NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

AN EMPIRICAL ASSESMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTING FIRMS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM NORTH CYPRUS

GRADUATION THESIS

SUBMITTED BY: MINE YARKINER (2003 4255)

SUBMITTED TO: Asst. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ağa

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Abstract

Business organizations make considerable use of professional services. However, it has received less attention in the context of professional business services than of other consumer services in general.

This study represents an empirical assessment of service quality and customer satisfaction in professional accounting firms operating in North Cyprus. The general purpose of this study was to examine the potential of SERVQUAL, an instrument frequently employed to assess the quality of consumer services, in professional accounting firms and to identify those managerial actionable factors that impact customer satisfaction. In addition, the study explored the relationship among customer satisfaction, service quality, firm image, and price of service rendered.

The results of the empirical study indicate that price, firm image and service quality had a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. The impact on satisfaction from highest to lowest in order was, overall firm image, price compared to quality and service quality (empathy), respectively. This tells us the firm image is the most important factor to customer satisfaction, price next, and service quality last from firms' perspective. From our empirical results, we may infer that the client believe that no matter which accounting firm they choose should have a certain degree of service quality guaranteed in the highly competitive battle field.

Key words: Quality of consumer services; customer satisfaction; accounting firms; SERVQUAL

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SECTION I

PROBLEM FORMULATION

1.1 Introduction

This section presents the topic area, the problem situation, the problem statement and the objectives of this study.

1.2 Statement of the topic

Business organizations make considerable use of professional services. However, it has received less attention in the context of professional business services than of other consumer services in general. There are few articles to investigate customer satisfactions of professional accounting firms and how business organizations select and switch accounting firms.

In the present economic environment, characterized by technological dynamism and intensive competition, the issue of customer satisfaction has become extremely important for the success of any business. If not recognized and responded to rapidly changing business environments effectively, a firm may result in increased pressure of work, lost revenue opportunities, increased costs and, ultimately, in increased levels of customer dissatisfaction (Gurau and Ranchhod 2002).

Nowadays many accounting firms are also stuck in a highly competitive market. Sometimes, a firm gets a disturbing message that the client is not pleased with the services. By this time it may be too late for taking any correctable action. Therefore, a firm must constantly ask itself, "what do clients want from us?" and "how do we improve what clients actually perceive?"

With the emergence of competitive battlefield, the need for an appropriate approach to quality measurement in the context of professional business became apparent.

1.3 Problem situation

Company formations come in legally described different forms. In Northern Cyprus, there are over 12,000 ltd companies that are legally enforced to get their accounts audited by registered accounting firms (Office of the Registrar and Receiver of Companies, 2006). Correspondingly, there are 251 accounting firms and registered accountants offering auditing services. Due to the latest political and other developments in Cyprus the number of companies are on the increase so is the competition between the accounting firms to maintain or increase their market share.

Evidently, there is a need to understand why business companies select and switch accounting firms in general and in Northern Cyprus in particular.

1.4 Problem statement

The SERVQUAL, an instrument frequently employed to assess the quality of consumer services, was adapted to assess customers' perceptions of service quality in the context of professional business (Bojanic 1991; Freeman and Dart 1993; Weekes, Scott, and Tidwell 1996). Some researchers examined the relationship between audit quality attributes and client satisfaction (Behn, Carcello, Hermmanson, and Hermanson 1997). Client satisfaction with the audit team was positively associated with audit fees paid by Fortune 1000 clients (Behn et al., 1999). Taking these studies into consideration, the literature is focused on either examining the determinants of service quality only or audit quality attributes oriented. Business organizations make considerable use of professional services. However, it has received less

mention in the context of professional business services than of other consumer services in services. Besides, extant satisfaction research offers little insight into the role of price might on customer satisfaction.

The purpose of this study is to assess customers' perceptions of service quality with an ecounting service firm. It was a study where investigations using SERVQUAL was carried out to assess the quality of services provided to clients of local accounting firms in Northern Cyprus.

1.5 Objectives of the study

A professional accounting firms in Northern Cyprus were investigated with the following objectives set for the study:

- 1.5.1 To examine the potential application of SERVQUAL in the case of a professional accounting services companies.
- 1.5.2 To identify those managerially actionable factors (such as price and firm image) that impact service quality and customer satisfaction at the selected professional accounting firms.

1.6 Conclusion

This section was presented the problem formulation for the study through presenting the topic area, problem situation, problem statement and the resulting objectives. The next section will introduce a brief literature review on SERVQUAL – measuring customer satisfaction in accounting services.

SECTION II

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This section briefly introduces SERVQUAL as an instrument used to assess customer perceptions on service quality and depicts a model as a framework to be used for the objectives of the study.

2.2 SERVQUAL

SERVQUAL is a multi-item scale developed to assess customer perceptions of service quality in service and retail businesses (Parasuraman et. al., 1988). The scale decomposes the notion of service quality into five constructs as follows:

Tangibles: physical facilities, equipment, staff appearance, etc.

Reliability: ability to perform service dependably and accurately

Responsiveness: willingness to help and respond to customer need

Assurance: ability of staff to inspire confidence and trust

Empathy: the extent to which caring individualized service is given

SERVQUAL represents service quality as the discrepancy between a customer's expectations for a service offering and the customer's perceptions of the service received, requiring respondents to answer questions about both their expectations and their perceptions (Parasuraman et. al., 1988). The use of perceived as opposed to actual service received makes

SERVQUAL measure an attitude measure that is related to, but not the same as, satisfaction (Parasuraman et. al., 1988). Parasuraman et. al. (1991) presented some revisions the original SERVQUAL measure to remedy problems with high means and standard deviations found on some questions and to obtain a direct measure of the importance of each construct to the customer.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 depicts the conceptual framework for the proposed study. This model begins with SERVQUAL measurement scale, consisting of five-dimensional structure (responsiveness, empathy, tangibles, and reliability), to assess service quality.

