

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEXICAN USER SATISFACTION INDEX (IMSU) TO EVALUATE SOCIAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS IN MEXICO: THE CASE OF THE DAYCARE SOCIAL PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The Mexican Customer Satisfaction Index (IMSU), a national index based on the ACSI, has recently been developed. It is being used to evaluate beneficiary satisfaction with social programs, and to create models that explain the causes and consequences of that satisfaction. Government officials in Mexico are asking whether social programs should be evaluated based on beneficiary satisfaction, rather than on the basis of efficiency measures and economic indicators. According to the results of our research, the authors believe *social programs should be evaluated based on beneficiary satisfaction as well as efficiency measures and economic indicators.*

Thus far, several social programs have been evaluated with this index, and the results have yielded important insights into what really matters to people, the strengths and weaknesses of each program assessed, and an idea of where improvements should be made. This article summarizes the methodology (including qualitative analysis, the satisfaction model, questionnaire, and structural equations model) and the results obtained for one of the social programs involving Daycare. The results have been shared with social policy makers, and we are hopeful that IMSU will gradually become a central tool for the improvement of social programs and related government policies in Mexico.

INTRODUCTION

As a general rule, the voice of “those who don’t have a voice” should be heard, and we believe that this is especially true in developing countries such as Mexico. We need to listen to what users have to say about social programs and government policies that affect them. And, as we would do with any commercial product, we should incorporate these opinions into the plans for improvement of the product: in the redesign of social programs, and related government policies, leading to improvements in the society of Mexico in general.

This article discusses the Mexican Customer Satisfaction Index (IMSU), a national index being implemented in Mexico to measure satisfaction with social programs subsidized by the government. We expect that this index will be a relevant and useful complement to all current government indicators used to evaluate social programs. Previously, researchers measured “the efficiency, effectiveness, economics, quality and social impact of the programs” (Diario Oficial, 2007). We will continue to perform these measurements, but in addition, the IMSU will include the perceptions and opinions of the customers of the social programs.

SOCIAL PROGRAMS IN MEXICO

México is a country of opposites. Despite occupying the 14th place in the world ranking of

economies (World Bank, 2011), and being home to the richest man in the world, Carlos Slim (Forbes, 2011), 47% of the country population (more than 50 million people) suffer from patrimonial poverty and 18.2% suffer from alimentary poverty (people who live in patrimonial poverty cannot cover the costs of their basic nutritional, health, clothing, home, transportation and educational needs, even if they use all their household income for that purpose; people in alimentary poverty cannot cover the costs of their basic nutritional needs even if they use all their income for that sole purpose). Revealing even more bipolarity: while 10% of the richest people in the country make 40% of the total income generated in a year, the poorest 20% in the country make only 3.8% of the total income generated (Coneval, 2007). This is the primary reason why the government agency in charge of Federal Social Programs in Mexico, the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Social development Agency, known as SEDESOL), manages an annual budget of approximately 8 billion U.S. dollars and serves more than 40 million beneficiaries with its social programs (SEDESOL, 2011).

In 2003, Nelson Mandela said, when he came out of retirement to speak on behalf of the *Make Poverty History* campaign in London: "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made, and it can be overcome and eradicated by the action of human beings." The President of Mexico, Felipe Calderón and his political allies in government agree with that idea, and have made poverty reduction a mayor focal area in the "Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2012" (National Development Plan 2007-2012). This plan established that an effective democracy "must reduce the gap between the citizens and their government, through mechanisms that promote transparency and accountability" (Gobierno Federal, 2007). The plan also proposed a series of measurements to be implemented in order to track improvements in the areas of education, health, housing, infrastructure and poverty elimination. These measurements would be used to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the various government sponsored programs. The plan aimed to adopt a government budgeting system totally based on results. A budget system based on results requires a group of processes and instruments to *objectively* measure the results of each program. At the time that the National Development Plan was released, each government

program was being evaluated according to its own indicators, and there was no objective way to compare programs.

