Customer Satisfaction of Slim-Up Center in Bangkok

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Abstract: **Satisfying the customers is an essential element of the slimming industry for staying in business in this modern world of global competition. They need to satisfy and even delight the customers with the value of their products and services to gain their loyalty and repeat business. Customer satisfaction is therefore a primary goal of slimming service.**

This study is focused on customer satisfaction of service quality in Slim-up center and examines the reality between customer expectations and satisfaction. This research attempts to search a better understanding of the relationship between service qualities attributes and customer satisfaction.

This study was conducted to investigate the customer's satisfaction and study relationships between demographic profile and members' satisfaction. The results of this study were very beneficial to all slimming centers, especially Slim-Up Center. It was submitted to the Customer Service and Marketing Department for improving its service, designing the right marketing campaign, and increasing the level of customer's satisfaction.

In this era where technology is at the forefront of every industry, the evolving dynamics of fitness centers have expanded rapidly and providing satisfaction to the fitness center customers had become significant. This researcher state that in current age of technology, customer satisfaction is largely depending on customer service and infrastructure.

The study on customer's satisfaction is significant since it is the best source of information for the company to improve services. Without exploring customer's opinions about the services they use, it will be difficult for the company to be successful. Consequently, all companies in the service industry such as airlines, hotels, railways and other fitness centers, should survey customer's satisfaction regularly and ensure that customer's satisfaction and service provided gap being reduced to zero because it is an important factor in determining the company's success. This paper includes customer satisfaction questionnaire, tracking survey results and examines reports that turn survey data into useful information.

Keywords: **Customer satisfaction, Slim up, Service, Customer expectation.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of services and satisfactions are becoming increasingly important. Business services aimed at enhancing performance require reliable methods of measurement, assessment, and improvement with the aim of sustaining long term relationships with their customers have changed their strategic focus to emphasize customer retention.

Preserving their long term customer relationships requires that these businesses both measure and appropriately adjust the quality of their customer service. Service quality is a major influence on customer satisfaction as customers buy products or services and on whether they continue to do so. As a result, accurate and reliable instruments that assess service quality are of interest to companies whose revenues come in whole or part from service.

Currently the most popular and ubiquitous service quality instrument is SERVQUAL. Based on the proposition that service quality can be measured the service that customers expect and the performance they perceive to have received. First, the identification of service quality dimensions was of primary interest to researchers second, the development of measurement instruments of service quality was the focus of subsequent research efforts.

In this research we shall be primarily concerned with the effects of customer satisfaction on the behavioral responses of customers, giving, therefore, a more integrated dimension into the research family that seeks to determine the antecedents of customer loyalty.

Therefore, the goal of this research to help firms understand behavioral responses to customer satisfaction from the customer's perspective in "Slim up Center''.

1.1 History and Background of slimming industry:

1.1.1 Fitness Industry in Thailand:

There are 11 fitness operators in Thailand and Thailand's fitness segment has been growing over the past several years as people become more concerned with their health. "The fitness club industry in Thailand was expected to be worth about 11 billion baht in year 2012", said the International Health & Racquet Sport Association.

There are 1,011 fitness centers with 546,000 members in Thailand, including those opened in hotels and golf clubs. Between 50 and 60 centers are operated by big chains, and the chains generated about 4 billion baht in combined revenue last year.

1.1.2 Fitness (Gyms) Centers vs. Slimming Centers:

The ongoing battle between slimming centers and gyms have been going on for a long while. Each will accuse the other of not being effective. The slimming centers will say that it is extremely difficult to lose weight by exercise alone since we are so busy, have children, etc. etc. The gym will say that the methods employed by slimming centers are not that effective, is expensive and once you stop going, then you gain all the weight back.

Now, whether you chose to go for slimming centers or gym, you need to realize that both:

➢ Requires that you spend some money.

➢ In order for either method to be effective, you must control your food intake.

➢ Once you stop going to either one, it is likely that the weight you've lost will be gained back, unless you adopt real sensible eating habits and exercise on your own.

➢ Slimming centers adopts slimming methods that does not involve exercise. There are various 'creative' method, wraps and treatment, all supposedly to flush out those fats.

➢ You need to follow a strict diet program with slimming centers- else, whatever method they use will not work- and you will be 'blamed' for not having enough willpower. However, we need to realize that if we lose weight through dieting, we are effectively lowering our body's metabolism, i.e. the body will try to conserve energy- hence, it makes it harder and harder to lose weight.

➢ You tend to spend more. I've known of a few people who have spent about 50K baht in less than 5 years- and the moment they stop going to the center, they start gaining back the weight that they've lost, plus gain was very quickly.

➢ Most gym membership costs less than slimming center charge per year and you have unlimited access- most of the time. People who have started going to gym and classes make new friends who encourage one another- as the result, they enjoy going to classes together and are more motivated to work towards a goal. This leads to better adherence.

➢ It is not possible to maintain long term health if you do not exercise- as exercise improves the blood circulation, toxin removal and distribution of oxygen throughout your body. It makes your body stronger and is able to delay or prevent an onset of various illnesses like CAD, arthritis, cholesterol, etc. Exercise also increases your metabolism and your body's ability to utilize calories and fat. No amount of body wrap and spa soaks will be able to achieve that.

➢ A slimmer shoulder that is achieved through wraps and diet will not look as stunning in a spaghetti strap blouse compared to a toned shoulder achieved through cardio and strength training. It's the same with the stomach, thighs and bums.

1.1.3 Factors why people go to Slimming Center:

1. Change in nature of job and working place and work timing:

In this fast and rapid pace growing economy, office employee working style and job nature demand more stress and sitting at one place. Because of sitting at one place on same chair every day since morning to evening and eating whatever

is available at their seat has affected people life style and metabolism. Every day employee sits in office until late hours and this life style does not provide enough time for exercise (traditional way of keeping person fit). With growing economy, people are getting rich but losing time for any physical exercise. This is the main reason why people choose slimming center which provide flexible time and attend you whenever you have time and it is fastest way of losing your excess fat.

2. Eating habit:

With the change in life style, working atmosphere and job requirement, provide people an opportunity to switch toward fast food. Fast food and ready to eat food industry is taking advantage of this limitation of time of working class and generate a chance to all community to enjoy there meal at their office desk, at home and even in meeting room. Also all the big factories, working place have canteen near to them. People ignorance about healthy food habits and time limitation make people to switch to food habit which include fast food (with high content of carbohydrate, fats and oil) and ready to eat.

Fast food infiltration in our culture: You can drive down the road in many communities and pass five or six service stations, fast food restaurants, and convenience stores in less than a mile. There are fast food restaurants inside some schools. Malls have food courts. Fast foods are showing up on airline flights and in airports. It's basically everywhere. The food industry spends $30 Billion annually to convince people to eat their products. The problem is that the industry makes its most if its money through selling highly processed foods.

3. Unwillingness to lose weight, get fit and firm by traditional fitness ways:

One of the main reasons, of people getting fatter is unwillingness to do physical exercise and lose of motivation toward traditional fitness methods. The change in life style, provide less time for urban dwellers for these physical exercises, so people are attracted toward slimming centers where do you enjoy sit and enjoy surrounding while losing weight, felling fit and health. With the improved living standard, getting addicted to comfort and luxury also attract people toward slimming centers.

4. Diseases and Drugs:

Some illnesses may lead to obesity or weight gain. These may include diabetes, Cushing's disease, hypothyroidism, depression and polycystic ovary syndrome. Drugs such as steroids and some antidepressants may also cause weight gain. A doctor is the best source to inform you whether illnesses, medications, or psychological factors are contributing to weight gain or making weight loss hard. Moreover, some people take dietary pills that are very dangerous for their health as it can make your weight loss in very short period. But after that, it will affect your metabolism and people might gain tremendous weight.

