Attitude	0.789637	0.839943
Behavioural Intention	0.732609	0.799318

The survey was administered among 180 MBA graduates in Coimbatore city. The main reason for choosing Coimbatore city is that, it is considered to be the educational hub with more than 100 institutions offering management education. Non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to choose the respondents. The study uses PLS path modeling technique. This method does not make any assumptions about the distribution of the data and is non parametric in nature. Path analysis is done using Visual PLS to calculate the construct scores.

5. HYPOTHESIS TESTING AND DISCUSSION

FIG. 1: PROPOSED MODEL OF SERVICE QUALITY AND STUDENTS' BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION

A construct level correlation analysis was used as a preliminary check for the three hypotheses proposed in section 3. Visual PLS is used to calculate the construct scores. These scores are checked for significant correlation using SPSS package. The correlation scores are shown in Table 2. It is seen that all the correlations are significant. Only the correlation between overall satisfaction and attitude towards institution seems to be low (though significant). This may be explained by the fact that the attitude towards institution depends on a number of other factors like economic conditions, personality, job trends, etc that have not been considered in this research study.

TABLE 2 : CORRELATION OF CONSTRUCTS USED IN THE MODEL

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig (2 tailed)
H1	Service Quality	Overall Satisfaction	0.756	0.000
H2	Overall Satisfaction	Attitude	0.412	0.000
H3	Attitude	Behavioural Intention	0.614	0.000

Although the bivariate correlations are significant for most hypotheses when considered in pairs, it is still needed to check whether they are still significant when the constructs are put together in a structural model as a causal effect. A rigorous test of the significance of various proposed relations can be tested using the bootstrap function in Visual PLS. It is possible to use resampling methods (bootstrap and jack knife) to obtain the significance of the various paths in the model (Efron 1979; Efron and Gong 1983).

Bootstrap is more reliable in estimating the significance of paths. So this research has considered and used bootstrap for the purpose of determining causal relations proposed in the model. In boot strap used in this research, random samples sized 180 (the respondent number) were taken, and 500 such samples were taken (to get best estimates a resample number of 500 is recommended although in theory an infinite resample is needed for the purpose). The results were examined for significance. At 5% level of significance the cutoff t-statistic is 1.96. In general it is assumed that if the t statistic is more than 2, the path is significant.

TABLE 3: PROPOSED MODEL BOOT STRAP SUMMARY

Hypothesis	Entire Sample estimate	Mean of Sub samples	Standard error	T-Statistic	R Square	Result
H1	0.812	0.8543	0.0385	36.9547	0.782	Significant
H2	0.625	0.6371	0.0174	11.1092	0.585	Significant
H3	0.848	0.8115	0.0222	22.7225	0.316	Significant

H1: Service quality has a positive influence on student's satisfaction towards the institution.

From the Table 3 it is found that the relationship is significant (beta = 0.812, t=36.9547) The R Sq value is also very high (0.782). This show that when students are satisfied with the service quality of the institution the overall satisfaction level increases accordingly. The results are in line with the findings of Mahiah., S. et al. (2006),who found that the overall service quality have a significant relationship with satisfaction at R= 0.66. Further, the result supports the findings of Ham and Hayduk (2003) who found that even in the higher educational settings, there is a positive correlation between perception of service quality and student satisfaction. Parasuraman et al., (1985), exemplified cases where respondents were, impressed to some extent but the service did not meet their expectations, because most events of customer satisfaction narrate a specific assessment of a service experiences where customer's pleasure is analyzed as it relates to a particular transaction (Howard and Sheth 1969; Hunt 1979; Singh 1988). From this perspective, customer satisfaction is mere a minor aspect, it's the service quality that counts most. It is important for the higher educational institutions to concentrate on the service quality and improve the satisfaction level of students.
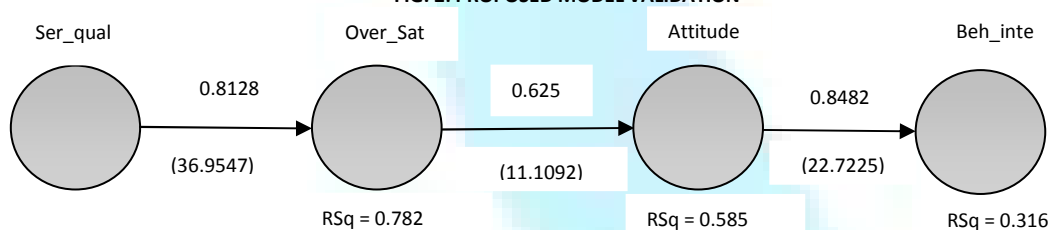
H2: Students' satisfaction has a positive influence on attitude towards the institution.

