

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Australasian Marketing Journal

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/amj

The role of creativity and project management in enhancing service quality of advertising agencies: A qualitative approach

Elizabeth Levin ^a, Park Thaichon ^{b,*}, Sara Quach ^a, Antonio Lobo ^a

^a Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia

^b Griffith University, Gold Coast, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 21 December 2016

Revised 21 October 2017

Accepted 21 October 2017

Available online

Keywords:

Agency performance

Project outcome

Project management processes

Creative competence

Advertising

ABSTRACT

This research study aims to investigate the role of creativity and project management as important aspects of service quality. The context is the advertising industry which is highly competitive and its clients have very specific needs and expectations. Data was collected using indepth interviews with marketing managers and project leaders who were responsible for the advertising needs of their organisations. The findings provide detailed insights into the nature of creative competence, project management process and project outcomes from the clients' perspective. Creative competence includes an assessment of the creative work produced by the advertising agencies and their staff. The project management processes reflect the need for detailed plans and budgets to be developed and communicated, as well as having a clear process for change management once the project scope and plan have been signed off. This study is the first of its kind using a qualitative approach to investigate the role of creativity and project management in enhancing the service quality of advertising agencies.

© 2017 Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

This study evaluates the role of creativity and project management in enhancing the service quality of advertising agencies. With an exponential increase in technology-enabled services, the attention of the services literature has shifted to measurement and operationalisation issues in service quality (Kurt and Atrek, 2012). SERVQUAL was introduced by Parasuraman et al. (1988), followed by the development of E-S-QUAL (Parasuraman et al., 2005), a measurement scale for online service quality. Previous literature on service quality reveals that perceived service quality dimensions are not limited to those identified in SERVQUAL and E-S-QUAL (Ganguli and Roy, 2010; He and Li, 2010). These scales are inadequate in addressing specific issues which are relevant to the advertising industry as a service provider in the business-to-business (B2B) environment. For instance, service quality in the client-advertising agency context involves the quality of an agency's performance, project outcome, project management processes, creative competence and other aspects, which are not addressed by either SERVQUAL or E-S-QUAL. Moreover, several basic differences exist in the relationships between client and their advertising agencies as compared with other B2B services and there is a paucity of such studies in B2B contexts such as advertising agencies (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007).

Previous research undertaken to investigate the client-advertising agency relationship can be categorised into two groups. The first group consists of studies focused on the key drivers of relationship performance (Wackman et al., 1986) whilst the second group focuses on dissatisfaction, factors that precipitate switching behaviour and reasons for termination of relationships (Henke, 1995; Lacey, 1998). There has been limited research on the evaluative criteria and processes used by clients in developing service-quality perceptions (Caceres and Paparoidamis, 2007). SERVQUAL appears to be insufficient to conceptualize service quality in Business-to-Business context due to the complex nature of inter-firm service offering and relationships (Woo and Ennew, 2005). Moreover, several authors have argued that the concept of service quality and quality dimensions are industry-specific (Babakus and Boller, 1992; Baker, 2013). As such, the current study seeks to explore service quality perceptions in the professional services, in particular, advertising agencies which are project based organisations (Bartsch et al., 2013) involving "the creation of temporary systems for the performance of project tasks" (Sydow et al., 2004, p. 1475). Therefore, the dimensions of project management can be used to enrich the understanding of service quality as perceived by the clients of advertising agencies. However, Carden and Egan (2008) found that there is no published research relating project management to marketing. Hence, the research purpose is to develop and enhance understanding of the range of immediate experiences related to service quality in the advertising context which are embedded in the relationship and interaction between an advertising agency and its client (Goulding, 2005, p. 302). The main research question is

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: park.thaichon@gmail.com (P. Thaichon).

"How is service quality of advertising agencies, being project-based organisations, perceived by their clients?" More specifically, this study aims to investigate clients' perspective of the role of creativity and project management as core areas associated with service quality of advertising agencies. This study adds to the understanding of how project management is applied in the marketing discipline, specifically in the advertising context.

This paper is structured as follows: A review of the literature is performed with a discussion of service quality since advertising agencies provide professional services to their clients. This evolves into a discussion of specific services provided by advertising agencies, which are considered to be relatively important by their clients. The issues or problems are elicited as gaps in the literature. The research methodology follows using a qualitative approach. The in-depth findings are reported and discussed. The paper concludes with a discussion of theoretical and managerial implications, the limitations of the study and suggested future research.

2. Service quality provided by advertising agencies

Several researchers attest to the importance of service quality as a factor underlying business performance and an organisation's long-term feasibility (Carrillat et al., 2007). According to Cronin and Taylor (1992) there is interest in the measurement of service quality, as services have become increasingly important in the global economy, and organisations need to focus on offering and delivering higher quality services in order to maintain their competitive stance. However, 'service quality is an elusive and abstract construct that is difficult to define and measure' (Cronin and Taylor, 1992, p. 55). Oliver (2010) claims that the notion of quality was developed with regards to technical excellence in a manufacturing environment, whereas the quality construct in the services literature is an attitudinal construct which centres around customers' perceptions of overall excellence or superiority (Kang, 2006). Hence quality in manufacturing can be objectively assessed whilst in service contexts quality is evaluated subjectively. Parasuraman (1998), Caceres and Papparoidamis (2007) and Stan et al. (2007) note that most of the literature in the area of service quality relates to consumer research rather than research conducted in B2B environments.

Various authors have suggested that service quality is comprised of several attributes (Thaichon et al., 2014). The 'Nordic' perspective originating with Grönroos (1982) offered two global categories, technical and functional quality (Brady and Cronin, 2001), which is suitable for application in business service relationships (Szmigin, 1993). The technical component relates to the outcome of the service provided and may be measured objectively, whilst the functional aspect refers to how the service was delivered or the process and is more likely to be assessed in a subjective manner (Szmigin, 1993). Whilst in general, customers assume that a service provider's technical quality is of a satisfactory standard, in the advertising industry the objective measurement of technical quality, which would equate to the quality of the creative and strategic outputs, is not always readily assessable.

Szmigin (1993) has modified and expanded Grönroos' model and offers three components of service quality: 'hard quality', relating to technical quality; 'soft quality' which equates to functional quality; and 'outcome quality' which refers to the achievement of the desired goal or outcome. This author points out that although a service may be well performed, the desired outcome may not have been achieved, and outcome quality may be outside the control of the parties in the relationship as it is vulnerable to external forces and environmental conditions. This fits well with the classification of project success adopted in this study; the hard and soft quality, which are collectively referred to as 'process satisfaction' by Szmigin (1993) is comparable to the dimensions of creative competence and project management, whilst the outcome quality equates with project

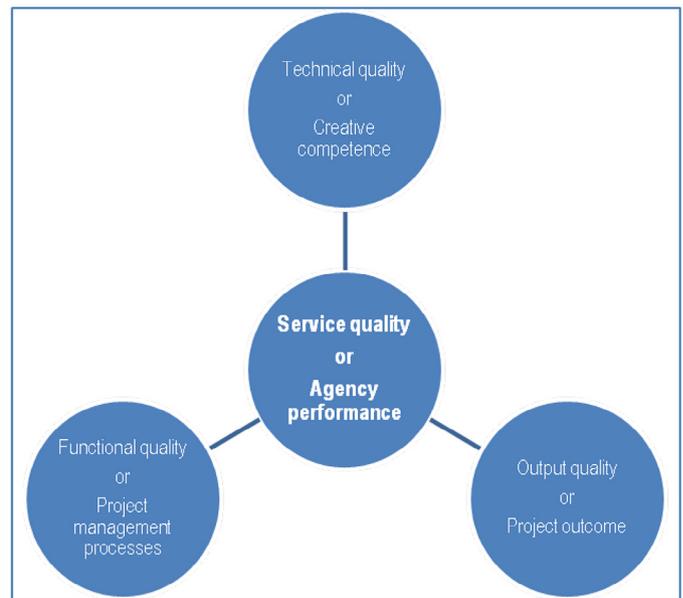


Fig. 1. Conceptualisation of service quality developed for the current study.

outcome. Szmigin (1993) claims that the hard and soft aspects of quality impact on the day to day aspects of the relationship, however, the service providers would be judged in the long run on their outcome quality. Szmigin's (1993) conceptualisation of service quality being composed of hard, soft and outcome quality is aligned with Michell's (1986) findings in relation to reasons for client dissatisfaction with advertising agency performance. These authors along with others such as Stan et al. (2007) agree on the relative importance of the three areas of service quality, i.e. creativity, client service and campaign results.

The current study aims to adopt Szmigin's (1993) classification of service quality consisting of the three dominant dimensions of hard or technical quality, soft or functional quality and outcome quality. Patterson and Spreng (1997) and Caceres and Papparoidamis (2007) have previously used Grönroos' classification of service quality in the context of client-agency relationships. However, Szmigin's model extends Grönroos' two dimension model and is easily adaptable and readily applicable in the advertising B2B environment. It would be inappropriate to use SERVQUAL as not all its dimensions are relevant in measuring and evaluating the relationships between clients and their advertising agencies (Davies and Palihawadana, 2006). Fig. 1 depicts the conceptualisation of service quality in the current study.

2.1. Performance of an advertising agency

Although the service quality literature has informed the development and design of the current study, owing to the customisation required for the advertising context, context specific nomenclature has been employed to describe the various components of service quality in this study.

Uлага and Eggert (2006) suggest that items in performance based constructs should include affective and conative dimensions in relationship management studies. LaBahn and Kohli (1997) define agency performance as encompassing 'the quality of the agency's creative work and the agency's attention to the implementation of advertising campaigns' (p. 500). However, the current study broadens agency performance to incorporate three dimensions: hard or technical, soft or functional and output quality in the forms of creative competence, project management, and project outcomes

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