Therefore, SEDESOL invited a group of Universities and institutions to develop and implement a methodology that could be used to evaluate all of the government's social programs. The adopted methodology was the IMSU (Mexican Customer Satisfaction Index), where experts from different areas participated and important institutions, including the Universidad Iberoamericana, UNAM, IIMAS, The Center for Mathematics Research (CIMAT), the Center for Economic Research (CIDE), The University of Michigan, The Michigan State University, and the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT) as sponsor, collaborated. Thus far, the IMSU group has evaluated 7 different social programs from SEDESOL and the work continues.

USING A SATISFACTION MODEL TO EVALUATE SOCIAL PROGRAMS

The chosen model (IMSU) is a satisfaction model adapted from the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) model. The key question was whether the same principles of marketing, customer orientation, and "including the voice of the consumer in the design of the product" could be applied in the case of social programs in Mexico. After all, these kinds of transactions do not revolve around a consumer's exchange of money for an organization's products/services, and the principal actors (the government and the poorest people in the country) are in a situation of disparity regarding power, education and influence.

Those involved in the development of IMSU believe that the same basic marketing principles in fact do apply. Talukdar, Debabrata; Gulyani, Sumila; and Salmen, also agree, as they explain in their article *Customer Orientation in the Context of Development Projects: Insights from the World Bank, 2005*:

"The mainstream marketing literature almost exclusively focuses on the understanding of marketing's role and contributions to the larger society in the context of private goods being exchanged for money in mature markets with well-developed

forces of supply and demand. However, the presence of adequate purchasing power among a significant segment of a society's population is a necessary precondition for a well-functioning private marketing system to emerge in any society. Unfortunately, approximately half of the world's current population lives in poverty, and more than 90% of these people live in developing countries with limited access to basic social and economic services, such as water, health, education and banking. Mired in such widespread poverty, developing countries thus appear to offer little opportunity for the traditional role of marketing in facilitating the monetized exchange of private goods. However, as a synthesized review of the World Bank's practice of customer orientation shows, a different role of marketing is also significant—that is, to incorporate effectively the voice and interests of the poor in a nonmonetized provision of public goods that is designed to improve their quality of life and standard of living. This role for marketing in developing economies is helping create the necessary socioeconomic infrastructure to facilitate the emergence of vibrant exchange markets for private goods in which the traditional role of marketing will eventually play out.”

Even though satisfaction is a subjective measure, the World Bank considers it to be a critically important measure, strongly and positively correlated with the success of Social Projects. “The World Bank board of directors has continuously insisted on the Bank's obligation to represent the voice of its end customers—that is, the targeted beneficiaries, especially the poor—and to empower them to participate effectively in development projects intended to positively affect their lives” (Talukdar, 2005).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NATIONAL SATISFACTION INDEXES

The first National Satisfaction Index was the Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer, developed in 1989, by Claes Fornell et al. (1996). This index was the basis for the development of national indexes in different countries including the Deutsch Kunden-Barometer in Germany in 1992; the ACSI (American Customer Satisfaction Index) in 1994; the ECSI (European Customer Satisfaction Index) in 1999 and the HKCSI (Hong Kong Consumer Satisfaction Index) in 1998-2000. Other countries currently developing national satisfaction indexes include New Zealand, Austria, Korea, Taiwan and Chile. All these indexes have in common the development of a theoretical model of satisfaction, where they measure not only the level of satisfaction, but its causes and consequences as well. Another characteristic of these indexes is that the models are designed to measure customers' satisfaction of products and private-sector services. *The exception is the ACSI, which has a model to measure users' satisfaction with government services and nonprofit organizations.*

The American Customer Satisfaction Index

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), which is the basis for the Mexican model, the IMSU, was produced by a consortium of the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan, the ASQ, and the CFI Group (ACSI, 2005). The ACSI offers a standardized measurement of customer satisfaction in America that “... can be used by companies to evaluate customer loyalty; identify potential barriers of entry to markets; it can predict return on investments and determine with precision which areas are not meeting customer expectations” (Montaudon, 2004). The ACSI model establishes that both perceived quality and customer expectations impact satisfaction. Satisfaction, in turn, impacts the level of complaints and trust obtained from the customer (see figure 1).