From the Table 3, it is found that the relationship is significant (beta = 0.625, t=11.1092) The R Sq value is also high (0.585). This show the overall satisfaction level of students towards the institutions positively affects the students' attitude towards the institution. This is in support of the findings by Oliver (1980) who found that satisfaction derived from past experience precedes and influences post purchase attitude. Further, Bolton and Drew (1991) treated attitudes as a consequence of satisfaction; and Suh and Yi (2006) had established the same inference.

H3: Attitude towards the institution influence behavioural intention.

From the Table 3, it is found that the relationship is significant (beta = 0.848, t=22.7225) The R Sq value is also high (0.316). This shows that the students' attitude towards the institution will affect their behavioural intention. The result is supported by Mackenzie and Lutz (1989) who has concluded that attitudes impact consumers' behavioural intention. This indicates that the attitude of the customer determines the behavioural intention like being a regular buyer, spreading positive word of mouth communication which might result in creating new customers and negative word-of-mouth communication leading to reduction in customer satisfaction (Richins, 1983).

FIG. 2: PROPOSED MODEL VALIDATION

TERMS USED IN MODEL

Ser_qual : Service quality, Over_Sat : Overall satisfaction,Attitude: Attitude, Beh_inte : Behavioural intention

6. FINDINGS

The results of the structural equation model analysis indicate that the satisfaction level on service quality influence the overall satisfaction, overall satisfaction influences the students' attitude; students' attitude towards institution influences the behavioural intention as given in the proposed model. Further the analysis also reveals that the relationship between attitude of students' and behavioural intention is stronger than any other constructs.

Focusing on the results concerning to behavioural intention, our study indicates that by ensuring a high level of service quality, administrators of the institutions will be able to trigger positive customers' reactions that are key for the sustainable development of the higher educational institutions. In fact, it has been widely suggested that key success factors for higher educational institutions are based on the brand awareness and building customer loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 2002).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The higher education sector today faces intense global competition and forced to focus on marketing strategies for their long term survival. It is essential for the administrators to develop the institutions which may result in building a sustainable competitive advantage. To achieve that it is necessary to understand the attitude of customers and their behavioural intention. An attempt is made to analyse the relationship between service quality, overall satisfaction, attitude and behavioural intention. The result of the study shows that service quality, overall satisfaction, attitude and behavioural intention have stronger relationship which indicates that by ensuring a high level of service quality, administrators of the institutions will be able to trigger positive customers' responses that are necessary for the sustainable development of the higher educational institutions.

The result of the current research study provides several implications for higher educational institution administrators and marketers. First, the quality of service should be good and that should meet the expectations of the customer. Second, the institutions can train the staff members to attract and satisfy the students through appropriate behaviour. Third, they should reinforce the word of mouth activities from satisfied customers by organising various alumni meets and other programs.

8. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As in the case with any research effort, this study is not free of limitations. However, these limitations serve as avenues for future research. First, the study had taken only service quality influence on the satisfaction of the students whereas there could be influence of other factors related of the institution which might influence the satisfaction, attitude and behavioural intention of the students. Second, this was a quantitative study. It used a survey to collect data from the respondents. This type of data collection technique limited the nature of the responses given by the participants. Third, the data was collected from a sample that only included students from institutions in a single geographic region. Fourth, the variables used in the study are drawn from the literature on service quality, satisfaction, attitude and behavioural intention. However, the existence of other external factors cannot be ruled out.

This study only tested the proposed model using Visual PLS path analysis as framed after the analysis of related literature. The study considered only service quality dimensions of the institution. Future research can be carried out with all the other factors related to the institution which may influence satisfaction, students' attitude towards the institution and their behavioural intention. The study restricts only to the higher educational institutions in Coimbatore city. Therefore, future study could be conducted in different regions. There is also scope for a comparative study with different categories of institutions. Further effort could be taken to measure the gap between the expectation and satisfaction level of students with regard to the institution they study.

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