CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in related theories, concepts, and previous literature. The summary of the eight main parts is as follows:

2.1 Theory of Satisfaction

2.2 The Concepts of Customer Satisfaction

2.3 Definition of Distance Learning

2.4 Characteristics of Distance Learning

2.5 Delivery Systems in Distance Learning

2.6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Learning

2.7 Roles of Technology in Distance Learning

2.8 Related Studies

2.1 THEORY OF SATISFACTION

Fornell's study (as cited in Sonam, 2002, p. 26) explains that 'satisfaction is a consumptive formation and the level of satisfaction is indicated by the utilization of service.'

Eberhard (1991) states that satisfaction is more than a reaction to the actual performance quality of a product or service since it is influenced by prior expectations regarding the level of quality. According to the expectancy disconfirmation model, customers often form beliefs about product performances based on prior experience with the product and upon communications about the product that imply a certain level of quality. When something performs the way we thought it would, we may not think much about it. If something fails to live up to expectations, a negative effect may result. And, if performance happens to exceed our expectations, we are satisfied and pleased.

This is in accordance with Westbrook's work (as cited in Sonam, 2002, p. 26) that expectation has a direct relationship with services. As services meet or exceed consumer requirements, satisfaction appears. He further elaborates that if expectation

is reached or exceeded by the services rendered, there will be repeated use of services. That is, the more satisfaction, the more the utilization.

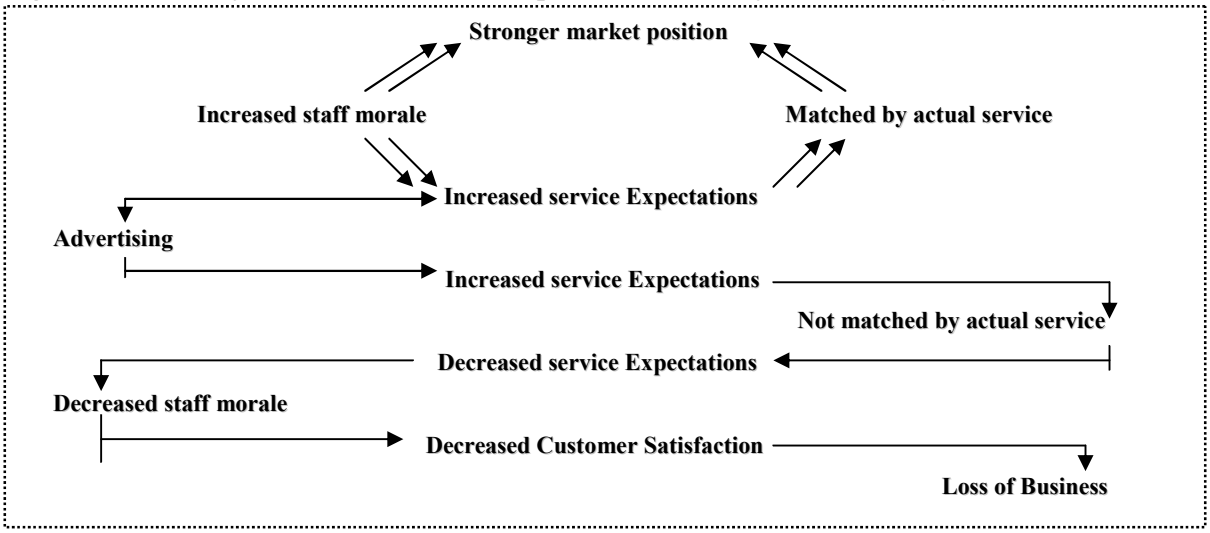
From the above explanations, it can be concluded that satisfaction is a consumer's or user's overall evaluation of the consumption experience with a product or service, and satisfaction can be measured by the repeated use of services.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

According to Anton (1996, p. 23), customer satisfaction is "a state of mind in which his or her needs, wants, and expectations throughout the products/service life have been met or exceeded, resulting in repurchase and loyalty."

As this definition makes clear, satisfaction is a function of perceived performance and expectation. If the performance does not match the expectations, the customers are dissatisfied. If the performance matches the expectations, the customers are highly satisfied or delighted. How to satisfy the customers, therefore, plays an important part of the strategic plan of each company. Satisfaction can point out the success or the failure of the company. Therefore, it is necessary for an organization to take a hard look at its service strengths and weaknesses. The importance of meeting expectations in creating repeat business is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Patterns of events when customer expectations are satisfied and dissatisfied



From *Customer First: A Strategy for Quality Service* (p.104), by Walker, 1990. Hertfordshire, Great Britain: BPCC Wheatons.