1.1.4 Motivation & Personality:

Motivation is the driving force within individuals that impels them to action. This driving force is produced by a state of tension, which as the result of an unfilled need. Individuals strive both consciously & unconsciously to reduce this tension through selecting goals (like reducing weight) and subsequently behavior that they anticipate will fulfill their needs thus relieve them of the tension they feel. The specific goals that consumers wish to achieve and the courses of action they take to attain these goals are selected on the basis of their personality characteristics. When consumers buy something he/she tries to match some criteria before buying the things which called self-dimensions, which is explained below:

Dimensions of self:

	Actual self	**Ideal self**
Private context	" How I see myself now"	"How I would like to see myself"
Social context(looking Glass self)	"How I think others see me"	"How I would like others to see me"

Actual self-image: when a consumer want to buy something he/she think first that it is look nice with me or not. Example, I become fat, no one likes to be fat, and I would like to join slim up center.

Ideal self-image: when consumers think that if I admitted at slim up center I will be slim for sure. So here the consumers want to see that he/she want see him/her in future to buying/using the product.

Social self-image: when we think that may be people think it not look at all with you, so we like to think about perception of others about your object.

Ideal social self-image: I admitted slim up center that I will be slim and people will say me that I became slim & looking nice.

Expected self: The expected self-image (how slimming service taker expect to see themselves at some specified future time) is somewhere between the actual and ideal self-image. It is a future oriented combination of what the actual self-image is and what consumers would like to be the ideal self-image (slim).

Ought-to self: The ought-to self-consist of traits or characteristics that an individual believes it is his or her duty or obligation to possess.

1.2 Purposes of the Study:

The objectives of this study are:

1.2.1 To examine the gap between customer expectation and perception of the customers of Slim-Up Center.

1.2.2 To examine the level of customer satisfaction based on price and level of service provided using SERVQUAL Methodology.

1.3 Significance of the Study:

This study was conducted to investigate the customer's satisfaction and study relationships between demographic profile and members' satisfaction. The results of this study were very beneficial to all slimming centers, especially Slim-Up Center. It was submitted to the Customer Service and Marketing Department for improving its service, designing the right marketing campaign, and increasing the level of customer's satisfaction.

The study on customer's satisfaction is significant since it is the best source of information for the company to improve services. Without exploring customer's opinions about the services they use, it will be difficult for the company to be successful. Consequently, all companies in the service industry such as airlines, hotels, railways and other fitness centers, should survey customer's satisfaction regularly and ensure that customer's satisfaction and service provided gap being reduced to zero because it is an important factor in determining the company's success.

1.4 Scope of the Study:

For this study, the questionnaire was distributed to more than two hundreds customers of Slim-Up Center. The site for surveying was at the four main centers in Bangkok (Bangka-pi, Srinakharin, Bang na and Chaeng Wattana). The SERVQUAL and Gap theory instruments were used in this study.

1.5 Definition of Terms:

Slim-Up Center is a slimming center in Thailand. In this study, it refers to four main centers of Slim-Up Center which are located at Bangka-pi, Srinakharin, Bang na and Chaeng Wattana.

Service quality is the difference between customer expectations of service and perceived service.

SERVQUAL is a service quality framework. It is also the most practical instrument, developed by Parasuraman in 1985, used for measuring service quality of a services organization.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Thai fitness industry:

Like other nations Thai community which comprise of foreigner and natives Thais are also becoming increasingly health conscious. Combining this with rising disposable income, increasing obesity, decreasing interest rate, busier lifestyles, strong growing media impact and very low penetration rates, demand for modern slimming center is on rise. All slimming center operators see the high potential in the fitness and slimming industry as according to a market analyst, the annual turnover of specialized slimming centers is about 400 million baht out of three billion baht from the weight-loss and dieting service industry operated by hospitals and clinics nationwide and growth is reflected by more expansion in slimming centers. However, from the low penetration rate in Thailand, much more opportunities are still available for all operators to play in this unique business.

2.1.1 Four types of fitness operators in Thailand:

Fitness operators can be categorized into four types according to the services provided as follows:

A. Mega Club – a large-sized gym complex – offers both indoor and outdoor sports with other facilities such as restaurants and salons. The examples of this type of club are the Royal Bangkok Sports Club and Ratchapreuk Sports Club.

B. Multi-Sports Center – a medium-sized gym – generally located in the large hotels or office buildings where some types of outdoor and indoor sports are offered. Sport City is an example of this type.

C. Fitness Center is a small-sized gym, which is focused on specific types of exercise and located in office buildings, hotels, and department stores in the metro area offering services with high convenience to its target customers. Fitness First, Yes Fitness, Clark Hatch, and California Wow Xperience are considered the best examples.

D. Niche Club (Body Shape, Slim-Up Center, Phillip Wein, and Slimming Plus) offers specific exercise and weight control programs to particular customer groups.

2.1.2 Services in Slim-Up Center:

Slim Up Center ; a slimming and firming institute from Italy by Slim up center under the concept of " World of Advanced Technology in Firming and Slimming! ", to care and solve body shape problems for those who get weight and body proportion problems, by using advanced technology to help one who wish to lose weight and firm up bodies.

Slim up Center basically offers the services on fit and firm to the customers who intend to lose weight. The main service include programs like

1. Slim-Up Station: It is where customer can notice the change whenever he/she use the slim-up center. It analyzes the problem and identifies the cause of problem too.

2. Slim-Up Must: It is the slimming program where the fat molecules are broken down and also muscle mass is increased.

3. Slim-Up Drain: It is the detox and waste cellulite break-down program. This program help skin glow, relax customers and cure skin problems.

4. Slim-Up Steam: It is slimming program which use Infrared with steam therapy to reduce quick weight, reduce sagging of skin and stretch marks.

5. Slim Up Ultrasound: It helps accelerating the breakdown of accumulated fat in specific location, which combines 3 technologies in 1; Soft Laser, RF radio frequency, and Nano Meter Vacuum, that help break down solid fat

6. CPS: It helps create Micro Bubbles in fat cells and stimulates micro bubbles to burse as fat breakdown and removed from the body. An important point is that this process is painless, does not require recuperation. After the treatment, the reaction continues within the body for 5-7 days, stimulating the burning of fats and cellulites with maximum efficiency.

2.2 Customer Service:

In this part, the researcher reviews customer service in the slimming context which includes definition and significance of customer service and services in slimming center.

2.2.1 Definition and significance of customer service:

The term "customer service" is often heard and discussed in hospitality. Several experts have various definitions. Gronroos (1990) defines 'customer service as an activity or a series of activities of more or less intangible nature that normally, but not necessarily, take place in interactions between the customer and service employees and /or systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems'. In business, a person who a company serves is a customer. Hence, the word "customer" and "service" is combined into one phrase as "customer service". However, from the customer viewpoint, Harris (1996) defined customer service as any activities the company does for the customer that enhance the customer experience.

Service is a significant job in all business, especially in hospitality, because it is keys for company's success in today's competitive economic environment (Harris: 1996). At present, both public and private sectors try to provide excellent service to its customers as their expectations are more demanding and sophisticated. Thus, the public and private sectors realize that providing service alone is no longer enough. According to Sachukorn (2000), providing a good service helps maintain existing customers and also influence the new ones to consume the product and service. As a result, all companies need to be customer-oriented in order to gain competitive advantages in the market.

2.2.2 Service characteristic in a slimming center:

A slimming center needs to deliver a good service the same as other companies in the service industry. The service characteristic of the slimming center differs from other service companies. In order to achieve customers' satisfaction, three characteristics of the service, which the slimming center should have, are reviewed as follows:

Firstly, prompt service is the most important expectation of customers in slimming business. Therefore, the slimming center needs to provide the prompt service to its customers in order to gain the highest level of customer's satisfaction.

Secondly, security of customers is also significant to slimming business. The slimming center needs to ensure the safety of customers in the clubs (e.g. safety of slimming equipment and member training program).

