

ABSTRACT

**An Empirical Investigation of the Factors Influencing Consumer Perception
of
Service Quality: A Developing Country Perspective**

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The reality of today's global business environment in which technology is widespread and competitive advantages are shrinking particularly in production, the provision of quality service has become a vital weapon for organisations to enjoy continued success.

This paper reviews the service quality literature and presents an empirical study that examines the factors which influences consumer perceptions of service quality in a developing country, Trinidad & Tobago. A total of 405 questionnaires were collected from existing customers of three service organisations from different industries, namely banking, telecommunications and the airlines.

The primary statistical techniques employed in the study were factor and discriminant analysis. Factor analysis was utilised to identify the underlying service

quality construct for the three service organisations and/or their respective industries. The organisations were the Bank of Nova Scotia (BNS), Telecommunication Services of Trinidad & Tobago (TSTT) and British West Indian Airlines, all based in Trinidad & Tobago. In addition, discriminant analysis was employed to examine whether demographic factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, education and income moderate consumer perceptions of service quality.

The results indicate that elements of the service rated as critical are basically the same across the three service industries. In general, customers wanted the firms to provide accurate & dependable service, with a willing complement of staff, in addition to providing prompt service and exhibiting a genuine interest in solving customer problems. Furthermore, the dimensionality of the service quality construct across the three service industries appeared to be fairly similar in nature.

The results of the discriminant analyses indicate that demographic items do moderate consumer perceptions of service quality. However, whether or not particular demographic items or service quality indicators were significant varied by industry.

Finally, the current study provides very useful information for both academics and management, and thus it is hoped that this research will provide an impetus for future research and improvement in service quality, not only locally but also in the wider Caribbean region.