Being a standardized index, it becomes a very powerful tool, since it allows comparisons among companies, among sectors, among

economies, and comparisons can effectively be made along periods of time.

In satisfaction models, like the one from the ACSI, one cannot directly measure “satisfaction”, “perceived quality” or “expectations” (that is the reason why these are referred to as constructs or latent variables), so they are measured through other indicators (known as observed variables) related to them. Once the data on the indicators is collected through questionnaires, it is analyzed with structural equation models that tell us where the cause-effect relationships lie and the impact or force of each relationship. In the ACSI model, the

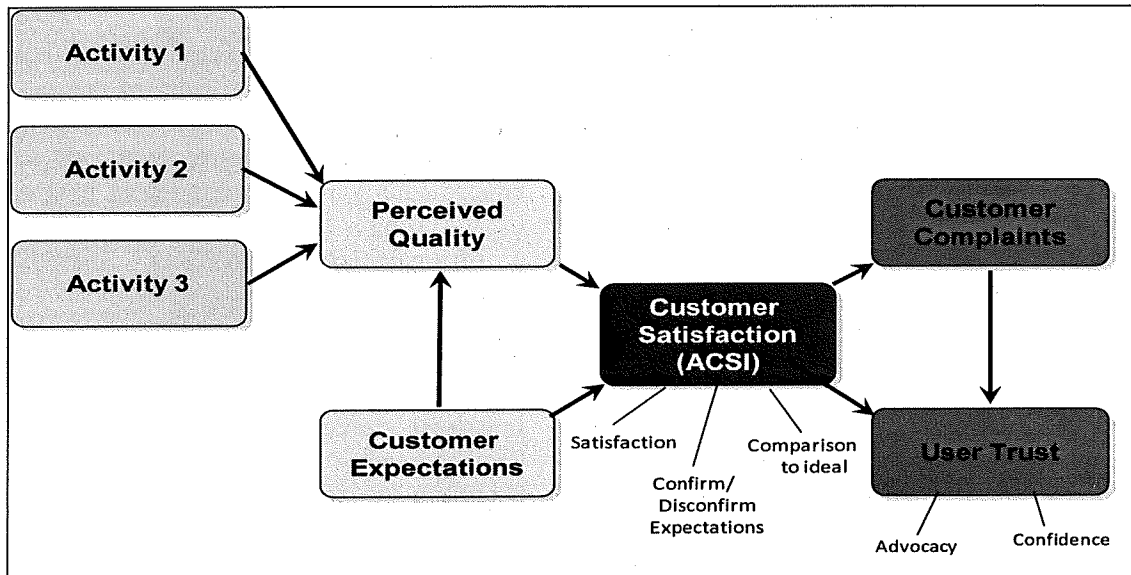
structural equation model used is based on a multiple regression method, and the technique used is component-based, called Partial Least Squares, which offers the convenience that you don’t need to have continuous variables in order to run the model.

Following, we will describe each dimension of the ACSI model: satisfaction, expectations, perceived quality and value, trust and complaints. Each of them has been extensively studied in the literature, which we briefly review.

FIGURE 1

The ACSI Model:

Government Services and Nonprofit Organizations (ACSI, 2005)



LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer satisfaction remains a central construct in marketing as companies continue to keep customer satisfaction as one of their primary goals (Halstead, Jones, and Cox 2007). Consequently, much research has been undertaken in the last 30 years, mainly in the areas of the

causes and consequences of satisfaction. The following quotes from various scholars reveal the essence of what has been defined and discovered over the recent past.

“Satisfaction is defined as the consumer’s response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between some comparison standards

and the perceived performance of the product. It is an extended process surrounding the acts of purchase, use and repurchase and it involves a consumer's psychological reaction, consisting of activities and reactions through time" (Powers and Valentine 2008, p. 82). Consumer satisfaction can also be defined as an overall positive evaluation of performance based on all prior experiences with a firm (Halstead 2007).