Finally, in the past keeping promises was rare in the slimming center because it focused on selling new memberships. Hence, after sales service was disregarded. This could easily destroy the reputation of the slimming center. Consequently, retaining its reputation by keeping promises, paying more attentions to the services, and understanding customer's needs, becomes the important service objective of the slimming center.

2.3 Customer's Satisfaction:

In this part, the definition of customer's satisfaction, the role of expectation, factors affecting customer's expectation, service quality, modal of service gap and the SERVQUAL instrument are discussed.

2.3.1 Definitions of customer's satisfaction:

Customer's satisfaction is defined as a function of performance relative to the customer's expectation. When offers have been promised and more are being delivered, this will always create satisfied customers (Chang 2000). Customer's satisfaction occurs when a firm's service, as perceived by customers, met or exceeded customer expectations (Reid and Bojanic: 2001). Furthermore, customer's satisfaction is a judgement that a product and service feature, or the product and service itself, provided a pleasurable level of consumption related fulfillment, including levels of under or over-fulfillment (Oliver: 1997).

In conclusion, customer's satisfaction is mostly defined as the company's ability to fulfill the business, emotional, and psychological needs of its customers. However, customers have different levels of satisfaction as they have different attitudes and experiences as perceived from the company.

2.3.2 The role of customer's expectation in service industry:

Expectations have a central role in influencing satisfaction with services, and these in turn are determined by a wide range of factors. According to both the Disconfirmation theory and the service quality, it seems to follow that lower expectations will result in higher satisfaction rating for any given level of service quality. However, there are clear circumstances where negative preconceptions of a service provider will lead to lower expectations, but will also make it harder to achieve high satisfaction rating – and where positive preconceptions and high expectations make positive ratings more likely. The expectations theory in much of the literature seems to be an over-simplification. This seems to come from confusion between low / high expectations and general negative / positive views of a particular service.

In particular, a poor reputation or image of a service is often viewed as both a factor that will result in users viewing services more negatively and as an influence that can lower expectations.

Moreover, these expectations are likely to be based, in total or in part, on past relevant experiences, including those gathered vicariously. Some specific factors which can influence the consumer's expectations are: word of mouth communications (what consumers hear from other consumers); personal needs (determined by individual characteristics and circumstances); past experience of a service (or a related service); external communications from the service provider (for example, printed advertisements, television commercials, brochures, and oral promises from service provider employees); and price which are explained more in details in next section.

Good customer satisfaction has an effect on the profitability of nearly every business. For example, when customers perceive good service, each will typically tell nine to ten people. It is estimated that nearly one half of American business is built upon this informal, "word-of-mouth" communication. Improvement in customer retention by even a few percentage points can increase profits by 25 percent or more. The University of Michigan found that for every percentage increase in customer satisfaction, there is an average increase of 2.37% of return on investment. Most people prize the businesses that treat them the way they like to be treated; they'll even pay more for this service.

2.3.3 Components and Requirements of Customer Satisfaction:

The concept of customer satisfaction is composed of several components from distinct sources Customer satisfaction begins with clear, operational definitions from both the customer and the organization.

Understanding the motivations, expectations, and desires of both gives a foundation in how to best serve the customer. It may even provide information on making improvements in the nature of business. This is the heart of research into customer satisfaction. The importance of clearly defining the key concepts and elements of satisfaction provide a template by which information can be gathered about what is, and what is not, working. This includes both the hard measures – those that are more tangible and observable (i.e., number of complaints, average wait time, product returns, etc.) and the soft measures – those less tangible aspects (i.e., friendliness, helpfulness, politeness, etc.)

The slimming industry needs to seek this information from both within and without. The organizational requirements of customer satisfaction are the internally based processes, components, standards, and criteria that a business strives to achieve. These are the performance goals and benchmarks set forth by the business, for the business. These are the elements of corporate culture. Meeting or exceeding these is often an indicator of success or failure. At times, these indigenous components of customer satisfaction may overlap with those set forth by the customer; at others they may be divergent.

Those processes, components, and standards that are deemed important by the customer are another important source of information. In order for a slimming business to meet the needs and desires of the customer, the business must know the needs and desires of the customer. This information is vital not only for successful slimming business, but also for understanding and improving customer satisfaction. This important component helps to set the standards and components of satisfaction from the perspective of the consumer (Hayes, 1998).

2.3.4 Factors affecting customer's expectation:

As discussed in the previous section, only providing good service cannot guarantee that customers' satisfaction is achieved. The service that meets customer's expectation can result in achieving customer's satisfaction. In order to attain the highest customers' satisfaction, service companies needs to understand factors affecting customers' expectation (Pongsathaporn: 2004) as follows:

2.3.4.1 Word of mouth communication refers to information about a service that customers receive from people they know. Customers are afraid to try the new service because it is intangible. Therefore, they try to seek information by checking with experienced customers who are their family members and friends.

2.3.4.2 Personal needs and preferences are personal tastes, thoughts, and preferences which are related to differences of social class, education, family, religion, culture, personal background and etc.

2.3.4.3 Past experiences are personal experiences about the service customers have perceived. If a company usually provides extra services to its customers, they will expect to receive them again next time. They also expect other service firms to provide such services.

2.3.4.4 External communication is an advertisement that a company uses to give information to customers and build its image. This information helps customers build their expectations towards the service.

2.3.5 Service Quality:

Service quality is a concept that has aroused considerable interest and debate in the research literature because of the difficulties in both defining it and measuring it with no overall consensus emerging on either (Wisniewski, 2001). There are a number of different "definitions" as to what is meant by service quality. One that is commonly used defines service quality as the extent to which a service meets customers' needs or expectations (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990; Dotchin and Oakland, 1994a; Asubonteng et al ., 1996; Wisniewski and Donnelly, 1996). Service quality can thus be defined as the difference between customer expectations of service and perceived service. If expectations are greater than performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory and hence customer dissatisfaction occurs (Parasuraman et al ., 1985; Lewis and Mitchell, 1990).

Always there exists an important question: why should service quality be measured? Measurement allows for comparison before and after changes, for the location of quality related problems and for the establishment of clear standards for service delivery. Edvardsen et al . (1994) state that, in their experience, the starting point in developing quality in services

is analysis and measurement. The SERVQUAL approach, which is studied in this paper is the most common method for measuring service quality.

2.5. Model of Service Quality Gaps:

There are seven major gaps in the service quality concept, which are shown in Figure 1. The model is an extention of Parasuraman et al. (1985). According to the following explanation (ASI Quality Systems, 1992; Curry, 1999; Luk and Layton, 2002), the three important gaps, which are more associated with the external customers, are Gap1, Gap5 and Gap6; since they have a direct relationship with customers.

- **Gap1:** Customers' expectations versus management perceptions: as a result of the lack of a marketing research orientation, inadequate upward communication and too many layers of management.

- **Gap2:** Management perceptions versus service specifications: as a result of inadequate commitment to service quality, a perception of unfeasibility, inadequate task standardization and an absence of goal setting.

- **Gap3:** Service specifications versus service delivery: as a result of role ambiguity and conflict, poor employee-job fit and poor technology-job fit, inappropriate supervisory control systems, lack of perceived control and lack of teamwork.

- **Gap4:** Service delivery versus external communication: as a result of inadequate horizontal communications and propensity to over-promise.

- **Gap5:** The discrepancy between customer expectations and their perceptions of the service delivered: as a result of the influences exerted from the customer side and the shortfalls (gaps) on the part of the service provider. In this case, customer expectations are influenced by the extent of personal needs, word of mouth recommendation and past service experiences.

- **Gap6:** The discrepancy between customer expectations and employees' perceptions: as a result of the differences in the understanding of customer expectations by front-line service providers.