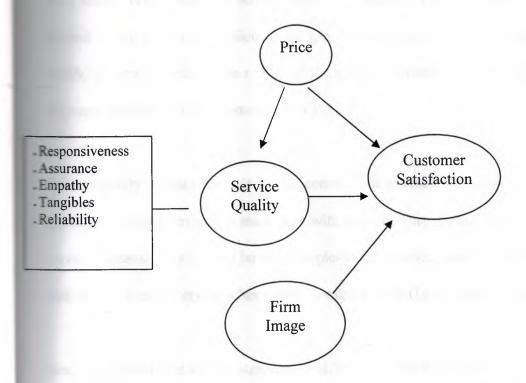


Figure 2.1: A model of customer satisfaction in the context of professional services

Service Quality

definition, service quality construct is the difference between perceived service and expected service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry1985). Customer expectations capture a customer's prior consumption experience with a firm's products or services as well as expectations and word-of—mouth information. (Fornell1992). Researchers generally agree that expectations serve as reference points in customers' assessment of service performance. Zeithaml & Bitner (2000) stated, "the dominant view among CS/D researchers is that expectations are predictive standards- i.e., what customers feel a service provider will offer."

Service providers must realize that the key to service quality is consistently meeting or exceeding consumer expectations (Bojanic 1991). The consumer's perception of the service does matter rather than the service provider's. Consumers' perceptions of service quality depend on the size and direction of the gap between perceived service and expected service which, in turn depend on the nature of the gaps associated with the design, marketing and delivery of services (Parasuraman et al. 1985).

Service quality is more difficult for the consumer to evaluate than product quality because of the lack of tangible evidence associated with service. This is especially true for professional services because they tend to be very people-based. Service quality can be measured by how well the service delivery matches a client's expectations (Lewis and Booms 1983).

Since the appearance of Parasuraman et al.'s (1985, 1988) research, which developed their scale to measure service quality (SERVQUAL), numerous researchers have attempted to empirically replicate the instrument's five-dimensional structure as follows:

1. Responsiveness-willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;

- 2. Assurance-knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence;
- 3. Empathy-caring, individualized attention to customers;
- 4. Tangibles-physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel; and
- 5. Reliability-ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

Most work performed evaluating or using the SERVQUAL instrument indicates that the generic determinants of the instrument provide a platform for expanding the instrument to include constructs for assessing extra case specific determinants such as professionalism, value for money and especially the core service or the business (Walbridge and Delene 1993). Since the SERVQUAL instrument has been productively used for measuring service quality in many proprietary studies, this study intended to employ SERVQUAL instrument to measure service quality in the context of professional service.

Customer Satisfaction

Oliver (1997) defines satisfaction as "the consumer's fulfilment response, the degree to which the level of fulfilment is pleasant or unpleasant." Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) define satisfaction as the customers' evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether that product or service has met their needs and expectations. Dissatisfaction with the product or service is resulted as failure to meet the customers' needs and expectations.

Satisfaction and perceived quality are highly intercorrelated (Bitner and Hubbert 1994; Churchill and Surprenant 1982). Some studies find that satisfaction drives a general perception of quality, while others find that perceptions of quality drive satisfaction (De Ruyter, Bloemer, and Peters 1997). Most marketing researchers accept a theoretical

1997), which in turn influences purchasing behaviour (Johnson and Gustafson 2000; 1999). These arguments suggest that service quality is likely to affect customer staction.

Firm image

memory (Keller 1993). Gronroos (1990) contended that a favourable and well-known image an asset for any organization because image can impact perceptions of quality, value, and satisfaction. Researchers have emphasized firm image affects perceptions of quality performance as well as satisfaction and loyalty (Andreessen & Lindestand 1998). Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) argued that firm image would influence customer perceptions of the service firm's operations and would be reinforced by actual service experiences to solidify the desired image. Some researchers also mentioned that firm image would have been affected by the customer's more recent consumption experiences, or customer satisfaction (Johnson, Fornell, Andreessen, Lervik, and Cha 2001).

Price

Price is defined what is given up or sacrificed to obtain a product or service from the consumer's perspective (Zeithaml 1988). Considerable empirical studies have shown different results of the relationship between price and service quality. Peterson and Wilson (1985) concluded that the relationship between price and quality is not universal and that the direction of the relationship may not always be positive. A positive price-service quality relationship does appear to exist in some empirical results (Monroe and Krishnan 1985; Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1991; Teas and Agarwal 2000). Based on the conceptual model

and external communications cause Provider Gap 4. Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) one of the important types of external communications in services is the price of the interval. In addition, customers likely depend on price as a cue to quality and because price expectations of quality, service prices must therefore be considered.

the other hand, the effect of price on satisfaction has received considerably less research mention than have the roles of expectations and performance perceptions (Spreng, Dixon, Olshavsky 1993). Postpurchase price perceptions have a significant, positive effect on satisfaction (Voss, Parasuraman, and Grewal 1998). Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) contended, the price of the service can greatly influence perceptions of quality, satisfaction, and value. Because services are intangible and often difficult to judge before purchase, price is frequently relied on as a surrogate indicator that will influence quality expectations and perceptions." Some researchers argued that client satisfaction with the audit team is positively associated with fees (Behn et al., 1999).