Consequently, customer satisfaction is the customer's overall feeling toward the company which can signify whether they are satisfied with the service or not. The customer service providers must get to know their customers' perception in order to increase satisfaction levels among existing customers as much as they can. This requires a long-term bond between the customer and the company, or the customer and the product because it takes more time and effort to gain a new customer than to keep an existing one.

2.3 DEFINITION OF DISTANCE LEARNING

The definition of distance education or distance learning is distinct from person to person, but shares the similar aspects. According to Morre and Kearsley (1996), distance education is systematic learning that normally occurs in a place different from where the teaching takes place and, as a result, requires special techniques of course design, instructional techniques, methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements. Distance education encompasses essentially all learning technologies, including postal distribution, video broadcast, CD-ROM and Web delivery in which instruction and learning interactions may take place independent of the relative physical locations of the individual participants. This definition may seem straightforward enough, but "conceptual confusion is continually created with the advent of new terminology such as distance learning, distributed learning, open learning, e-learning, flexible learning, learning portal and virtual classrooms" (Garrison, 2000, p. 1).

According to the American Association of University Professors, distance education is "the process whereby the education of a student occurs in circumstances where the educator and student are geographically separated, and the communication across the distance is accomplished by one or more forms of technology" (Gilbert, 2001, p. 17). Derrick (2003) defined distance education as simply any form of instructional delivery in which the student and teacher are not physically in the same location. The teaching and learning is accomplished through modes that are either asynchronous (teaching and learning not limited by time and place) or synchronous

(teaching and learning requiring a definitive time and specific location). Asynchronous distance education typically includes methods of instruction using the postal system, videocassettes or CD-ROMs, computer-based conferencing, Web-based bulletin boards, or e-mail (Leach & Walker, 2000).

2.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF DISTANCE LEARNING

A basic definition that is generally accepted by most theorists of distance education includes four characteristics (Wat-Aksorn, 2001): a) teacher and learner are separated for most of the learning process; b) the course or program is influenced or controlled by an organized educational institution; c) some form of media is used, both to overcome the physical separation of teacher and learner and to carry course content; d) two-way communication in some form must be provided between teacher and learner.

Krendl, Warren and Reid (1997, p. 101) explained the way these four characteristics are interpreted. The first characteristic eliminates courses that mostly occur in a classroom, with an occasional television or correspondence lesson or module. Classroom teachers who occasionally use an educational film or require their classes to watch a television show at home cannot be said to be teaching at a distance. The second criterion eliminates most self-study programs, such as individuals reading in a subject without formal guidance. The third is interpreted broadly, sometimes defining distance education as a correspondence course whose written material makes heavy use of illustrations. The fourth is also broadly interpreted: Two-way communication can mean everything from high-tech interactive video or online computer communication to the cumbersome, but still-effective, written communication between student and teacher, in which the student submits an assignment and the teacher returns it with comments and suggestions.

Consequently, interaction in the distance learning environment is the key element to student success and transfer of knowledge. Moore and Kearsley (1996) stated that there are four primary elements that the instructor should consider when teaching is accomplished through distance learning. First, the instructor might never see the students' reaction to what the instructor is saying or doing. Second, the

effectiveness of teaching is proportional to the instructor's use and knowledge of the technology involved. Third, instructors in distance learning courses need to focus on students' feelings, especially their motivation. Fourth, instructors must endeavor to encourage and give students confidence in the unfamiliar environment.

Keegan (1993) suggested the Quality Distance Teaching and Learning should foster meaning, making and discourse, move from knowledge transmission to learner-controlled systems, provide for reciprocal teaching, be learner centered, encourage active participation and knowledge construction, base on higher level thinking skills – analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, promote active learning, allow group collaboration and cooperative learning, provide multiple levels of interaction, and focus on real-world and problem solving.

2.5 DELIVERY SYSTEMS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Distance education appears to be continuing to evolve toward greater conceptual complexity, particularly in relation to the variety, power and flexibility of delivery systems to respond to the variety of learning environments. These include print, correspondence, radio, television, fax, audio and video cassettes, CDROMS, DVD's, telephone, one-to-one videoconferencing, teaching aids (such as photographic slides and experimental kits for use in the home), and computers (used to undertake computing as a general tool for word processing and spreadsheets, for electronic mail and computer conferencing and in computer assisted learning/computer aided instruction). Technological development is increasing the range of such media and increasing the way in which media can be combined. For example, content management software on the web can be used to post syllabuses in combination with a synchronously delivered course via room videoconferencing (Rumble, 1992).