"Expectations are key to measuring consumer satisfaction" (Russell-Bennett, Härtel, and Drennan 2010, p. 66). "Their impact on consumer satisfaction has received much attention in marketing literature and satisfaction research during the previous three decades" (Korkofingas 2010, p. 32).

The dominant satisfaction models proposed and tested in the consumer satisfaction literature have been variations of Oliver's model in which consumer expectations are the basis of post-purchase evaluations such as disconfirmation and satisfaction. In expectancy-disconfirmation theory, satisfaction is said to be formed on the basis of consumers' pre-purchase expectations about the attributes or performance of a product/service as well as their judgments about whether the actual product/service performance is the same as (confirmation), better than (positive disconfirmation), or worse than expected (negative disconfirmation). Expectations are said to either assimilate toward or contrast against performance depending on the degree of difference between expectations and actual performance (Halstead, 2007).

"Quality is defined as the buyer's estimate of a product's cumulative excellence". Consumers form expectations of quality. As a result, perceived quality is compared to quality expectations, resulting in disconfirmations of quality, which combine with other attribute disconfirmations to influence satisfaction judgments (Powers and Valentine, 2008, p. 83).

Frequently, the terms "quality" and "satisfaction" are used interchangeably, both in the industry and the academy. "However, service quality is primarily a cognitively oriented construct where three or more factors are evaluated resulting in an overall service quality perception, whereas satisfaction is primarily an affective reaction to a service encounter" (Powers and Valentine 2008, p. 84). As a general psychological phenomenon, satisfaction is primarily a function of a customer's quality

experience with a product or service (ACSI, 2005).

Perceived value is a "customer's perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performances, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in purchase situations. It is "a trade-off of higher order abstractions such as perceived benefits and sacrifice, which are formed from both intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes, including texture, quality, price, performance, service, and brand name. It's the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (Powers and Valentine 2008, p. 83).

Value is a function of perceived quality amalgamated with attributes such as price and both quality and value are significant predictors of satisfaction. Quality and value impact customer loyalty entirely through their relationship with customer satisfaction, and satisfaction, in turn, predicts future behavioral intentions (Powers and Valentine 2008).

Customer complaints are a consequence of consumer dissatisfaction. "Dissatisfied consumers engage in several different behaviors, such as negative word-of-mouth, exit, complaining to the seller or manufacturer, appealing to a third party, switching suppliers, taking legal action or even repeat purchasing as usual. Using severity of the perceived problem as a surrogate for intensity of dissatisfaction, scholars have found a direct relationship between intensity and complaining behavior" (Fernandes y Dos Santos 2007, p. 87).

Complaint management is a very important topic. "Fornell and Wemerfeit demonstrated that effective complaint management can result in increased levels of market share. Complainants who are pleased with the recovery process/outcome (and thus perceive that justice has been done) are more likely to repatronize the seller, and might even engage in positive word-of-mouth; whereas complainants who are unhappy with the seller's recovery efforts (and thus perceive a lack of justice) are more likely to defect and to warn others not to shop at the seller" (Blodgett and Li 2007, p. 2).

"Organizational recovery has a significant impact on overall consumer satisfaction following a failure and effective complaint handling has been linked to brand loyalty, and decreased

instances of litigation” (Bolkan and Daly 2008, p. 3). On the other hand, “customers who do not voice their complaint to the seller are more likely to react by limiting future purchases from the seller. Fortunately, many dissatisfied consumers do complain to the seller and request a refund, exchange, or some other form of redress. The future behavior of these complainants will then largely dependent upon the seller's recovery efforts” (Blodgett and Li 2007, p. 4).

A complaint behavior study performed in the U.S.A. with Mexican and Chinese immigrants concluded that consumers were found to react differently to a dissatisfied service experience by demonstrating different consumer complaint behavior compared to American consumers (Fanchen 2010). It is evident that not all consumers react the same way and consumer scientists have long recognized the importance of cultural differences in consumer behavior. In the service marketing literature, there is an emerging research stream inquiring into cultural differences in consumer service expectations, service evaluations, and consumer reactions to service failure and recovery (Fanchen 2010).

