



Exploring the impact of communication effectiveness on service quality, trust and relationship commitment in IT services[☆]

Jungi Park^{a,1}, Jungwoo Lee^{a,*}, Hyejung Lee^{a,2}, Duane Truex^{b,c,3}

^a Graduate School of Information, Yonsei University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

^b Department of Computer Information Systems, Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA 30303, USA

^c Mid Sweden University, Information Technology and Management, Sundsvall, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 21 April 2011

Received in revised form 11 February 2012

Accepted 13 February 2012

Available online 11 April 2012

Keywords:

IT services

Communication effectiveness

Service quality

Functional service quality

Technical service quality

Trust

Relationship commitment

ABSTRACT

Most firms today are served by specialized IT service providers for the development and maintenance of their business information systems. During the IT service encounter, service providers and clients interact throughout the project, exchanging information, sharing knowledge and making critical decisions. From the IT service provider's viewpoint, it is important to raise the level of clients' relationship commitment during this service encounter as their business continuity depends upon clients assessment. Intuitively, effective communication and effective service quality, mediated by trust, are critical factors in raising the level of relationship commitment. This study proposes an empirical model consisting of four critical antecedents of relationship commitment (communication effectiveness, technical service quality, functional service quality and trust) and then tests the model using data points solicited from two global firms. Study results revealed that trust is a strong mediator for relationship commitment while functional, rather than technical, service quality is a stronger mediator in forming the clients' trust.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

IT services are knowledge-based services provided by experts, who are proficient in information technologies and systems, to clients who need technologies and systems for their business operations. While providing these knowledge-based services, service providers obtain relevant domain knowledge from the clients. In turn, the clients expect an influx of technical knowledge from the providing experts. It is an iterative process wherein domain knowledge needs to be translated into actual IT service delivery outcomes, which may then be subject to client feedback via iterative interaction between clients and providers (Carr, 2006; Coughlan, Lycett, & Macredie, 2005). In other words, the IT service delivery process involves an in-depth exchange of knowledge rather than superficial exchange of task related instructions, between service providers and clients. The client-service provider partners are involved in an

extremely collaborative relationship rather than in a coordinating or cooperative relationship.

Because of the lack of specialized knowledge on IT from the client's side, IT service is one of those professional services that demands high credence, where it is not easy for clients to assess the service quality, even after delivery (Sharma & Patterson, 1999). Thus, an essential component of the IT service relationship must be the communicative actions between IT experts and clients. IT service providers are evaluated based on how well they understand and meet their clients' needs. It is through extensive and interactive communicative action that the service provider can apply what it has learned from client to the actual implementation of required systems and technologies.

Communication is a critical interpersonal process consisting of a repetitive cycle of initiating, maintaining and terminating information exchange (Applbaum, 1973) through verbal and nonverbal methods occurring at the actual IT service encounter (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). Effective communication between the stakeholders during service encounters helps to solve various potential problems inherent in the exchange of information and knowledge (Moorman, Deshpandcoq, & Zaltman, 1993). Effective communication significantly reinforce clients' intention to continue receiving the service from the same provider (Rafaeli, 1993), leading to the development of long-term relationships with clients (Sharma & Patterson, 1999). This is because the quality of interaction and the trust formed between service providers and clients at the

[☆] This research was partially supported by the MKE (Ministry of Knowledge Economy), Republic Korea, under IT/SW Creative research program supervised by NIPA (National IT Industry Promotion Agency; NIPA-2011-C1820-1101-0015).

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +82 10 5398 7751.

E-mail addresses: Warren.pak@gmail.com (J. Park), jlee@yonsei.ac.kr (J. Lee), hjlee@yonsei.ac.kr (H. Lee), dtruex@gsu.edu (D. Truex).

¹ Tel.: +82 10 5878 8862.

² Tel.: +82 10 4079 1607.

³ Tel.: +1 404 651 3899.

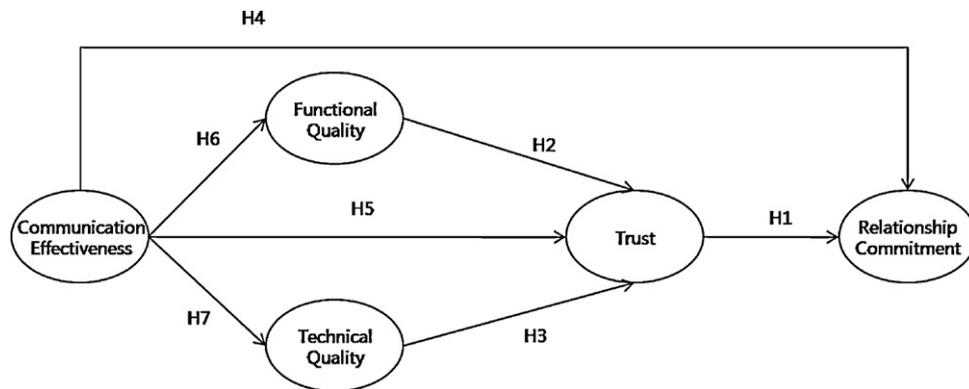


Fig. 1. Research model.

service encounter are critical criteria used in evaluating further commitment to the relationship (Mattila & Enz, 2002). Accordingly, engendering trust during the service delivery process is required for securing long-term relationships.