- **Gap7:** The discrepancy between employee's perceptions and management perceptions: as a result of the differences in the understanding of customer expectations between managers and service providers.
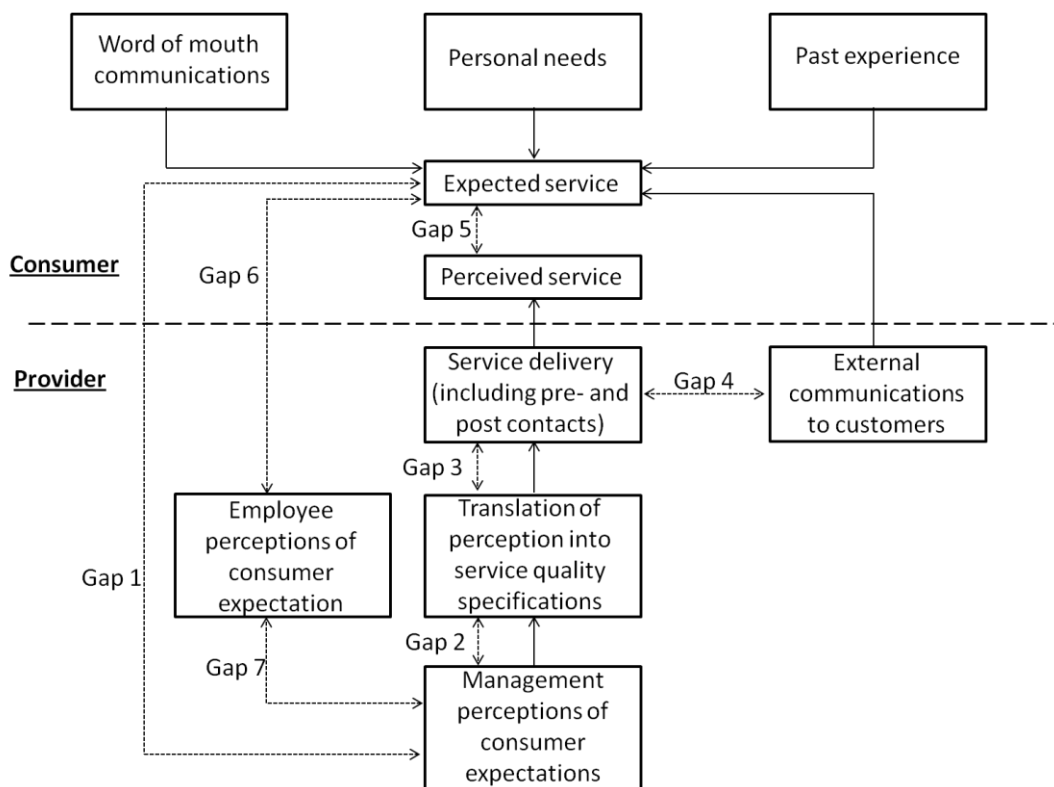

Figure 1: Model of service quality gaps (Parasuraman et al.,1985; Curry, 1999; Luk and Layton, 2002)

According to Brown and Bond (1995), "the gap model is one of the best received and most heuristically valuable contributions to the services literature". The first six gaps (Gap 1, Gap 2, Gap 3, Gap 4, Gap 6 and Gap 7) are identified as functions of the way in which service is delivered, whereas Gap 5 pertains to the customer and as such is considered to be the true measure of service quality. The Gap on which the SERVQUAL methodology has influence is Gap 5. In the following, the SERVQUAL approach is demonstrated.

2.6. SERVQUAL methodology:

Robinson (1999) concludes: "It is apparent that there is little consensus of opinion and much disagreement about how to measure service quality". One service quality measurement model that has been extensively applied is the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1994; Zeithaml et al. , 1990). SERVQUAL as the most often used approach for measuring service quality has been to compare customers' expectations before a service encounter and their perceptions of the actual service delivered (Gronroos, 1982; Lewis and Booms, 1983; Parasuraman et al., 1985). The SERVQUAL instrument has been the predominant method used to measure consumers' perceptions of service quality. It has five generic dimensions or factors and are stated as follows (van Iwaarden et al., 2003):

(1) Tangibles: Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel.

(2) Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

(3) Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

(4) Assurance: (including competence, courtesy, credibility and security): Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.

(5) Empathy: (including access, communication, understanding the customer): Caring and individualized attention that the firm provides to its customers.

3.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, we will show all processes of research methodology which consists of six parts starting from the research method the researcher used, the sample size and sampling procedure, the research instrument, pretests, the collection of data, and the statistical treatment of data as follows,

3.1 Methods of Research Used:

In this study, this research used is a descriptive research. The descriptive research is a scientific method that is concerned with describing and observing the behavior of a subject. The major purpose of the descriptive research is used to illustrate characteristics of people, organization, objects, groups, and environments. (Zikmund and Babin, 2007) In addition, here we uses the survey method by distributing the questionnaire to the respondents. All the questions shown in the questionnaire are based on the objective of this study and we adapted the questions from the previous study and develop the questions to be suitable for the respondents (Slim-up service taker). All questions are used to measure the Slim-up service taker's customer satisfaction.

3.2 Respondents and Sampling Procedures:

3.2.1 Target population:

The target population can be defined as the overall unit sets of analysis that are used under analysis (Cosenza and Davis, 1988). In this research we would like to determine the factors that will affect the Slim-up service taker's customer satisfaction, Therefore, we focuses and selects Slim-up service taker who used to go slim-up center(The mall Bankapi, Central Bangna, Central Chaeng Wattana, Seacon square), as our target population .

3.2.2 Sampling procedure:

3.2.2.1 Sampling method used:

In this study, we uses three types of sampling (non- probability sampling) techniques to collect the data from our target respondents which are explained as in below.

The first sampling technique that is used in this study is **"judgment sampling"** method. Judgment sampling or Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which we select units to be a sample based on their knowledge and

judgment about Slim-up. This technique is used in cases where authority can select more representative sample. This can bring more precise results than using other sampling techniques. From this sampling technique, we select the service takers who used to go slim-up center.

Then, the second sampling technique that we uses is **"Quota sampling"** method. It is a non-probability sampling technique wherein the sample has the same proportions of individuals as the entire population.

In this sampling technique, we designed the questionnaire to distribute to 222 respondents in each slim-up center as the target population.

Each Slim-up center we distribute the questionnaire:

Slim-up center(area)	Number of respondents
The Mall Bangka pi	55
Central Bang na	35
Central Chaeng Wattana	50
Seacon Square, Srinakharin	60

The last sampling technique that is used in this study is **"convenience sampling"** method. It is a non-probability sampling technique where samples are selected because of the convenient accessibility and proximity to get the respondents. The convenience sampling is a very popular method that is widely used in many researches because the target population is very large & it is impossible to collect data from each individual, therefore many researchers rely more on sampling techniques like convenience sampling method. Many researchers prefer this sampling technique because it is fast, inexpensive, easy and the subjects are readily available.

3.2.2.2 Sample size:

We find the information about the population of Slim-up center and knows that all the target population of slim-up center is approximately 200 persons.

3.3 Research instrument /Questionnaire:

In this research, we use the questionnaire as the research instrument. The respondents of this research are people who used to go slim-up center (The mall Bankapi, Central Bangna, Central Chaeng Wattana, Seacon Square), Bangkok area. For the questionnaires used in this research, we adapt the questions from the previous study and develop the question to fit to the respondents. In the questionnaire, the questions can be divided into 3 parts that consists of the factors that affect the Slim-up service taker's customer satisfaction. The questionnaire was designed with closed – end questions and composed into three parts.

Section I: To collect personal factors (Demographic) such as gender, age, income, occupation marital status of the respondents.

Section II: To collect the data related to Slimming centers in Bangkok.

Section III: To collect the data to all those who are current or past members of slim up centers.

Section IV: To collect the data about customer service expectation from slim up centers.

Section V: To collect the data about customer service perception of slim up center.

Conclusion table of each questionnaire part:

Variable	Question no.
Section I	1-7
Section II	1-9
Section III	1-4
Section IV	Likert Scale
Section V	Likert Scale

3.4 Pretests:

Before distributing the questionnaire to all respondents, the researcher has to do the pretesting of the questionnaire to measure whether the respondent understands all the questions in the questionnaire. This helps the researcher to avoid the misunderstanding and unclear question for the respondent and also helps the researcher avoid the error that occur from the misunderstanding of the questions. Therefore, we distribute 10 questionnaires as the pretesting techniques in order to measure whether the respondent understands all the questions in the questionnaire.

3.5 Collection of Data/Gather Procedures:

After the questionnaires are designed, we will start to distribute the questionnaire to people who used to go slim-up center(The mall Bankapi,Central Bangna, Central Chaeng Wattana,Seacon square), as our target population, Bangkok area. We distributed 400 questionnaires to the respondents, the interview took about 10-15 minutes to complete. We collected data in weekend such as the time when they finished their practice.

3.6 Statistical Treatment of Data:

After data collection, they were encoded and analyzed by the statistical computer software (SPSS V. 20). The descriptive statistics analyzed by using Frequency, Percentage, Mean Value and Standard deviation because it was appropriate to find out the relation between expectation and perception about slim up center.

4.   RESULT & DISCUSSION

This chapter presents results of the study consisting of the demographic profile of customers, level of customers' satisfaction, and service gap between customer expectations and perceptions.

It also shows relationship between price of service and customers' satisfaction.

We surveyed total 222 questionnaires and out it we got 142 complete respondents whose used or using now services at Slim-Up Center. Our report is based on 142 respondent answers.

4.1 Demographic profile of customer's:

Table 4.1.1 Gender Profile

GENDER		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	MALE	31	21.8	21.8	21.8
	FEMALE	111	78.2	78.2	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1.1 shows that male subjects in this study make up 21% and female subjects are 79% of the total number of respondents. The number of female subjects was larger than male subjects, which could be because female are more weight and shape conscious as compared to men.

Table 4.1.2 Age Profile

AGE		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 TO 24	27	19.0	19.0	19.0
	25 TO 34	42	29.6	29.6	48.6
	35 TO 44	32	22.5	22.5	71.1
	45 TO 54	28	19.7	19.7	90.8
	OVER 55	13	9.2	9.2	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1.2 shows customers from 6 age groups were selected. The subject group aged 18 – 24 years old accounted for 19%, 25 – 34 years old accounted for 30%, 35 – 44 years old accounted for 23%, 45 – 54 years old accounted for 19%, above 55 years old accounted for 9%. If we account total young population, it was 49% which is almost half of the population visiting Slim-up center and rest is middle age group people accounting 23 % and old people accounting for 28%.

Table 4.1.3 Marital Status and Nationality Profile

NATIONALITY					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	THAI	126	88.7	88.7	88.7
	OTHER	16	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

MARITAL STATUS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SINGLE	73	51.4	51.4	51.4
	MARRIED	47	33.1	33.1	84.5
	DIVORCED	22	15.5	15.5	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1.3 shows customers' marital status and nationality. Most of the customers of Slim-Up Center were Thai and single which account around 51 %. Around 11% people were from different nationality.

Table 4.1.4 Educations and Employment Status Profile

EDUCATION					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	HIGH SCHOOL	15	10.6	10.6	10.6
	DIPLOMA	11	7.7	7.7	18.3
	UNDER GRADUATE	66	46.5	46.5	64.8
	POST GRADUATE	44	31.0	31.0	95.8
	OTHER	6	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	
EMPLOYMENT STATUS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	EMPLOYED - FULL TIME	92	64.8	64.8	64.8
	EMPLOYED - PART TIME	13	9.2	9.2	73.9
	UNEMPLOYED	6	4.2	4.2	78.2
	STUDENT	20	14.1	14.1	92.3
	RETIRED	11	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1.4 shows customers education and employment profile. More than 45% Slim-Up Center customers' were graduated and belonged to working class. 14% were students and 30 % post graduate customers who joined slim-up center.

Table 4.1.5 Income per month Profile

INCOME		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	BELOW 10000 BAHT	21	14.8	14.8	14.8
	10001 - 20000 BAHT	18	12.7	12.7	27.5
	20001 - 30000 BAHT	18	12.7	12.7	40.1
	30001 - 40000 BAHT	12	8.5	8.5	48.6
	40001 - 50000 BAHT	33	23.2	23.2	71.8
	ABOVE 50000 BAHT	40	28.2	28.2	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1.5 shows customers from average income per month in 6 groups. 59% customers' of Slim-Up center were earning more than 30,000 baht per month. 15% earn less than 10,000 baht per month and these were students or unemployed customers.

Overall more than 50% customers' of Slim-Up Center were Thai single female with good education (graduated) and earning handsomely.

4.2 Awareness and factors for decision of choosing slimming center in Bangkok:

Slimming Center in Bangkok

No. of respondents by percentage

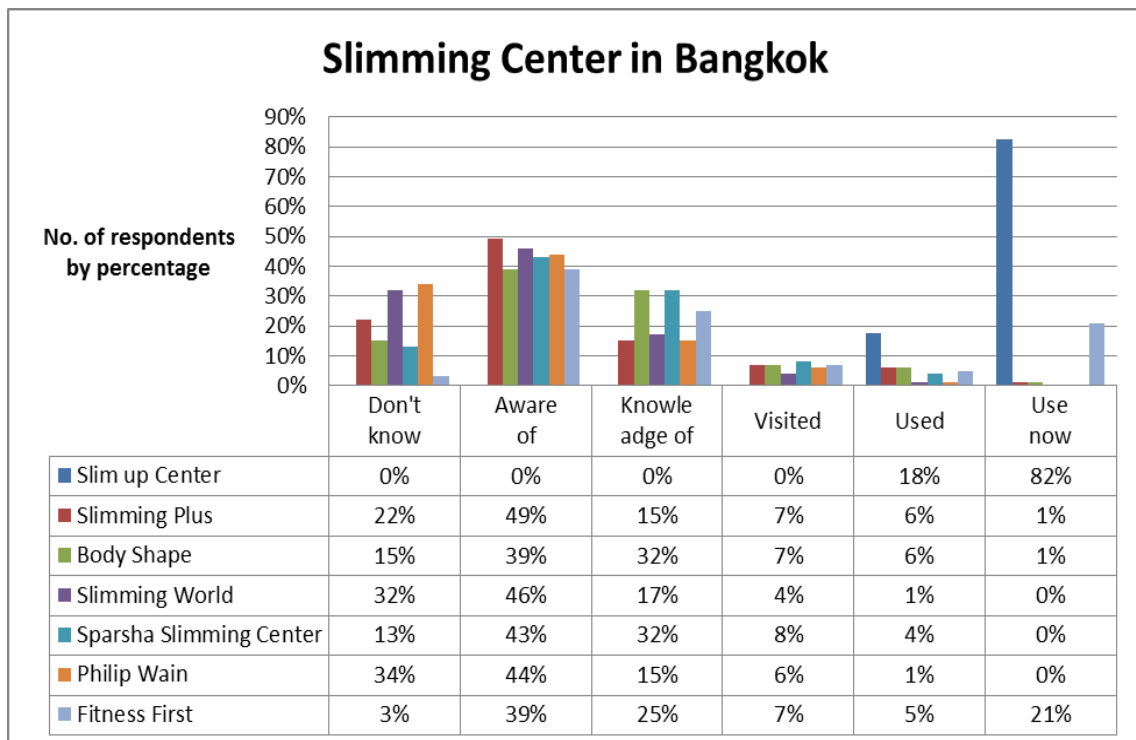|	Don't know	Aware of	Knowledge of	Visited	Used	Use now
Slim up Center	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%	82%
Slimming Plus	22%	49%	15%	7%	6%	1%
Body Shape	15%	39%	32%	7%	6%	1%
Slimming World	32%	46%	17%	4%	1%	0%
Sparsha Slimming Center	13%	43%	32%	8%	4%	0%
Philip Wain	34%	44%	15%	6%	1%	0%
Fitness First	3%	39%	25%	7%	5%	21%