Loyalty is a consequence of consumer satisfaction. “The cumulative levels of satisfaction, quality, and value influence the consumer's loyalty to the product or service. Loyalty also may have other antecedents such as emotional commitment and repeat purchase behavior” (Salegna and Goodwin 2005, p. 53). “More clearly defined, customer loyalty is “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (Powers and Valentine 2008, p. 85).

Consumer loyalty is valuable for the firm, as it is generally less expensive to maintain existing customers than to attract a new customer. Developing and maintaining strong relationships with consumers is a major issue for organizations wishing to create a sustainable competitive advantage particularly in service industries (Powers and Valentine 2008). “Over the years, numerous scholars have considered loyalty and repurchase to be virtually identical in their conceptual make-up and, along with many others, have indicated that customer loyalty can be increased by establishing barriers intended to make it more difficult for the customer to switch

to another store (or brand), and in this way, increase the frequency of repurchasing as well as the volume of that which is repurchased. However, there is an increasing number who believe that those who equate repurchase and customer loyalty are missing the point. While barrier strategies will increase the exit costs, they do not improve loyalty, even though they lead to repurchase. Barriers simply make the first new sale more difficult. Loyal customers are not necessarily satisfied, but satisfied customers tend to be loyal” (Solvang 2007, p. 112).

Customer advocacy, according to the ACSI model, is a consequence of customer loyalty. Customer advocacy behavior refers to the promotion or defense of a company, product, or brand by a customer to another and is arguably the ultimate test of a customer's relationship with a commercial entity. Empirical investigations of customer advocacy behavior are relatively few, as most studies have utilized the more global construct of WOM (Word-of-Mouth) communications. WOM is defined as informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers. “Positive WOM includes recommendations to others, conspicuous display, and interpersonal discussions relating pleasant, vivid, or novel experiences, negative WOM has to do with product denigration, unpleasant experiences, and private complaining” (Audrain-Pontevia and Kimmel 2008, p. 125). “Advocacy, however, is more specific than WOM in that it deals only with positively valenced promotion” (Walz & Celuch 2010 p. 97).

“Advocacy includes positive WOM but is seen as an outcome of a stronger relationship, in that the customer is also willing to defend the company or brand against critics. It can be argued that advocacy, or the promotion or defense of a company, product, or brand by a customer to another, is one of the most important outcomes of building customer engagement” (Walz and Celuch 2010, p. 98).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IMSU

The ACSI model has been tested on a number of social programs in Mexico. The social programs evaluated currently provide services for more than 10.5 million beneficiaries, and include: 1) the “Daycare” program, which promotes the

creation of daycares by people in the community so that mothers and single parents can have the opportunity to go to work; 2) the "Liconsa," a program that supplies milk at subsidized prices for people in alimentary poverty; 3) the "70+," a program that gives a monthly stipend to poor people 70 years and older; and 4) the "Program for the Development of Priority Zones" that promotes the development of infrastructure both for the community and for families. This last one includes the "Concrete Floor" program, which aims at reducing the number of families living in houses with dirt floors, which is now the case at more than 8% of the total houses in Mexico.

The "Daycare" Program

We will use the "Daycare" social program to illustrate the implementation of the Mexican User Satisfaction Index. The objective of this program is to offer working mothers or single fathers, in a poverty situation, a proper place where their children can be cared for at a subsidized cost. The program intends to help people in two different ways. First, it gives poor households the opportunity to improve their economic level by properly taking care of their children, so that women and single parents can go to work. Second, it creates employment in the community by supporting (giving money and education for) the creation of the needed daycares.

We especially like this program because it is not a "poverty mitigation" program, but a productive program, since it really helps all of those involved (parents *and* owners of daycares) to get out of the vicious circle of poverty. In our opinion, the objective for the Mexican Government, in the long run, should be to use the federal budget in those social programs that meet the "productive" requisite and reduce poverty, not on those programs that only make poverty "less difficult to live with."

METHODOLOGY

Following we will describe the methodology used to test the usefulness of the ACSI model for evaluating beneficiary satisfaction with social programs in Mexico.