Recent studies in IT services identify service quality as a critical mediating factor between communication effectiveness and trust (Carr, 2006; Lee & Kim, 1999). Further research on traditional services has shown that service quality is itself composed of separate, but closely related, functional and technical aspects (Gronroos, 1984). IS-SERVQUAL, a service quality measure developed in IT service academia (Kettinger & Lee, 1994), had been developed with specific focus on functional attributes of IT services, such as empathy, tangibles, service reliability, and the like. IS-SERVQUAL covers functional aspect of IT service quality. The technical quality of IT services has been addressed by other measures developed separately for different purpose: information quality and/or system quality. Technical service quality for IT services is, by definition, the quality of technical outcome of those services (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). A literature review of major journals indicates that, in the IT service area, the functional and the technical quality of IT services may have not been measured simultaneously as separate dimensions of IT service quality in relation to trust and relationship commitment.

To fill this gap, this study developed a theoretical model from extant literature review concerning the nomological net of communication effectiveness onto relationship commitment via technical and functional service quality, and trust. Measures of functional and technical IT service quality were adopted from previous studies and were validated. Using these measures, an empirical test was conducted using 210 data points solicited from employees of two global firms via partial least squares (PLS) modeling.

2. Theoretical research model

Even for IT service providers offering professional services of high credence, it is not easy to gain trust and maintain long-term commitment from clients. As Morgan and Hunt (1994) have argued, trust precedes commitment behavior. To gain trust from the client, service providers need to exhibit their competence in delivering the intended services by assuring appropriate service quality during service delivery process as well as the service outcome itself (Chakrabarty, Whitten, & Green, 2007). The literature reveals that the service quality contains two critical but separate dimensions: technical quality and functional quality (Gronroos, 1984). Technical service quality is related to the delivered outcome, whereas functional service quality to the actual process of service. For example, in a restaurant, technical service quality can be operationalized as the quality of food while functional service quality as server's attitude and demeanor during the dining experience. Both dimensions

of service quality may reinforce or undermine clients' trust. The literature also points out that these dimensions of service quality as well as the relationship commitment be associated with the communication effectiveness of service providers. In this section, a theoretical research model is developed based on the extensive review of prior studies, leading to testable hypotheses.

2.1. Research model

The conceptual model guiding this research is depicted in Fig. 1. This model is adopted from the relationship marketing literature (Sharma & Patterson, 1999; Gronroos, 1984), dealing with consumer's relationship commitment. The model reflects the characteristics of IT services, by conceptualizing clients' trust to be the function of perceived functional and technical service quality measured in terms of elements of IT services. Applying this theory, communication effectiveness is conceptualized as an antecedent of trust and relationship commitment, mediated by the two dimensions of service quality: functional and technical. Hypotheses based on this conceptualization are presented in the following subsection along with details of our supporting theoretical arguments.

2.2. Relationship commitment: the ultimate dependent construct in IT services

Relationship commitment represents the highest level of ties among participating parties. It refers to how deeply organizations or individuals are involved in a transactional exchange relationship and the extent to which they maintain the relationship over a long period. Along with trust, it is an important variable which may lead to mutually beneficial relationship on a longer term basis (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Garbarino and Johnson (1999) described relationship commitment as a psychological attachment in which even the future welfare of an organization is based.

Thus, for this research, relationship commitment can be defined as a continued desire to maintain a relationship of value exchange and is a psychological state predisposing an organization toward maintaining the relationship over long term (Moorman et al., 1993). Previous studies of relationship commitment identify 'affective commitment' (Jones, Reynolds, Mothersbaugh, & Beatty, 2007) defined as 'the affective willingness to maintain a relationship enhancing perception of future value' (Dick & Basu, 1994). As a psychological state reflecting affective attachment in the relationship between a service provider and its clients, high affective commitment measures devotion to the relationship (Bendapudi & Berry, 1997).

Sharma and Patterson (1999) even suggested that the clients' relationship commitment to a service provider can be a surrogate measure for perceived service performance. Relationship commitment will be inducing or reducing voluntary participations of

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات