

Antecedents of Perceived Values and Outcomes of Student Satisfaction: Evidence From Higher Education in Vietnam

Vi T. T. Nguyen

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8686-1236>

Ho Chi Minh University of Banking, Vietnam

Hoanh-Su Le

University of Economics and Law, VNU-HCM, Vietnam

Thanh D. Nguyen

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5775-8494>

Ho Chi Minh University of Banking, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between service quality and perceived value in blended learning, focusing on their impact on student satisfaction, loyalty, and word of mouth (WOM). A survey of 1,959 participants was analyzed using partial least squares–structural equation modelling. The results indicate that service quality consists of online services, including information and system quality, and offline services, such as academic, administrative, and facility services. Perceived value is categorized into get value, which encompasses functional, social, epistemic, emotional, and image aspects, and give value, which refers to monetary and non-monetary sacrifices. Offline service quality has a stronger impact on perceived value than online quality. Significant relationships were found between service quality, perceived value, satisfaction, loyalty, and WOM. However, offline service quality did not directly affect loyalty. These findings offer insights for educational institutions seeking to enhance services and encourage positive WOM.

KEYWORDS

Blended Learning, Service Quality, Perceived Value, Satisfaction, Loyalty, WOM

INTRODUCTION

Rapid advancements in science and technology, further accelerated by the COVID–19 pandemic, have fundamentally transformed the educational landscape. The pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of traditional educational systems, expediting the adoption of flexible learning models for over 1.6 billion students globally (Affouneh et al., 2020; Ayasrah et al., 2022). Central to this transformation is the digital revolution, which encompasses innovations such as artificial intelligence, learning analytics, and immersive technologies like augmented and virtual reality that have redefined educational experiences. These tools enhance flexibility, personalization, and inclusivity, contributing to a more dynamic and interconnected global educational environment (Luo & Zhou, 2024; Singh et al., 2024).

Blended learning, which combines face-to-face instruction with online methods, has emerged as a prominent model in higher education, capitalizing on the strengths of both modes of delivery

DOI: 10.4018/IJABIM.372061

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(Boelens et al., 2017; Li & Huang, 2024; Um et al., 2021). While the pandemic acted as a catalyst for change, broader trends in digital innovation, particularly AI-driven personalization and advanced analytics, are pivotal to ensuring sustainable growth and global competitiveness in the academic sector. To remain competitive, universities must leverage these technologies to enhance the student experience, cultivate long-term relationships, and provide high-value services, ensuring their relevance in the rapidly evolving digital age (Douglas, 2015).

Several studies confirm that service quality is critical to university success, profitability, and competitive advantage (Tan et al., 2022). Moreover, Ashraf et al. (2016) identified key dimensions of perceived educational quality from students' perspectives, including faculty credentials, administrative services, library resources, general facilities, career prospects, and financial aid. While service quality has traditionally been linked to offline contexts, maintaining high standards in online environments is equally essential, prompting vendors to explore effective methods through trial and error (Xu et al., 2013).

In addition, Seo and Um (2023) highlight that blended learning offers cost efficiency and flexibility, with offline service quality (p-SQ) enhancing perceived epistemic, social, and emotional value, while online service quality (e-SQ) addresses perceived conditional value. Perceived value reflects customer perception rather than the service provider's subjective assessment (Khalifa, 2004). Value perceptions, shaped by evaluating the trade-off between benefits and costs, consist of two components: *get* and *give* (Ledden et al., 2007, 2011; Zeithaml, 1988). In educational services, Ledden et al. (2011) argue that service quality precedes value and significantly influences student satisfaction (SAT) and word of mouth (WOM). Therefore, institutions should focus on enhancing service quality and perceived value to improve SAT (Zeithaml, 1988).

Strong evidence indicates that perceived value drives SAT, as students who perceive high value in their education report higher SAT (Ledden & Kalafatis, 2010). Furthermore, Carvalho and de Oliveira Mota (2010) demonstrate that perceived value fosters student loyalty (LOY) and positively influences students' likelihood of providing favorable WOM recommendations about the institution and its programs (Bruce & Edgington, 2008). A loyal student may continue financially supporting their institution, promote it through WOM to prospective or current students, or engage in cooperation (Thurau et al., 2001). This underscores the importance of enhancing perceived value to improve student SAT, student LOY, and advocacy in education.

Additionally, postgraduate education is a strategic priority for universities, fostering expertise and research in science and technology, thereby driving knowledge growth and socio-economic development. To support these initiatives effectively, universities must systematically acquire and integrate diverse scientific knowledge while considering institutional responsiveness, value, and expectations. Numerous studies have examined various aspects of educational services, including perceived value (Alves, 2011; Chandra & Bagdi, 2021; LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1999; Ledden et al., 2011), service quality (DeLone & McLean, 2003; Seo & Um, 2023; Sultan & Wong, 2014; Zeqiri et al., 2023), SAT (Ledden et al., 2007; Seo & Um, 2023; Sultan & Wong, 2019), LOY (Alves & Raposo, 2010; Tan et al., 2022), and WOM (Delafrooz et al., 2019; Farzin et al., 2021; Sultan & Wong, 2019).

Despite extensive research on these aspects, a notable gap remains in the literature regarding their comprehensive integration. This study identifies perceived value as an outcome of service quality dimensions and analyzes their relative impacts. It proposes measuring the roles of e-SQ and p-SQ in influencing perceived value, SAT, LOY, and WOM.

This research aims to (a) identify higher-order constructs of service quality and perceived value in blended learning; (b) assess the impact of e-SQ and p-SQ on perceived value dimensions, including both get value (GET) and give value (GIV); and (c) explore how service quality types and perceived value influence student SAT, student LOY, and WOM.

Focusing on postgraduate alumni from Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) who participated in blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study evaluates postgraduate education quality from diverse student perspectives. The findings provide

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