2.4 Conclusion

This section has provided the background to SERVQUAL as an instrument to measure customer satisfaction from services. A conceptual model of the SERVQUAL instrument was also depicted that was supported the investigations during the study. The next section will discuss the methodology.

SECTION III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Sources, collection and analysis of data are discussed in this section in order to justify the methods chosen for the proposed investigations.

Sources of data

Rey motivating literatures that was scanned and the empirical steps that was followed in the sudy are discussed below.

32.1 Secondary data collection

Literature review into customer satisfaction with regard to service products and the SERVQUAL model was carried out for mainly two reasons. First, whether the SERVQUAL instrument is applicable in the context of professional accounting business was discussed. The appropriate numbers of dimensions of SERVQUAL was explored. Second, the course of analysis of the full model for investigations was introduced.

3.2.2. The measuring instrument, sample and primary data collection

In preparation for the study, in-depth interviews with some partners from accounting firms and some existing clients of the selected case company was conducted to ensure the face validity of the measures. Several academic researchers were approached to provide some advices. Based on their feedback, several items of the original SERVQUAL questionnaire was deleted and modified. The questionnaire was pre-tested with 30 clients of various accounting firms. Respondents have explicitly been asked to indicate any ambiguities or

from these respondents were used to further refine and modify the SERVQUAL

A cover letter explaining the nature and importance of the research offering a summary report the findings on completion of the study was sent to the clients of the companies who will selected purely by random sampling. The questionnaire does contain three parts:

Part I Does contain questions about the customer's opinion of perceived and expected services, respectively.

Part II Does ask the customer to evaluate the accounting firm in terms of various constructs.

Part III Does contain demographic information to determine the title of respondent and type of business engaged e.t.c. Questionnaires had been hand delivered to owners/managers of customer companies and has been collected later at the convenience of the customer companies. Of the 120 instruments mailed, 109 questionnaires were returned (9 of which were unusable), yielding an effective responsive rate of 91.74%. The sample consist of 100 companies that span all industries from foods,to real construction and tourism industries.

Table 1 Demographic information

Items	Total	%
1. Title:	n in the state of	
Chairman/President	55	55
Vice President	30	30
Accounting Manager	10	10
Other	5	5
2. Type of Business Engaged:		
Textile	19	19
Service sector	15	15
Electricity company	4	4
Construction	15	15
Rent A Car	5	5
Tourism	4	4
Other	38	38
	84	
3. Number of year:		
0-5	50	50
6-10	18	18
11-15	13	13
16-20	12	12
21	7	7

3.2.3. Measurement of the Constructs

This section explains our measures and validation. All the final scale items are provided in the Appendix 1 and 2. A 5-point Likert scale was applied to measure the different constructs anchored from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

As to service quality, we described 19 measurement variables adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1988; 1991) SERVQUAL instrument to this particular professional accounting business. This led to five-factor dimension of service quality, consisting of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Customer satisfaction was measured using identical

adapted from Fornell, Anderson, Cha, and Bryang (1996): (1) an overall rating of sfaction, (2) the degree to which performance that fall short of or exceeds expectations, (3) a rating of performance relative to the customer's ideal good or service in the egory. Measures for price were adapted from items used by Mayhew & Winer (1992) and liner (1986). Firm image was measured by adapting relevant scale items from Johnson & stafsson (2000).

3.2.4 Validation of Measures

The SPSS programme was used to analyze the results of the questionnaire. We assessed the reliability (reliability) by reviewing the t-test, and after that we explored the relationship among the pendent variable (customer satisfaction) and the independent variables (service, quality, irm image, and price of services rendered).

s discussed in earlier sections, we conducted in-depth interviews with some partners from counting firms and some of their existing clients while preparing our SERVQUAL estionnaire. Since SERVQUAL is a well-established measure, the scale can be considered possess content validity. Empirically, convergent validity can be assessed by reviewing the sts for the factor loadings of the indicators. If all factor loadings for the indicators assuring the same construct are statistically significant (greater than twice their standard or), this can be viewed as evidence supporting the convergent validity of those indicators inderson and Gerbing 1988). Table 2 presents that all t-tests were significant showing that indicators were effectively measuring the same construct, or high convergent validity. In addition, those reliability coefficients were also found acceptable: 0.866 (responsiveness), .766 (assurance), 0.772 (empathy), 0.829 (tangibles), and 0.891 (reliability). For subsequent measurement model evaluation and hypothesis testing, we aggregated the SERVUQAL to

have five indicators (i.e., RES, ASS, EMP, TAN, and REL) by summing of the measurement items at the first-order construct level.

Table 2 Sig. (2-Tailed) and T values of SERVQUAL scale						
Parameter	Sig. (2- Tailed)	T-Value	Reliability			
		10.25				
Responsiveness			.866			
RES 1	.000	-4.187				
RES 2	.000	-4.119				
RES 3	.000	-5.327				
RES 4	.000	-3.987				
Assurance			.766			
ASS 5	.000	-3.796				
ASS 6	.010	-2.619				
ASS 7	.002	-3.112				
ASS 8	.002	-3.188				
Empathy			.772			
EMP 9	.004	-2.938				
EMP 10	.000	-4.191				
EMP 11	.000	-3.697				
EMP 12	.003	-3.063	•			
Tangibles			.829			
TAN 13	.047	2.009				
TAN 14	.480	.709				
TAN 15	.917	.104				
Reliability			.891			
REL 16	.002	-3.235				
REL 17	.004	-2.947				
REL 18	.001	-3.306				
REL 19	.000	-4.950				

The second measurement model included customer satisfaction, price, and firm image. We calculated Cronbach's alpha for the scale items to ensure that they exhibited satisfactory

of internal consistency. Reliability was checked by calculating Cronbach's alpha. The billities of these scales were .788 (customer satisfaction), .842 (price), and .844 (firm presented by calculating Cronbach's alpha. The billities of these scales were .788 (customer satisfaction), .842 (price), and .844 (firm presented by calculating Cronbach's alpha.