Discussion about the use of technology in distance education by many educators (Melton, 2002; Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Rumble, 1992) indicates that there is no "right' or "wrong" technology for distance education. Each medium and each technology has its own strengths and weaknesses. One of the worst mistakes an organization or an instructor can make is to become rigidly committed to delivery by a single medium (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). The media selection process should be

undertaken for each course and each program since they all have different requirements depending on the objectives, learners, and environment. Moore & Kearsley (1996) point out that a decision about what technologies and media to employ should weigh many factors "…a combination of media should be selected to meet the diversity of the subject matter and learners' needs, as well as to provide redundancy and flexibility (p. 100)."

No one technology can support all types of teaching and learning at a distance, therefore, the most effective approach is to combine a range of technologies. Moore and Kearsley (1996) suggest that using multiple types of media (video, audio, and data) ensures that all learning styles are met and that significant methods for interaction are provided. Each of these media serves a specific purpose (Melton, 2002):

1). **A strong print component** can provide much of the basic instructional content in the form of a course text, as well as readings, the syllabus, and day-to-day schedule.

2). **Interactive audio or video conferencing** can provide real time face-to-face (or voice-to-voice) interaction. This is also an excellent and cost-effective way to incorporate guest speakers and content experts.

3). **Computer conferencing or electronic mail** can be used to send messages, for assignment feedback, and other targeted communication to one or more class members. It can also be used to increase interaction among students.

4). **Pre-recorded video (on tape or CD/DVD)** can be used to present class lectures and visually-oriented content.

5). **Fax** can be used to distribute assignments and last minute announcements, to receive student assignments and to provide timely feedback.

2.6 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Moskal and Dziuban (2001) found that the top three reasons students enrolled in online courses were flexibility, curiosity about or desire to try online courses, and scheduling conflicts with traditional classes. Willis (1994) additionally noted a major concern with time management, because students were juggling classes, work, family,

and travel commitments. Students who enroll in distance learning courses do so for convenience. They are either time bound by work, travel schedules, or location bound due to geographic or family responsibilities.

Specifically speaking, this is because learning at a distance provides many advantages and comfort to learners. For example, the learners can save time and money in learning, have freedom to review lessons and study anytime and anywhere at their convenience, can learn and deal with personal or family affairs at the same time, and don't have to worry about age-barriers between classmates because it is mainly an independent study (Distance learning college guide, 2005-2007).

However, in distance learning, most of the time some learners can't avoid the following difficulties (Distance learning college guide, 2005-2007) which finally lead to disadvantages which are, for instance, inadequate knowledge about how to access costly and complex technology required in teaching and learning, no fixed time or environment for study between a student and instructor, which leads to postponed schedules, and unexpected obstacles contributing to ineffective study such as bad internet network, or communication problems. Volkell (2001) stated that "cheating may be very hard to detect" when exams are given online. Also, geographical isolation, which is a key problem to insufficient interaction in learning, has been identified as one of the major problems for distance students. In addition to the practical problems of contacting academic and administrative staff, obtaining study materials and borrowing library books, distance students suffer from the disadvantage of being unable to interact with other students and are often denied the perception that they belong to a scholarly community. This may lead to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, and a lack of confidence in their own abilities (Wood, 1996).

2.7 ROLES OF TECHNOLOGY IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Computers and communication technological devices are now widely used in educational settings. Computer use eases the obvious administrative roles of keeping records, scheduling classes, and making out paychecks. In the domain of instruction, the computer's and communication technological devices' roles become an important factor in teaching as well. Beare (2000) mentioned computers can provide distinct

advantages over more traditional approaches. For example, the use of a computer for listening exercises often provides not only sound, but also visual input providing students with more contextual clues. Students interacting with a computer are also using motor skills as well, which can have a strong reinforcing effect on the learning process by connecting physical actions (clicking, typing) with desired results. Students are also allowed more control over their own learning process as they make the decisions when to repeat questions, exercises, and sequences based on their rate of progress.

With the aid of the Internet and CD-ROM based materials, teachers can quickly access documents addressing individual student needs. This is especially effective when teaching English for Special Purposes such as Business English. Using these materials, the teacher can often provide content addressing specific student needs, therefore improving motivation and effectiveness.