Qualitative Analysis

The methodology starts with a qualitative analysis in order to verify that the words referring to emotions actually match a particular aspect of the program under study (Gangimair-Wooliscroft and Wooliscroft 2010).

Then, when using structural equation models to measure satisfaction, the design of an "a-priori" model is required where one must describe the possible causes, effects and relationships among the variables. In order to identify the latent and the manifest variables and their possible relationships, we performed a three-stage qualitative analysis. The first stage included a revision of the "rules of operation" for each program, analyses of the program previous evaluations and interviews with the people responsible for the program to identify processes performed and points of contact with the customer. The second stage included a careful review of the content of open-ended interviews with beneficiaries in order to identify latent variables and possible sources of variation. These interviews also helped us to understand the beneficiaries' economic and educational level, their language and main causes and consequences of their satisfaction. The final stage included developing and presenting a proposal of the a-priori model to the project sponsors. Slight changes are typically made to the a-priori model based on feedback from the sponsors' experience, and the judged viability and pertinence of the proposed variables.

Design of the Measurement Instrument

Based on the a-priori model resulting from the qualitative analysis, the IMSU team designed a questionnaire. The questionnaire included four sections: 1) personal and demographic information of the beneficiary; 2) test questions to prove that respondents reveal a correct understanding of the evaluation scale; 3) questions to operationalize the satisfaction model; and 4) additional questions required as per the sponsors' strong requests.

The final questionnaire that was designed for the Daycare Program included a total of 21 questions. We used 10-point Likert scales for most of the questions; and questionnaires were administered by personal interview in a face-to-face format. *If the reader is interested, the*

questionnaire is available for review by contacting the lead author (address information is posted at the end of this article).

Pilot Tests

A pilot test was performed in order to test the performance of the questionnaire, the sampling procedure, responses variation, and the structural model. One hundred questionnaires were administered to mothers, fathers or tutors of the children using the program Daycare services. Interviews were performed in two municipalities in the State of Hidalgo, México. Ten beneficiaries were interviewed in each of the five daycares chosen from each municipality. Daycares were chosen using simple random sampling procedures.

National Sample

The national sample included the administration of 1200 questionnaires. First, we chose 120 daycares with probabilities proportional to the number of students per daycare. Second, we chose 10 beneficiaries per daycare, using systematic sampling. Finally, we chose a few

replacement daycares in case the desired sample couldn't be reached. One hundred and nine out of the twelve hundred interviews were supervised in 17 of the 120 chosen daycares. Supervision was performed in the States of Distrito Federal, Hidalgo, Tabasco and Veracruz.

Exploratory Data Analysis

In order to verify data accuracy, 10% of all questionnaires were compared against the information in the rest of the database. Then, all "inconsistencies" were removed from the sample (we defined an inconsistency as when the same person rated her satisfaction over 9 and, at the same time, rated the program below 4 when compared against an "ideal program"; or when the same person rated her satisfaction below 6 and rated the program over 8 when compared against an "ideal program"). All questionnaires with two or more "atypical" responses were identified and we verified that all atypical responses were properly recorded. Finally, a full characterization of the sample was performed, including gender, age and educational level of the respondents, as summarized below.

| Program | Gender | Age | Education Level | N° spotlights in house |
|-------------------|------------|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Daycare (parents) | 88.1 women | 21.5% are, at most, 23 years old | 99.05% are literate | 26.3% have at most 4 spotlights |
| | | almost the half are, at most, 28 years old | 22.30% finished junior high school | |
| | | Range: de 16- 69 years old. | 17% finished senior high school | Mean: 6.4 spotlights |
| | | Mean: 29.46 years old | 2.3% finished college | |

Structural Equation Model

Questionnaire data were statistically analyzed with the ACSI software (which runs a structural equations model that evaluates linear relationships between latent variables and manifest variables). A series of metrics were obtained for each social program: the satisfaction index, the impact and levels of each construct (causes and consequences of the satisfaction), Cronbach alpha and confidence levels. Indicators about reliability and validity... Average Variance Extracted, the composite reliability, and the outer loads were calculated. The coefficient of

determination, R², obtained of endogenous variables, are moderated.