33 Conclusion

This section has portrayed the methodology of the study.

ECTION IV

and Results

Regression results of customer satisfaction and service quality.

Variables Entered/Removed(b)

Wodel	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	RELAVEQS	10	
	RESAVEQS		
	TANAVEQS		Enter
	EMPAVEQ S, ASSAVEQS		
	ASSAVEQS (a)		

2 All requested variables entered.

Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.605(a)	.366	.332	.487

≥ Predictors: (Constant), RELAVEQS, RESAVEQS, TANAVEQS, EMPAVEQS, ASSAVEQS

The above model summary indicates that the model explains 36.6 % of the variability (dispersion) in the dependent variable.

ANOVA (b)

Model	or early	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.874	5	2.575	10.860	.000(a)
	Residual	22.286	94	.237		
	Total	35.160	99		= 00 A 00 A \	

a. Predictors: (Constant), RELAVEQS, RESAVEQS, TANAVEQS, EMPAVEQS, ASSAVEQS

b. Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction

(res, ass, emp, tan, rel) explain a highly significant proportion of the variation in the medent variable, customer satisfaction.

Coefficients(a)

Wodel		Unstand Coeffic		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Today	В	Std. Error	Beta		
4	(Constant)	4.399	.058		75.944	.000
	RESAVEQS	.211	.197	.250	1.073	.286
	ASSAVEQS	049	.240	054	205	.838
	EMPAVEQS	.274	.130	.307	2.111	.037
	TANAVEQS	.013	.063	.019	.201	.841
	RELAVEQS	.139	.117	.159	1.185	.239

Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction

The above coefficients and significance levels indicate that empathy has the greatest influence on the dependent variable, customer satisfaction, (0.307). The direction of influence is positive.

4.2 Regression results of price and customer satisfaction

Variables Entered/Removed(b)

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	price6, price4, price5(a)		Enter

a All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.322(a)	.103	.075	.573

a Predictors: (Constant), price6, price4, price5

b Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction1

R square in the above table indicates that model explains 10.3 % of the variability in the dependent variable.

ANOVA(b)

Model	i la	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.638	3	1.213	3.694	.014(a)
	Residual	31.522	96	.328		
	Total	35.160	99			

a Predictors: (Constant), price6, price4, price5

The above F value and significance level indicates that the independent variable, price, explain a moderately significant proportion of the variation in the dependent variable (customer satisfaction).

Coefficients(a)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		В	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.079	.357		8.630	.000
	price4	.244	.108	.296	2.267	.026
	price5	.049	.100	.067	.488	.627
	price6	018	.109	025	168	.867

a Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction1

The above coefficients and significance levels indicate that the price compared to quality has the greatest influence on the dependent variable, customer satisfaction, (0.296). The direction of influence is positive.

b Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction1

4.3 Regression results of firm image and customer satisfaction.

Variables Entered/Removed(b)

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	firm image8, firm image7(a)		Enter

a All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.408(a)	.167	.149	.550

a Predictors: (Constant), firm image8, firm image7

The R value in the above table indicates that model explain 16,7% of the variability in the dependent variable.

ANOVA(b)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.859	2	2.930	9.699	.000(a)
	Residual	29.301	97	.302		
	Total	35.160	99			

a Predictors: (Constant), firm image8, firm image7

Significance level in the above table indicates that the independent variables (firm image) explain a highly significant proportion of the variation in the dependent variable (customer satisfaction).

b Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction1

b Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction1

Coefficients(a)

Model		Unstand Coeffi		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		В	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.737	.349		7.831	.000
	firm image7	.383	.119	.442	3.221	.002
12	firm image8	036	.103	047	345	.731

a Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction1

Coefficients in the above table indicate that overall firm image is highly significant explanatory variable for the customer satisfaction (0.442). The direction of influence is positive.

4.3.1 Discussion and Implications for management

This study added to the understanding and applicability of SERVQUAL by examining the validity of the instrument in the context of accounting firms. In addition, we also explored the relationship among customer satisfaction, service quality, firm image, and price of service rendered by calculating the mean differences between perception and expectation.