The use of computers and communication technological devices has become a new way of learning English as these modern media channels can be compatible with a variety of approaches, methods and techniques of learning and teaching in various ways. Learners can learn English with or without teachers. Learners can interact with the program and other learners because of the multimedia feature incorporating video, sound and text. Computers offer great flexibility for class or individual learning by offering activities and content to suit individual learning styles. New technologies available to teachers at a fingertip are well-designed software, information resources access, and Internet applications. Computers can also be used in the language classroom as a source of facts and figures, in the same way as a reference book (Rumble, 1992).

Because of its distinct features, communication technology today helps learning to become lively, interactive, effective, and informative. There are a number of good reasons why applying computer and communication technology to teaching English can improve students' learning. Below are the top ten reasons to use computer technology in teaching (Usana Wongnaarkpet, 2000, p. 63).

- Time Reduction:

With the use of computer technology to assist language learning and teaching, it reduces the amount of time required to master some materials. Learning from interactive technologies encourages learners to easily understand their language problems as they learn from visual presentation with the audio explanation.

- Reduction of Tuition fee:

With the same language program, which we have paid for, more and more students will gain benefits as that program helps the students to learn English. The more English learners access Computer-Assisted Language Learning CALL programs, the more worthwhile the investment is.

- Instructional Consistency:

Instruction is delivered in a consistently reliable fashion that does not vary in quality from class to class or from school to school.

- Privacy:

Learners feel free to ask questions or do the exercises even if they can't answer the questions. With self-study, the learners have more motivation to solve their own language problems without embarrassment. They are appreciative of the freedom and individual feedback the machine provides as the self-pace learning increases learner's motivation.

- Learning Improvement:

Students' learning has demonstrated improvement after learning with an interactive system and the use of Internet and Web-based instructional media.

- Increased Retention:

Interactive technologies provide strong learning reinforcement and help to reduce learners' stress. For students, computer-assisted language learning often represents a refreshing change from normal lessons.

- Increased Safety:

With interactive systems, learners can explore dangerous subjects without risk. These dangers might be in academic areas (chemistry explosions, burns) or social areas (drug, sexually transmitted diseases).

- Increased Motivation:

Some computer-assisted language learning features such as graphics, sounds, animation, video, and audio not only interest and motivate many learners but also improve learner's attitudes toward learning English.

- Increased Access:

Interactive systems can provide greater and more equal access to quality education

- Learners Enjoy Interactive Learning:

Learners can control their own learning process and discover new areas of interests.

2.8 RELATED STUDIES

Satisfaction relates to perceptions of being able to achieve success and feelings about the achieved outcomes (Keller, 1983). From this perspective, several studies, such as Debourgh's study in 1998, Enockson's study in 1997, and Johanson's study in 1996, have explored student satisfaction with online programs (as cited in Simonson et al., 2000). For example, in Enockson's study assessing distance education in a university setting, it was found that students were satisfied with online instruction because it provided flexibility and responsiveness to their learning requirements and expectations. Similarly, from Johanson's study of an online classroom, it was concluded that students' satisfaction is positively impacted when (a) the technology is transparent and functions both reliably and conveniently, (b) the course is specifically designed to support learner-centered instructional strategies, (c) the instructor's role is that of a facilitator and coach, and (d) there is a reasonable level of flexibility. In contrast, the study of Debourgh found that student satisfaction depends more on the quality and effectiveness of the instructor and the instruction than on the technology.

In 1999, a study that measured the student satisfaction of distance education in higher education, Long, Tricker, Rangecroft, and Gilroy's evaluation of student needs and learning techniques were reviewed. Their research explored designing and

developing a template for assessing student satisfaction in distance education. During a pilot study of the questionnaire, it was suggested that the student's expectation of the course did not always match what was experienced in the course. The research used both quantitative and qualitative methods and focused on construction of the questionnaire, the sampling process and the analysis of the data. Results of the study indicated that students should join a particular program because (a) they feel the content matches their professional and personal needs, (b) the opportunity for flexible study attracts them, (c) the quality of course materials are important, (d) student-to-instructor interaction should be of the highest quality, and (e) relevant assignments and high-quality feedback are of central importance.

Theorists have suggested that there are several characteristics that may affect the dropout rate and that, in turn, are likely to influence retention. These attributes include: educational background, personality traits (including learning styles), and extracurricular concerns such as work and family obligations (Moore & Kearsley, 1996).

Age, Family and Employment Obligations

In distance learning, older students tend to use resources more effectively and search for educational providers that can best serve their needs (Fender, 1999). Due to changing demographics, new demands are being placed on educational institutions. Many more adult students cannot attend a traditional college due to inconvenient class times, inaccessibility, and family responsibilities. Online instruction allows the student greater time flexibility to work on course materials, to interact with other students, to take tests, and submit papers. The appeal of distance learning for the adult population can be to upgrade job skills or to complete courses toward a bachelor or master's degree (Becker, 1999). Students have found that in order to move up in a company, additional education is required. Institutions that offer distance education tend to target those employed individuals who wish to update skills or receive retraining (p. 40).

In a doctoral dissertation of Kirtley (2002), it was said that distance education frees the learner from time and space constraints and provides a delivery method to

meet the specific needs and interests of the student. The older students with family and employment obligations find it harder to attend classes; therefore, distance learning provides a possible alternative for them. The distance education student is profiled as being goal oriented, highly motivated and over 26 years of age. Studies cited in her dissertation have indicated that the average age of the successful student is 28 years. Researchers agree that on average, the distance education student is older than the typical undergraduate student is. The older students are considered as more mature and tend to value their time, effort and money. Generally speaking, the mature students are likely to be more serious and committed to their studies. Also, learning has become a life-long process; older or employed students tend to be able to attend school on a part-time basis. Adults continue to be a large proportion of the distance education market and are the most likely to consider distance learning as a viable educational option.

Kirtley (2002) believed that many distance learners are students with employment and family obligations that make attending a traditional campus-based class difficult. The flexibility offered with online courses allows the learner to earn a degree or update skills without being locked in to a specific class time. Many students who are employed have found that in order to move up in a company, additional education is required.

The younger student values instructor motivation, communication and course interaction more than the adult learner does. Typically, younger students lack maturity and motivation to be a self-learner. Students that do demonstrate academic maturity are said to use critical thinking and have the ability to synthesize different areas of knowledge, essential in a self-instructed environment (Fender, 1999).

According to Thompson (1998), many distance learners fill the role of spouse as well as student. His study shows that those students having supportive spouses and a good home environment tend to do well in the distance education environment. The distance education students must balance their studies with multiple roles at home and at work. Even today, married women take responsibility for most of the housework and childcare. Married women often set high standards for their domestic role and

their role as mothers in order to compensate for the lack of time spent with the family due to studies.

Many higher education institutions develop programs that allow the non-traditional student to take classes and complete their degree via online courses. The non-traditional student is typically older than the traditional student, has more defined career goals and deals more easily with this form of learning. Researchers have found that satisfaction levels among the older students are high because the distance learning format allows them access to education providing them the opportunity for career advancement (Westbrook, 1993).

Gender

McGrath and Braunstein's study (1997) shows that most studies of distance learners in higher education report more females are enrolled in distance courses. Women reported their motivation and reasons for enrolling in distance education courses as being lifelong learners, the desire to complete a degree and feeling out of place in the traditional classroom. Recent studies indicate that women are likely to use home computers for educational purposes and are good recruits for distance education (Blum, 1999). Distance learning attracts women with children who may not be able to attend the traditional campus. Online courses can provide women the opportunity to complete course requirements and continue to meet work and family obligations. Stay-at-home mothers find online courses extremely convenient. Not having to travel to campus, find baby-sitters, or sit in class is considered a significant advantage (Weber, 1999).

Females are more likely to succeed in the distance learning format than males (Voorhees, 1987). According to her, the class format and nature of the course assignments play an important part in whether or not there will be gender-based differences in learning in an online course. When electronic communication is used only to disseminate information, men tend to be more satisfied with this method of delivery. However, if the medium were used in a collaborative environment, it would be a better fit and generate a high level of satisfaction for the women. Gender research

indicates females, more than males, have a preference for a cooperative and supportive learning environment where problems and achievements can be shared.

Studies have shown women to be more responsive to the course work in distance learning courses and online discussions (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Higher success rates among females in distance education are attributed to (1) the lower number of women working outside the home, (2) the higher rates at which women access institutional support structures, (3) the higher level of motivation for women who work in areas that require academic upgrading for career advancement, and (4) the attractiveness of distance education due to their multiple life roles (Thompson, 1998).

Studies of distance learning have been taken into consideration leading to action so far in other countries. However, surveys of satisfaction with distance English learning have been rarely conducted in Thailand. Therefore, in this survey, the researcher initiated to adapt the combination of the methodology and also instrumentation from earlier mentioned studies which were conducted abroad, leading to developed research questions and hypotheses to find out the answers which were discussed earlier in this survey.