RESULTS

The national survey was performed from April the 21st through April the 29th, 2010. One thousand, one hundred and eighty three questionnaires were successfully administered (98.6% vs. original sample size) in 29 out of the 32 states in the country. Gender distribution included 11.7% men and 88.3% women. The Cronbach alpha for the Daycare Program questionnaire was 0.942 -above 0.90, which is

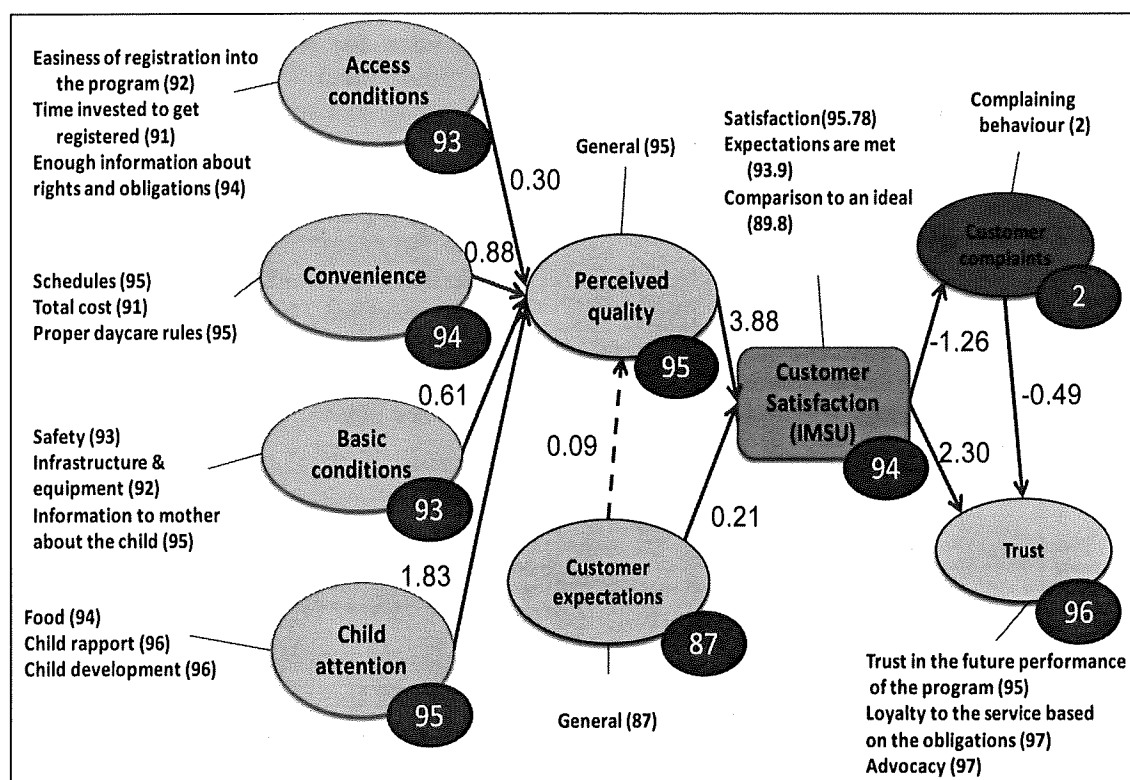
considered a very high reliability index (Hernandez, 2006). The final structural model

and all obtained results are illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

Model and Results for the Daycare Program

Perspective: Parents Using the Service



As can be observed, parents are very satisfied with the Program, with a satisfaction index of 94 (out of 100), and a margin of error of ± 0.5 , at a confidence level of 95%.

The factor that most impacts satisfaction is the one about "child attention" with a weight of 1.83 (which means that a five point increase in "child attention" rating will result in 1.83 points increase in Perceived quality). The second factor impacting satisfaction is "convenience" (0.88), which includes "schedules", "total cost" and "proper daycare rules". The third factor is "basic

conditions", with an impact of 0.61 over "perceived quality" and the fourth one is "access conditions" with an impact of 0.30.

All basic assumptions of the original model were confirmed: perceived quality has a significant positive impact (3.88) on satisfaction, and satisfaction has a significant positive impact (2.30) on trust and a negative impact on complaints (-1.26). Complaints, at the same time, have a significant negative impact (-0.49) on trust.

Perceived quality obtained a rating of 95; expectations obtained a rating of 87 and trust

obtained a rating of 96 (out of 100 in all cases). The percentage of beneficiaries who complained was 2%.

DISCUSSION

As a result of the analysis, a number of modifications to the Daycare program can be made. For instance, since the main impact to perceived quality comes from "child attention", then important efforts should be done in order to maintain food, rapport and child development at a high level of performance. That might mean that daycare owners and daycare employees must have enough knowledge in pedagogies and nutrition, and SEDESOL might have to implement training programs in those topics. It might also mean that perceived quality is being impacted by the emotional relationship that the organization establishes with the client (Salegna and Goodwin 2005) and caring for one's children might be a very emotional relationship.

Indicators "cost" and "time invested to get registered" obtained the lowest ratings of all. It seems parents are still finding it difficult and expensive to participate in this program. We believe that the Mexican government has to make this service affordable; however, once that criteria is met, it might have to stop reducing cost and start increasing "child attention" because trust or loyalty is not only related to economic rewards, but also with service and customer satisfaction with intangibles (Salegna and Goodwin 2005); it is not only about price, but benefits obtained (Sanchez-Fernandez and Angeles 2006).

The impact of expectations on perceived quality did not turn out to be significant. This result might be indicative of the Mexican culture where most poor people don't expect much from the government and are not used to receiving high quality services; so when they feel dissatisfied, they don't complain, they just live with it. In our considered opinion, this is the kind of culture that must be changed in Mexico: we have to offer people better services, and they have to start demanding from their government better opportunities; finally, they have to learn to complain when expectations are not being met, so that the government may become, little by little, more accountable and more democratic.

CONCLUSIONS

Just as in the Daycare example illustrated in this article, the IMSU methodology has been able to identify the causes, consequences and levels of satisfaction in each of the social programs evaluated thus far. Through the qualitative analysis of the methodology, several strengths and weaknesses were identified for each program. Through the questionnaires and structural equations analyses, we were able to deduce the weight or influence of each strength and weakness into people's satisfaction and final confidence in the government. SEDESOL must communicate the results and findings throughout the agency, so that real changes to social programs and government policies can start.

The IMSU methodology has proven to be challenging. In particular, we found several obstacles while doing the interviews: from the difficulty of getting to the poorest areas in the country because of the conditions of the roads; to designing and redesigning the questionnaires so that people could understand the language and scales being used; to the fact that the list of beneficiaries were not always accurate; or the fear of some beneficiaries to answer with the truth because they thought they could be expelled from the program if they said something negative about it. However, the IMSU methodology has also proven to be powerful, and we believe that it will help the government focus its budget and improvement efforts in those programs that will really make a difference. It will also allow comparisons among programs, so that effective benchmarking can be done. It will make government more accountable, because people will be able to track the evolution of satisfaction indexes and realize whether the government policies are moving in the right direction.

It's been said that you "can't improve what you don't measure," but now we are starting to "measure" social programs, not only on the basis of their economics and efficiency, but also on the basis of beneficiary satisfaction. At the end of the day, the beneficiaries are the main actors in social policy, so they should be helping (re)design it. That is why we feel confident we are on the right track to improve social programs and government social policies in Mexico.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the results of this research, we believe the current methodology and model can be used to evaluate other social programs and government institutions, converting the IMSU into a national indicator. We will focus part of our efforts into expanding the use of this index into other programs and government agencies.

The second part of our efforts will focus on the study of the "expectations" construct in the context of the Mexican culture, since it seems not to have had a significant impact over satisfaction. This goes against most of the published literature where expectations have a central role in satisfaction, and we want to understand the reasons for the difference.

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