Table 3 Perception, Expectation and mean differences

		Perce	ption			Expec	tation	
Esponsiveness (ES)	Top box	Low	Mean	Std Dev.	Top box	Low	Mean	Std Dev.
081	4.4804	4.2196	4.350	.65713	4.7017	4.4983	4.600	.51247
082	4.3681	4.0719	4.220	.74644	4.6471	4.4329	4.540	.53973
QS3	4.3971	4.1229	4.260	.69078	4.7905	4.5895	4.690	.50642
084	4.4716	4.1684	4.320	.76383	4.7546	4.5354	4.640	.57770
lotal:			17.15				18.47	
Ass)		100						
QS5	4.4608	4.1392	4.300	.81029	4.7700	4.5500	4.660	.55450
QS6	4.5844	4.3556	4.470	.57656	4.7531	4.5469	4.650	.51981
QS7	4.5621	4.2579	4.410	.76667	4.7864	4.5936	4.690	.48607
QS8	4.6345	4.4055	4.520	.57700	4.8319	4.6481	4.740	.46319
Total:			17.70				18.74	
Empathy EMP)								
QS9	4.4955	4.2645	4.380	.58223	4.6837	4.4563	4.570	.57305
QS10	4.3912	4.0288	4.210	.91337	4.6727	4.4673	4.570	.51747
QS11	4.4035	4.0565	4.230	.87450	4.6899	4.4701	4.580	.55377
QS12	4.3154	3.9846	4.150	.83333	4.5773	4.3227	4.450	.64157
Total:			16.97				18.17	
Tangibles (TAN)								
QS13	4.4788	4.2012	4.340	.69949	4.3170	3.9030	4.110	1.0434
QS14	4.3921	4.1079	4.250	.71598	4.3429	4.0171	4.180	.82118
QS15	4.3869	4.0931	4.240	.74019	4.3762	4.0838	4.230	.73656
Total:			12.83				12.52	
Reliability (REL)								
QS16	4.6331	4.3269	4.480	.77172	4.8497	4.6703	4.760	.45216
QS17	4.6544	4.4056		.62692	4.8408	4.6592	4.750	.45782
QS18	4.6822	4.3978	4.540	.71661	4.8846	4.7154	4.800	.42640
QS19	4.6636	4.3964	4.530	.67353	4.9661	4.8339	4.900	.33333
Total:			18.08				19.21	

4.3.2 Dimensionality of SERVQUAL

The five dimensions of SERVQUAL (i.e., Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, Tangibles, and Reliability) were supported by the data collected here. This study also found that a significant expectation gap does exist in the sample population. On average, management appears to be only marginally satisfied with accounting firms' service quality. Since the

average difference score was calculated by perception minus expectation (negative values imply that perceptions fall short of expectation, and positive values imply that perceptions exceed expectations), the mean score also indicates that the higher (less negative) the score, the higher is the level of perceived service quality. This implies that there is still some room for improvement in terms of service quality. Specifically, they are responsiveness (mean score= -1.320), empathy (mean score= -1.200), reliability (mean score= -1.130), and assurance (mean score= -1.040) from the highest to lowest in order. This indicates that clients need more responsiveness and empathy from their accounting firms and less care about accounting firms' assurance. This result makes sense since most of the filed work is performed at the client's sites. So if an accounting firm needs to stand out in a highly competitive environment, more concerns to their clients are greatly needed. We have positive mean score only for **tangibles** which means that perceptions of respondents statistically equal to their expectations.

SECTION V

5.1

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This section summarised the motivation, purpose and the limitations of the proposed study.

5.2 Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Professional Accounting Firms

Business organizations make considerable use of professional services. However, it has received less attention in the context of professional business services than of other consumer services in general. The purpose of this study was to examine the potential of SERVQUAL, an instrument frequently employed to assess the quality of consumer services, in professional accounting firms and to identify those managerial actionable factors that impact customer satisfaction. In addition, the study tried to explore the relationship among customer satisfaction, service quality, firm image, and price of service rendered.

5.3 Limitations

The limitations of the proposed study need to be acknowledged.

Although the empirical data to be collected will be representative of the clients of the selected accounting firm only and this should not be taken as a generalization for other industries because of different industry characteristics, business culture, and management styles imposed.

4 Conclusion & Recommendations

The results of the study suggest, that service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction, overall firm image does have positive effect on customer satisfaction, price of ervice compared to quality has a significant and positive impact on customer satisfaction and price of service directly influences the service quality. As digging into further the components of service quality, we found that only one out of five dimensions of SERVQUAL were satisfactly significant related to customer satisfaction. It is empathy. This indicates that executing firms have to bear this particular area in mind if they expect to own their clients hearts. This study added to the understanding and applicability of SERVQUAL by examining validity of the instrument in the context of accounting firms. In addition, we also explored the relationship among customer satisfaction, service quality, firm image and price of service rendered. In fact, this is a unique study to investigate customer satisfaction of accounting firms with an empirical study from North Cyprus and Turkey.

5.4.1 Relationship between individual dimension of SERVQUAL and satisfaction

As digging into further the components of service quality we found that only one out of five dimensions of SERVQUAL were statistically significant related to customer satisfaction. It is empathy. This may indicate those sample companies are not quite pleased with this area. These findings are also coincided with the results in Table 3 showing one of the largest negative difference score (empathy). Specifically, we can conclude with that an accounting firms needs to recognize and response effectively to this area (empathy). If they still want to retain customers in highly competitive environment.

4.2 Positive relationship among customer satisfaction, price, firm image and service quality

rice, firm image and service quality had a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. he impact on satisfaction from highest to lowest in order was, overall firm image, price ompared to quality and service quality (empathy), respectively. This tells us the firm image is the most important factor to customer satisfaction, price next, and service quality last from irms' perspective. From our empirical results, we may infer that the client believe that no matter which accounting firm they choose should have a certain degree of service quality quaranteed in the highly competitive battle field.