Figure 4.2.1 Awareness about slimming centers in Bangkok

Figure 4.2.1 shows customers knowledge and awareness about slimming centers in Bangkok. Out of 142 respondents 117 respondents are using Slim-Up Center now and 25 respondents used it earlier. We also noticed from questionnaire and graph, respondent who's used Slim-up Center now using Fitness First services. The respondents have knowledge of other slimming centers but very less respondent have visited slimming center.
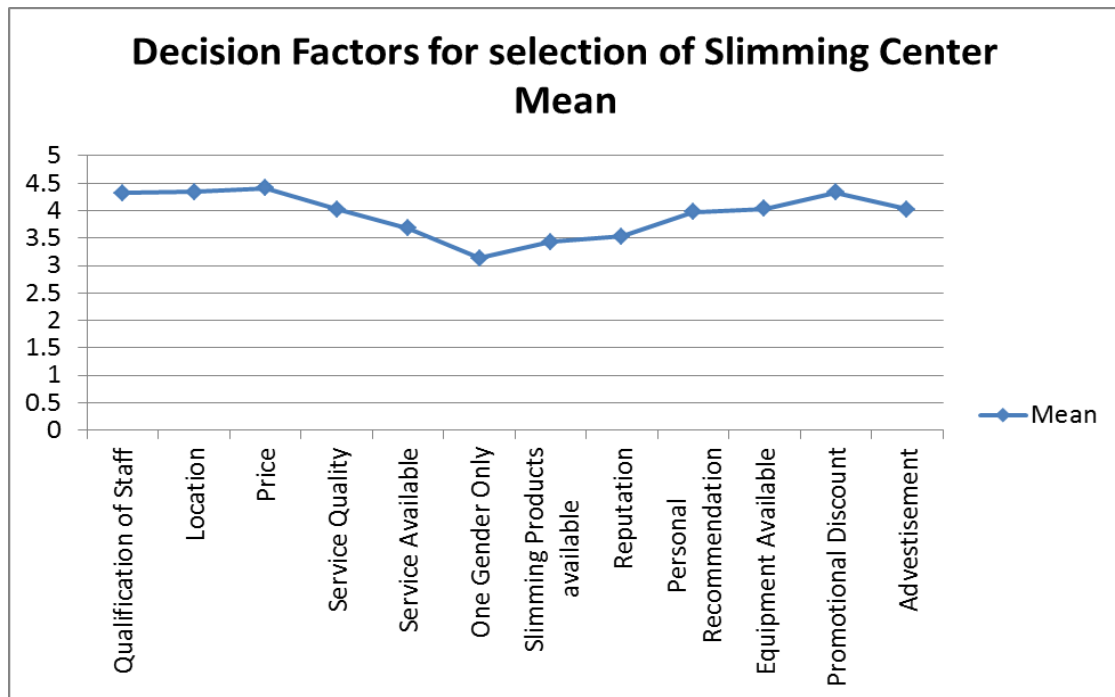
Figure 4.2.2 Factor for deciding for selection of Slimming Center

In figure 4.2.2 shows customer decision factors for selection of the Slimming Center. Out of 142 respondents, we found that Price, location of the center, qualification of staff, advertisement and promotional discount were the main factors which accounted more than 50% for their decision to select a slimming center. Also we found that only one gender factor was unimportant for customers.

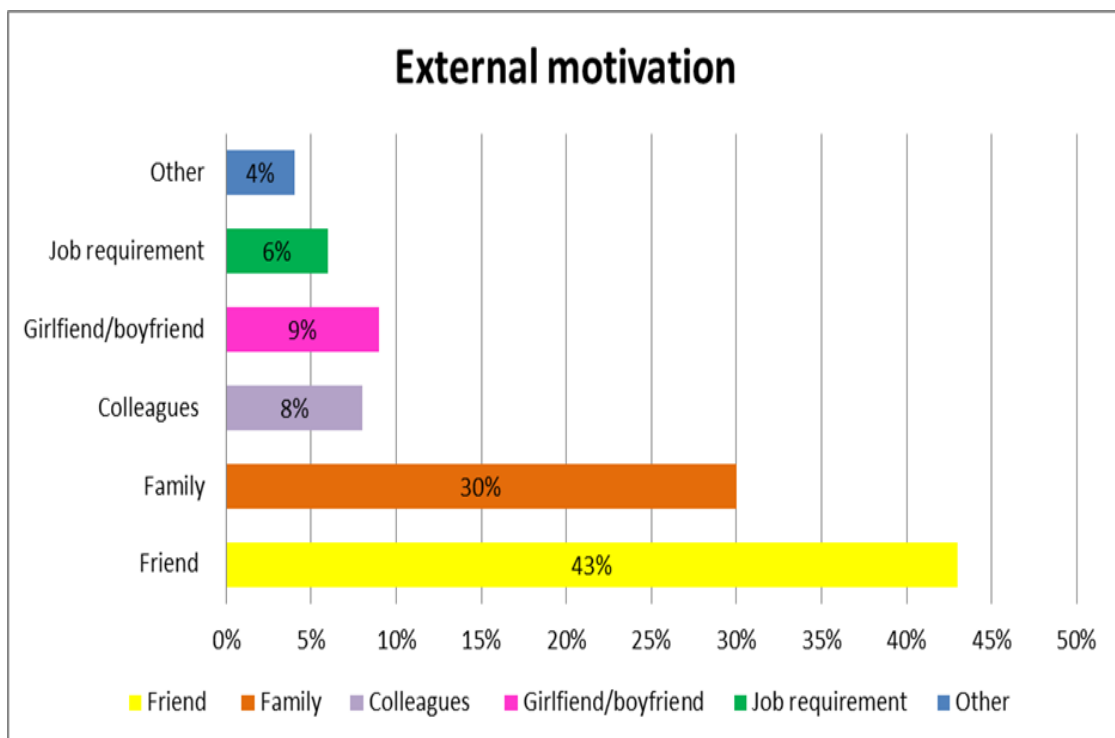**4.3 Motivations and factors to join Slim-Up Center:**

