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Development of a Model for Assessing the Quality of Translation Services: A SERVQUAL Approach

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Introduction

The quality of translation services is highly relevant to the implementation of China's national development strategies because translation services play a significant role in facilitating the delivery of such strategies as the Belt and Road Initiative, going global of Chinese culture, and businesses, etc. In a highly competitive environment, customer needs are changing rapidly, and uncertainty, unpredictability and potential risks are increasing, the survival of translation services enterprises is greatly challenged. With the rapid technological development and the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, many translation services firms now have to rise up to a more severe and chaotic competitive situation.

Purpose

Quality is not only the core competence of translation services organizations, but also a necessary condition for their survival. Higher quality enables the organizations to improve customer satisfaction, increase sales volumes and revenue, reduce risks, and expand market shares. Continuous improvement of service quality management within a translation services organization can effectively update the organization's operational practices while being efficient and flexible, enhancing the organization's competitiveness in a dynamic environment.

Methods

- A process-based and customer-focused quality management system (QMS) is established following the requirements of ISO 9001:2015 on quality management.
- A quality service evaluation model, which consists of five dimensions and 22 items, is developed for translation firms using the SERVQUAL approach.

Results

- The evaluation dimensions and items are selected in accordance with the QM measures suitable for translation services firms by appropriately modifying the formulation of SERVQUAL model. The calculation formula of the model is:
- $$SQ = \sum_{k=1}^{22}(P_k - E_k)$$

  where SQ refers to the perceived service quality, P_k is the score of the k factor perceived by the customer, and E_k is the score of the k factor expected by the customer (k=1,2,3,…,n, n=22).
- The weight of each dimension i relative to the total score SQ is denoted as w_i^1, and the weight of each item j under dimension i (i (j=1,2,…,n_i)) relative to that dimension is w_{ij}^2 (j=1,2,…,n_i) then
- $$SQ = \sum_{i=1}^{5} w_i^1 \sum_{j=1}^{n_i} w_{ij}^2 (P_{ij} - E_{ij})$$
- The methods based on analytic hierarchy analysis are presented for calculating the relative weights of each evaluation components in the model.

Results

Constructing the comparison matrix of assessment items. The method is illustrated by taking the assessment of the overall objective *I* and its direct subordinate items as an example..

For assessing the *m* direct subordinate items of the overall objective *I*, *1≤i≤m*, compare the impacts of any two subordinate items on I_i^1 and that of I_i^1 on objective *I*, and construct a comparative judgment matrix of order *m* × *m* for objective *I* with reference to the following table:

$$(I) = [c_{ij}]_{m\times m} = \begin{pmatrix} c_{11} & \cdots & c_{1m} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ c_{m1} & \cdots & c_{mm} \end{pmatrix}$$

Table Evaluation of relative importance

Rank of importance	c_{ij} value
I is as important as j.	1
I is mildly more important than j.	3
I is moderately more important than j.	5
I is highly more important than j.	7
I is extremely more important than j.	9
I is mildly less important than j.	1/3
I is moderately less important than j.	1/5
I is highly less important than j.	1/7
I is extremely less important than j.	1/9

Conclusions

The study finally provides the methods based on analytic hierarchy process to determine the relative weights of each item in the evaluation model. An example is given in the end to illustrate how the weight of each item can be calculated. This study provides methods to construct an efficient QMS and effective evaluation model to measure the firm's performance in service quality, in the hope that it can help improve the quality of translation services. To better understand the implications of the QMS and the evaluation model, future studies need to be implemented in customers' perception and expectation in quantitative ways.

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