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APPENDIX I

RELIABILITY TEST

1. Price

Case Processing Summary

	7411	N	%
Cases	Valid	100	100.0
	Excluded (a)	0	.0
	Total	100	100.0

a Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.842	3

2. Custumer satisfaction

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	100	100.0
	Excluded (a)	0	.0
	Total	100	100.0

a Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.788	3

3. Firm image

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	100	100.0
	Excluded (a)	0	.0
	Total	100	100.0

a Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.844	2

PERCEPTION - EXPECTATION T-Test One-Sample Statistics

305	N Mean Std. Deviation		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
q21	100	3800	.90766	.09077	
q22	100	3200	.77694	.07769	
q23	100	4300	.80723	.08072	
q24	100	3200	.80252	.08025	
q25	100	3600	.94836	.09484	
q26	100	1800	.68726	.06873	
q27	100	2800	.89983	.08998	
q28	100	2200	.69019	.06902	
q29	100	1900	.64659	.06466	
q210	100	3600	.85894	.08589	
q211	100	3500	.94682	.09468	
q212	100	3000	.97959	.09796	
q213	100	.2300	1.14464	.11446	
q214	100	.0700	.98734	.09873	
q215	100	.0100	.95869	.09587	
q216	100	2800	.86550	.08655	
q217	100	2200	.74644	.07464	
q218	100	2600	.78650	.07865	
q219	100	3700	.74745	.07475	

One-Sample Test

			Test Valu	ue = 0			
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper	
q21	-4.187	99	.000	38000	5601	1999	
q22	-4.119	99	.000	32000	4742	1658	
q23	-5.327	99	.000	43000	5902	2698	
q24	-3.987	99	.000	32000	4792	1608	
q25	-3.796	99	.000	36000	5482	1718	
q26	-2.619	99	.010	18000	3164	0436	
q27	-3.112	99	.002	28000	4585	1015	
q28	-3.188	99	.002	22000	3569	0831	
q29	-2.938	99	.004	19000	3183	0617	
q210	-4.191	99	.000	36000	5304	1896	
q211	-3.697	99	.000	35000	5379	1621	
q212	-3.063	99	.003	30000	4944	1056	
q213	2.009	99	.047	.23000	.0029	.4571	
q214	.709	99	.480	.07000	1259	.2659	
q215	.104	99	.917	.01000	1802	.2002	
q216	-3.235	99	.002	28000	4517	1083	
q217	-2.947	99	.004	22000	3681	0719	
q218	-3.306	99	.001	26000	4161	1039	
q219	-4.950	99	.000	37000	5183	2217	

One-Sample Statistics

T-Test PERCEPTION

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
RES1a	100	4.35	.657	.066
RES2a	100	4.22	.746	.075
RES3b	100	4.26	.691	.069
RES4b	100	4.32	.764	.076
ASS5a	100	4.30	.810	.081
ASS6a	100	4.47	.577	.058
ASS7a	100	4.41	.767	.077
ASS8a	100	4.52	.577	.058
EMP9a	100	4.38	.582	.058
EMP10a	100	4.21	.913	.091
EMP11b	100	4.23	.874	.087
EMP12a	100	4.15	.833	.083
TAN13a	100	4.34	.699	.070
TAN14a	100	4.25	.716	.072
TAN15a	100	4.24	.740	.074
REL16a	100	4.48	.772	.077
REL17a	100	4.53	.627	.063
REL18a	100	4.54	.717	.072
REL19a	100	4.53	.674	.067

One-Sample Test

			Test Valu	ue = 0		
					95% Confidence Interva of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
RES1a	66.197	99	.000	4.350	4.22	4.48
RES2a	56.535	99	.000	4.220	4.07	4.37
RES3b	61.670	99	.000	4.260	4.12	4.40
RES4b	56.557	99	.000	4.320	4.17	4.47
ASS5a	53.068	99	.000	4.300	4.14	4.46
ASS6a	77.528	99	.000	4.470	4.36	4.58
ASS7a	57.522	99	.000	4.410	4.26	4.56
ASS8a	78.336	99	.000	4.520	4.41	4.63
EMP9a	75.228	99	.000	4.380	4.26	4.50
EMP10a	46.093	99	.000	4.210	4.03	4.39
EMP11b	48.371	99	.000	4.230	4.06	4.40
EMP12a	49.800	99	.000	4.150	3.98	4.32
TAN13a	62.045	99	.000	4.340	4.20	4.48
TAN14a	59.359	99	.000	4.250	4.11	4.39
TAN15a	57.283	99	.000	4.240	4.09	4.39
REL16a	58.052	99	.000	4.480	4.33	4.63
REL17a	72.258	99	.000	4.530	4.41	4.65
REL18a	63.354	99	.000	4.540	4.40	4.68
REL19a	67.258	99	.000	4.530	4.40	4.66

One-Sample Statistics

T-Test Expectation

T-Test Expectation							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
RES1b	100	4.60	.512	.051			
RES2b	100	4.54	.540	.054			
RES3b	100	4.69	.506	.051			
RES4b	100	4.64	.578	.058			
ASS5b	100	4.66	.555	.055			
ASS6b	100	4.65	.520	.052			
ASS7b	100	4.69	.486	.049			
ASS8b	100	4.74	.463	.046			
EMP9b	100	4.57	.573	.057			
EMP10b	100	4.57	.517	.052			
EMP11b	100	4.58	.554	.055			
EMP12b	100	4.45	.642	.064			
TAN13b	100	4.11	1.043	.104			
TAN14b	100	4.18	.821	.082			
TAN15b	100	4.23	.737	.074			
REL16b	100	4.76	.452	.045			
REL16b	100	4.75	.458	.046			
REL17b	100	4.80	.426	.043			
REL19b	100	4.90	.333	.033			

One-Sample Test

			Test Valu	ie = 0		
					95% Confider of the Diff	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
RES1b	89.761	99	.000	4.600	4.50	4.70
RES2b	84.115	99	.000	4.540	4.43	4.65
RES3b	92.610	99	.000	4.690	4.59	4.79
RES4b	80.318	99	.000	4.640	4.53	4.75
ASS5b	84.039	99	.000	4.660	4.55	4.77
ASS6b	89.456	99	.000	4.650	4.55	4.75
ASS7b	96.488	99	.000	4.690	4.59	4.79
ASS8b	102.334	99	.000	4.740	4.65	4.83
EMP9b	79.749	99	.000	4.570	4.46	4.68
EMP10b	88.314	99	.000	4.570	4.47	4.67
EMP11b	82.705	99	.000	4.580	4.47	4.69
EMP12b	69.361	99	.000	4.450	4.32	4.58
TAN13b	39.389	99	.000	4.110	3.90	4.32
TAN14b	50.902	99	.000	4.180	4.02	4.34
TAN15b	57.429	99	.000	4.230	4.08	4.38
REL16b	105.274	99	.000	4.760	4.67	4.85
REL16b	103.753	99	.000	4.750	4.66	4.84
REL17b	112.570	99	.000	4.800	4.72	4.88
REL19b	147.000	99	.000	4.900	4.83	4.97

APPENDIX II

Satisfacion in Professional Societies Films

An Empirical Assessment of Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Professional Accounting Firms

(Customers of			ttd)				
Autumn 2006	Drive - condex						
Administration accounting firm	ey carried out as par n at the Near East U m operating in Nort v. Your responses v	Iniversity. The aim her Cyprus. Please	is to measure the respond to all que	quality of service as a			
Thank you for	your kind co-opera	ation.					
Near East Uni	siness Administration versity Company/respor	,	on				
What is the re	gistered name of yo	our company?					
How long has 0-5 years	your company beer 6-10 years	n in operation?	16-20 years	21+ years			
	your company beer		ing services from. 16-20 years	? 21+ years			
0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	10-20 years	21+ years			
What is your	current position at the	he company?					
	a say in selecting an	accounting service	for your compan	y?			

Section 2 – SERVQUAL measurement variables

Please use the following table to rank your responses to situations 1 to 19.

Strongly atisfied	Somehow satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somehow dissatisfied	Strongly dissatisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Latent Variable	Measurement Variable	Perception				
		5	4	3	2	1
Responsiveness RES)	Willingness to help customers					
	2. Prompt service to customers					.40
	3. Keeping customer informed about when services will be performed					
	4. Readiness to respond to customers' request					
ssurance (ASS)		-				
	consistently courteous 7. Employees who have the					
	knowledge to answer customer questions					
	8. Making customers feel safe in their transactions					
npathy (EMP)	9. Convenient business hours 10. Giving customers personal attention					
	11. Employees who understand the customer's needs					
	12. Having the customer's best interest at heart					
angibles (TAN)	13. Employees who have a neat, professional appearance					
	14. Visually appealing facilities 15. Modern equipment					
	16. Providing services at the promised time					T-1-21
	17. Dependability in handling customers' service problems					
	18. Providing services as promised 19. Maintaining error-free					
	records					

Section 2 – SERVQUAL measurement variables

Please use the following table to rank your responses to situations 1 to 19.

Strongly satisfied	Somehow satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somehow dissatisfied	Strongly dissatisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Latent Variable	Measurement Variable	Exceptation				
and the second	Control of the second	5	4	3	2	1
Responsiveness (RES)	1. Willingness to help customers					
	2. Prompt service to customers					
	3. Keeping customer informed					
	about when services will be					
	performed	7)				
	4. Readiness to respond to customers' request					
Assurance (ASS)	5. Employees who instill					
	confidence in customers					
	6. Employees who are consistently courteous					
	7. Employees who have the knowledge to answer			to to		
	customer questions					
	8. Making customers feel safe in their transactions	:				
Empathy (EMP)	9. Convenient business hours	-				
	10. Giving customers personal attention					
	11. Employees who understand the customer's needs					
	12. Having the customer's best interest at heart			***************************************		
Tangibles (TAN)	13. Employees who have a					
	neat, professional appearance					
	14. Visually appealing facilities					
	15. Modern equipment					
Reliability (REL)	16. Providing services at the promised time					
	17. Dependability in handling					
	customers' service problems					
	18. Providing services as promised					
	19. Maintaining error-free records					

Section 3 - variables for satisfaction, price, and corporate image

Please use the following table to rank your responses to situations 1 to 8.

Strongly satisfied	Somehow satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somehow dissatisfied	Strongly dissatisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Latent variable	Measurement variable	1	2	3	4	5
Customer satisfaction	1.Overall satisfaction					
	2. Expectancy disconfirmation (performance that falls short of or exceeds expectations)					
	3. Performance versus the customer's ideal service provider in the category					
Price	4. Price compared to quality					
	5. Price compared to other companies					-
	6. Price compared to expectations					
Firm image	7. Overall firm image					-
	8. firm image compared to other companies					

Thank you for your kind co-operation.

Mine Yarkıner

Muhasebe Şirletlerinde Müşteri Memnuniyeti ve Hizmet Kalitesinin Deneysel olarak Değerlendirilmesi

_Ltd)

(Customers of _____

turuyor. teyi ve mi	Amaç, Kuzey Kıbr İşteri memnuniyeti	ni ölçmektir. Soru	e bürolarının sund lar muhasebe hizn	duğu hizmetlerdeki netleri işletmelerinin
	gizliliği korunacal	, aşağıda üç bölüm ktır.	ue sunuian soruiai	i yamuayimz.
nize teşek	kür ederim.			
	er me öğrencisi Üniversitesi			
	Sirket/temsilci ta			
etinizin k	ayıtlı, resmi adı ne	air?		
-	yıldır çalışıyor? 6-10 yıl	11-15 yıl	16-20 yıl	21+ yıl
-		11-15 yıl	16-20 yıl	21+ yıl
ul				21+ yıl hizmetleri alıyor?
etiniz,				
etiniz,	6-10 yıl	'dan ka 11-15 yıl	ç yıldır muhasebe	hizmetleri alıyor?