Figure 4.3.1 External motivation

In figure 4.3.1 shows customers external motivation to join slim-up center. Out of 142 respondents, we found that encouragement from friends and family is the major external force for respondents to join slim-up center.
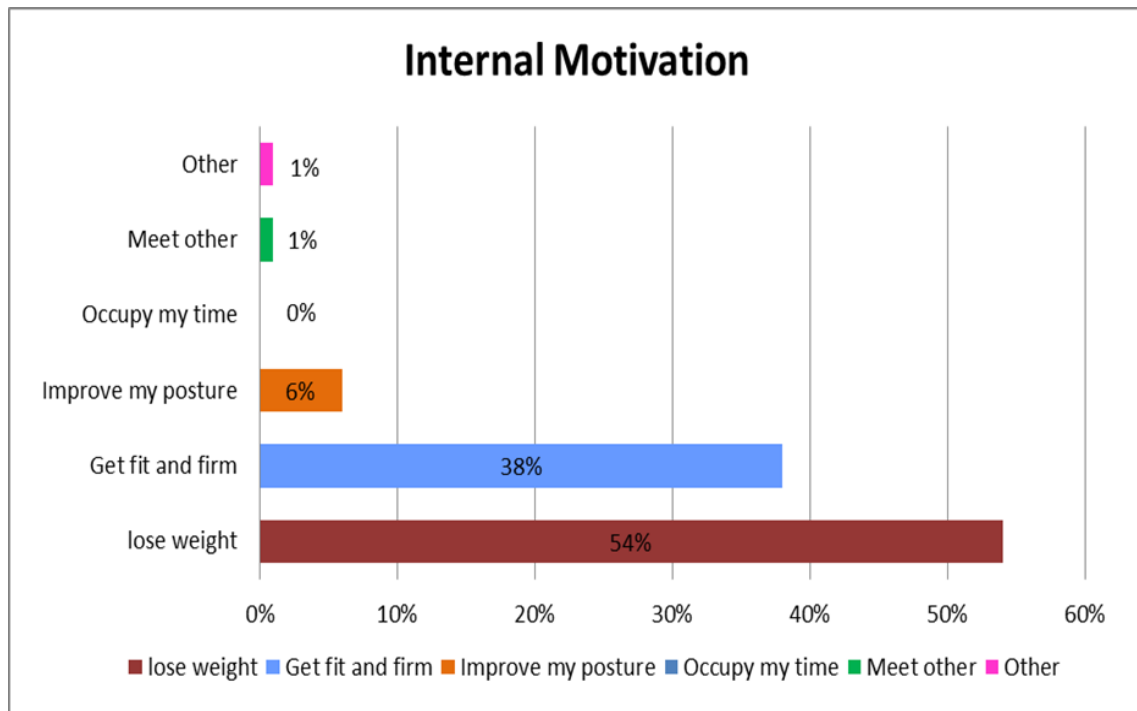
Figure 4.3.2 Internal motivation

In figure 4.3.2 shows customers internal motivation to join slim-up center. Out of 142 respondents, we found that determination to lose weight is the strongest internal feeling which encourages customers to join Slim-Up Center. But it is not the only strongest factor; feeling of getting fit and firm is another contributing factor. Combining both factors hoop for 92%.
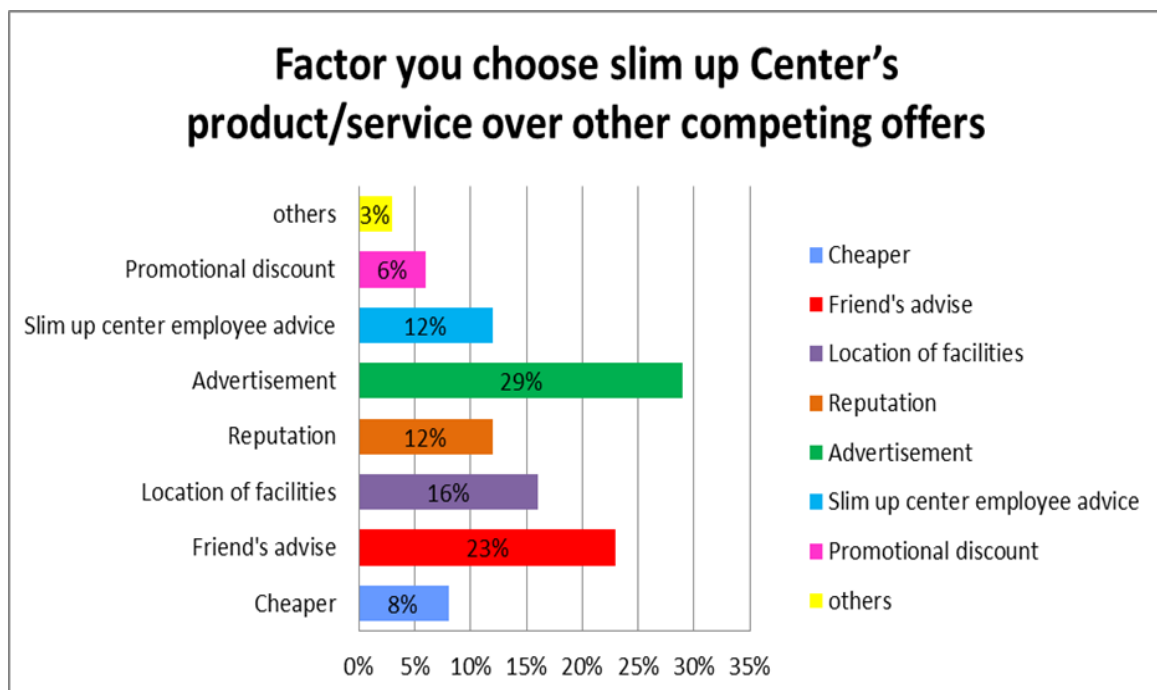

Figure 4.3.3 Factor you choose slim up Center's product/service over other competing offers

In figure 4.3.3, shows customer choice factors for selection of the Slim-Up Center over other competing center. Out of 142 respondents, we found that Advertisement account for 29%, friend's advice account for 23 % which are the most compelling factor to choose Slim-Up Center. The other important factors are location of the center which account for 16% and Slim-up Center employee advice which account for 12%. But the important thing to notice was that only 8% of the total respondents decide to choose Slim-Up Center because it is cheaper than other centers.

4.4 Service Gap Model Analysis:

4.4.1 TANGIBLE: It includes all those factors that customers see, hear or touch. It also includes physical facility equipment, the ambience of the reception room where customers wait. Well maintained equipment, well dressed and courteous service person are included too.

TABLE NO 4.4.1 GAP ANALYSIS FOR TANGIBLES

Factors	Expected mean	Perception mean	Service Gap
Program or service uses latest & best technology	3.37	2.85	0.52
Sufficient number of machines to cater for every customer	3.37	2.93	0.44

Source: primary data

4.4.2 RELIABILITY: It refers to the ability of a firm to provide honest, sincere and dependable services. Customers consider reliability as the most important dimension of the service performance.

TABLE NO 4.4.2 GAP ANALYSIS FOR Reliability

Factors	Expected mean	Perception mean	Service Gap
My trimming and slimming objective are fulfilled	3.43	2.65	0.78
The product or services should be flexible to match my own schedule and requirements	3.43	2.93	0.5
The level of service will be same for each customer	3.23	2.93	0.3

Source: primary data

4.4.3 RESPONSIVENESS: It is the readiness with which a service provider renders service. It is also the ability of the service provider to respond to the needs of the customer promptly and efficiently. It is important to customers who expect additional service over and above what is usually provided.

TABLE NO 4.4.3 GAP ANALYSIS FOR RESPONSIVENESS

Factors	Expected mean	Perception mean	Service Gap
Staff should be responsible and helpful toward customers at all time	3.28	2.74	0.54
Staffs /Trainers will instructed use of equipment before start	3.24	2.65	0.59

Source: primary data

4.4.4 ASSURANCE: It is the ability of an organization to inspire the trust and confidence of its customers. Customers feel assured when their needs are fulfilled by an organization

TABLE NO 4.4.4 GAP ANALYSIS FOR ASSURANCE

Factors	Expected mean	Perception mean	Service Gap
The price is appropriate to the program or service chosen	3.39	2.7	0.69
My program or service will comply with all relevant safety standards	3.47	3.1	0.37
Medical facility to deal with any kind of emergency	3.38	3.19	0.19

Source: primary data

4.4.5 EMPATHY: Providing individual attention with a personal touch which will go a long way in inspiring the trust and confidence of customers. By empathizing with a customer, organizations are able to understand and fulfill their needs.

TABLE NO 4.4.5 GAP ANALYSIS FOR EMPATHY

Factors	Expected mean	Perception mean	Service Gap
Staffs will give me full details of the services available & costs involved before start	3.33	2.94	0.39
Staff should recognize each customer& treat them as an individual	2.91	2.9	0.01

Source: primary data

On analyzing the gap, we found that largest gap difference is in the customer's expectation of fulfilling their objective of getting trim. Many customers feel their expectation was not complete fulfilled but certain aspect of their objective was fulfilled. The expectation of reasonable good price for the services at Slim-Up Center has the second largest gap. This might have been resulted of not receiving good promotional offer or lack of communication.

There is wide gap in the responsiveness dimension of the service quality area of Slim-Up center. Slim-up Center has to work hard on this dimension for better customer's satisfaction and few suggestions are

i) Training of the staff should be conducted to improve the attitude, morale and interpersonal skills.

ii) The customer's concerns and problems should be handled promptly at every level.

iii) Training and counseling of staff as being good listener should be provided to all staff.

The next section presents the result of customers' satisfaction towards the five dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) using the SERVQUAL instrument.

4.5 Level of Customer's Satisfaction:

Figure 4.5.1 Customer's Satisfaction

Figure 4.5.1 shows the level of customer's satisfaction. The mean scores of customers' satisfaction in the five dimensions (tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) were at the average level (2.89). Similarly, research examined resident satisfaction with fitness and recreation services at Wellness Center. Although in that research, it did not apply the SERVQUAL instrument to examine the participant satisfaction, their variables were part of the SERVQUAL dimensions and the results revealed that the resident satisfaction was at the average level in overall aspects.

In hospitality, customers mostly rate their highest satisfaction on 'assurance' dimension. According to Carman (1990), it is the most significant dimension that influences customers' satisfaction because service is intangible and is difficult to evaluate. Hence, all service companies try to do everything to make customers happy with their services. In this study, the result showed that the highest score (3.04) among the five dimensions was 'empathy', followed very closely by 'assurance', 'tangibles' (2.89), 'reliability' (2.84) and 'responsiveness' (2.70). In addition, members rated their highest satisfaction in the 'empathy' dimension which include Staff being professional, helpful, and give personal attention; and in 'assurance' dimension which included price of the program, skill of staff, safety and medical security. This may be because Slim-Up staffs have good training and give personal attention to customers and their needs. The result is also supported by one member who commented that:

"I had tried other slimming center before I went to Slim-Up Center. I can say that Slim-Up Center has such modern and amazing technologies. They even keep improving their technology as I can see they always have new machines. Besides, all the staff is really nice and what I like about them is they always make a phone call to remind you of your appointment while others don't."

The result is consistent with Gabbie and O'Neill (1977) who examined customer satisfaction using the SERVQUAL instrument in the hotel sector, and with Fick and Ritchie (1991) who studied the operation of the SERVQUAL instrument in three major tourism sectors: airlines, restaurants, and ski area services, in that the most important dimensions of the service are 'assurance' and 'tangibles'. Thus, it can be concluded that the 'assurance' dimension is mostly found as the highest level of satisfaction among customers in the hospitality industry such as hotels, airlines, restaurants, ski area services, and fitness centers. If companies are unable to inspire trust and confidence in their customers, it will be difficult for them to achieve a high level of customer's satisfaction.

Responsiveness is often found as the lowest level of satisfaction among customers in the service industry. This may be because staffs are not willing to provide prompt and good service to customers'. In this study, the result showed that the 'responsiveness' dimension was rated as the lowest score (2.7) among the five dimensions. It was highly possible that the customer's dissatisfaction occurs when members do not receive prompt service from the Slim-Up center if they have concerns, requests or need help. It is highly possible that customer's personal needs were not understood by staff members.

Prompt service is an important expectation of customers who use the service, especially in restaurants, hotels, and fitness centers. Customers judge the service as poor when the speed of service does not meet their expectations. Previous research of restaurants and hotel settings found that the 'responsiveness' dimension was also reported as the lowest satisfaction level among the five dimensions. For example, Bojanic and Rosen (1994) examined the nature of the association between service quality as perceived by consumers and its determinants by applying SERVQUAL in a restaurant setting. They found that customers rated 'responsiveness' as the lowest expectation in their studies.

In conclusion, the 'responsiveness' dimension is often rated as the lowest satisfaction and expectation in the service industries such as restaurants, hotels, and fitness centers. However, Zeithaml et al., (1990) explained that the 'responsiveness' dimension in the SERVQUAL was willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Therefore, it will be beneficial to Slim-up Center if the company can ensure that the service provided by its staff, especially the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service, meet member's expectation and satisfaction.

4.6 Relationship between demographic profile and customer's satisfaction gap:

This section discusses the relationship between demographic profile (gender, age and income) and customer's satisfaction gap.

TABLE NO 4.6.1: Gender, Age and Customer Satisfaction Gap

SERVQUAL Dimensions	Average Gap (N=142)	Gender		Age (in years)		
		Male (N=31)	Female (N=111)	18 – 34 (N=69)	35 – 54 (N=60)	Over 55 (N=13)
Responsiveness	0.56	0.40	0.61	0.51	0.65	0.50
Assurance	0.41	0.49	0.39	0.35	0.42	0.56
Tangible	0.48	0.31	0.53	0.38	0.59	0.54
Empathy	0.09	-0.08	0.14	0.17	0.06	-0.03
Reliability	0.53	0.46	0.55	0.41	0.62	0.72

In the 'responsiveness' dimension, male customers placed a greater satisfaction level. This may be because staff response to male request and concern as they are in minority. Also many studies showed that female is more flexible and patient than a male, so we think staff priorities male over female during same schedule. According to Pacharuk (2004), most female customers agree to wait for the service since they want their needs to be fulfilled (e.g. female customers want to use beauty treatment service. They can wait for the service for hours since they want to be beautiful). Therefore, they are willing to wait for the service longer than male customers which slimming staff customizes it.

Regarding overall satisfaction gap, customers aged from 18 to 34 years were more satisfied with the five dimensions than other age groups customers. This may be because most senior members (above 55 years old) are not interested in using extra services and cannot use all types of services in the slimming center because of their age and limitations of their ability. Thus, senior customers seldom have unsatisfactory experiences such as misrepresentations of slimming counselors, reductions of service time, and staff's inappropriate manners (Wangpen and Inthornma: 2007).

TABLE NO 4.6.2: Income and Customer's Satisfaction Gap

SERVQUAL Dimensions	Average Gap (N=142)	Income per month (baht)					
		Less than 10K (N=21)	10K – 20K (N=18)	20K – 30K (N=18)	30K -40K (N=12)	40K – 50K (N=30)	Over 50K (N=40)
Responsiveness	0.56	0.59	0.58	0.47	0.58	0.61	0.54
Assurance	0.41	0.31	0.30	0.37	0.64	0.41	0.47
Tangible	0.48	0.51	0.31	0.25	0.46	0.50	0.64
Empathy	0.09	0.12	0.31	0.11	0.25	0.015	-0.025
Reliability	0.53	0.42	0.39	0.44	0.56	0.65	0.59

In the 'tangibles' dimension, customers earning from 10,000 baht to 30,000 baht per month are more satisfied as compared to others income level group. This may be because customers with this income always compare benefits they receive with the money they spend. Therefore, it is highly possible that lower income members are more satisfied with the 'tangible' dimension than higher income members. According to Pongsathaporn, in most cases customers with less income like to make sure that they get a lot of benefits prior to paying for the service. The result is consistent with Rungjumrussopa (2003) in that customers earning less income consider the benefit they will receive from the service before paying for it. The service can meet their expectation and it is highly possible that they are always satisfied with the service.

In the 'reliability' dimension, customers earning more than 20,000 baht were less satisfied. This may be because customers earning more than 20,000 baht have more opportunities to use services provided by other fitness operators located in luxurious hotels than other group members (Panittumrong: 2004). If the members experience service failures, such as misrepresentations of slimming counselors, they can compare the service with other fitness operators. The result is similar to that of Wangpen and Inthornma (2007) in that high income members have higher expectations towards the service. It is possible that they have more tendencies to be unsatisfied with the service failures. The researcher concludes that customers with different incomes are satisfied with the services at different level because they have different attitudes, expectations and abilities to pay for the service members.

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