Bölüm 2 – SERVQUAL ölçüm değişkenleri

Lütfen, aşağıdaki çizelgeyi kullanarak 1 den 19'a kadar muhasebe büronuzdan <u>beklediğiniz</u> hizmete göre yanıtlarınızı sıralandırın.

Çok memnunum	memnunum	Kararsızım	memnun değilim	Hiç memnun değilim
5	4	3	2	1

Ana Değişken	Ölçüm değişkeni	Be	klenen			
		5	4	3	2	1
Tepkisellik	1. Müşterilere yardımcı olma					
(RES)	isteği					
	2. Müşterilere anında hizmet verilmesi					
	3. Hizmetlerin ne zaman					
	gerçekleşeceğine ilişkin		:			
	müşterilerin bilgilendirilmesi					
	4. Müşteri isteklerine her	*** *** ****				
	zaman hazır olunması					
Güvence (ASS)	5. Müşterilere güven veren					
Suvenee (1155)	çalışanlar olması					
	6. Çalışanların her zaman		-			
	saygılı olması					
	7. Müşterilerin sorularına					
	yanıt verebilecek bilgili					
	çalışanların olması					
	8. Yürütülen işlemlerde					
	müşterilere güven verilmesi					
Empati (EMP)	9. Müşterilere uygun çalışma					
	saatlerinin olması					
	10. Müşterilere bireysel, özel					
	ilgi verilmesi					
	11. Müşterilerin					
	gereksinmelerini anlayan					
	çalışanların olması					
	12. Müşterilerin çıkarlarına					
	kalpten ilgi gösterilmesi					
Görünüş (TAN)	13. Çalışanların tertipli ve					
	mesleklerine uygun giyinmesi					
	14. Göze hoş gelen işyeri					
	düzeni, olanakların olması					
	15. İşyerindeki donatımın					
	modern olması					
Güvenirlilik	16. Hizmetlerin söz verilen					
(REL)	zamanda sağlanması					
	17. Müşterilerin hizmet					
	sorunlarıyla ilgilenilmesinde					
	güvenilir olunması					
	18. Söz verildiği şekilde					
	hizmetlerin sağlanması					-
	19. Yanlışsız kayıt tutulması					

Bölüm 2 – SERVQUAL ölçüm değişkenleri

Lütfen, aşağıdaki çizelgeyi kullanarak 1 den 19'a kadar muhasebe büronuzdan algıladığınız hizmete göre yanıtlarınızı sıralandırınız.

Çok memnunum	memnunum	Kararsızım	memnun değilim	Hiç memnun değilim
5	4	3	2	1

Ana Değişken	Ölçüm değişkeni	Al	gılanan			
		5	4	3	2	1
Tepkisellik (RES)	Müşterilere yardımcı olma isteği					
()	Müşterilere anında hizmet verilmesi					
			-			
	3. Hizmetlerin ne zaman					
	gerçekleşeceğine ilişkin					
	müşterilerin bilgilendirilmesi					
	4. Müşteri isteklerine her zaman hazır olunması			-		
Güyenee (ASS)			-			
Güvence (ASS)	5. Müşterilere güven veren					
	çalışanlar olması					
	6. Çalışanların her zaman					
	saygılı olması					
	7. Müşterilerin sorularına					
	yanıt verebilecek bilgili					
	çalışanların olması					
	8. Yürütülen işlemlerde					
E (EMP)	müşterilere güven verilmesi					
Empati (EMP)	9. Müşterilere uygun çalışma					
	saatlerinin olması					
	10. Müşterilere bireysel, özel					
	ilgi verilmesi					
	11. Müşterilerin					
	gereksinmelerini anlayan					
	çalışanların olması					
	12. Müşterilerin çıkarlarına					
CHARLE (TANI)	kalpten ilgi gösterilmesi					
Görünüş (TAN)	13. Çalışanların tertipli ve					
	mesleklerine uygun giyinmesi					
	14. Göze hoş gelen işyeri					
	düzeni, olanakların olması					
	15. İşyerindeki donatımın modern olması					
Güvenirlilik	16. Hizmetlerin söz verilen					
(REL)						
KEL)	zamanda sağlanması					
	17. Müşterilerin hizmet					
	sorunlarıyla ilgilenilmesinde güvenilir olunması					
	18. Söz verildiği şekilde					
	hizmetlerin sağlanması	-				
	19. Yanlışsız kayıt tutulması					

Bölüm 3 – Müşteri tatmini, fiyatlar ve kurum imajı değişkenleri

Lütfen, aşağıdaki çizelgeyi kullanarak 1 den 8'e kadar belirtilmiş durumlara göre zanıtlarınızı sıralandırınız.

ok memnunum	memnunum	Kararsızım	memnun değilim	Hiç memnun değilim
5	4	3	2	1

Ana değişken	Ölçüm değikeni	5	4	3	2	1
lüşteri nemnuniyeti	1.Genel memnuniyet				2	1
	 Beklentilerin geçersiz olma olasılığı (Şirketin beklenenin altında ya da üstünde başarım göstermesi) 					
	3. Müşterilerin ideal hizmet beklentisine oranla şirketin başarımı					
iyatlar	4. Şirketin hizmet kalitesine kıyasla fiyatları					
	5. Diğer şirketlere göre şirketin fiyatları					
	 Müşteri beklentilerine göre şirketin fiyatları 					
rket imajı	7. Şirketin genel imajı					
	8. Şirketin diğer şirketlere kıyasla imajı					-

ginize teşekkür ederim.

ine Yarkıner