

A research proposal on

**Sustaining perceived value with a low
teacher-value in online education**

Assignment for the course '*Marketing Research*' (MKT-5004)
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1. Introduction

This research proposal has been prepared as part of an assignment for the MBA unit *Marketing Research (MKT 5004)* at the University of Rajshahi. Section 1 (Introduction) explains the purpose of the research, the value that it offers and provides a brief description and the research questions of the proposed study. Section-2 cites the literature reviewed for the key related concepts. Section 3 describes the research design with the rationale for each part. Section 4 outlines the schedule and the budget for this study. Section 5 lists the references cited.

1.1 Purpose, value and brief description

Purpose:

The study draws on the Marketing literature that highlights the importance of people in the services marketing mix, and how this affects the customers' perceived value. To investigate this further, the proposed study examines whether manipulating teacher value (TV) in an online tutoring service significantly affects students' perceived customer value, expressed as a score between 0 – 9.

Brief description:

The study uses a quantitative experimental design with 300 first-year students from six leading Bangladeshi universities (three public and three private). Prior to random selection, the sample is further stratified by university-departments (i.e. field of study) and then by gender. By intentionally varying the *teacher-value* (TV) element while keeping all other components of the services-marketing mix constant across the control and experimental groups, the design isolates the effect of TV and enables studying the relationship between TV and perceived value.

Value:

Existing literature in services marketing emphasises the critical role of the *People* element in the services-marketing mix. This, in educational contexts, implies the significance of 'teacher-value' which in turn is shaped by factors such as *Teacher Expertise*, *Teacher Communication and Clarity*, *Teacher Professional Conduct*, *Teacher Interpersonal Support*, and *Teacher Engagement*. While existing studies assert the above, very few studies have aimed to isolate teacher-value as a variable to be manipulated within a controlled services-marketing **context**. It therefore remains unclear whether teacher-value alone can significantly shift perceived value when all other service elements remain constant, or, can the perceived value be sustained even with a lower teacher value.

This research fills this knowledge gap and answers the strategic question whether the customer's perceived value can be sustained in an online learning environment despite a lower teacher-value, and can this weakness be compensated through other services-marketing mix elements. This study is therefore valuable for education entrepreneurs and service designers in Bangladesh, addressing the challenge of meeting the high demand (of online learning) despite shortages of qualified teachers across different regions.

1.2 Research Questions

- 1.2.1 Does manipulating teacher-value (TV) while keeping other elements of the services marketing mix constant significantly affect the perceived value of the service?
- 1.2.2 Can the perceived value be maintained despite a low Teacher-Value (TV)?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Literature on Research Design

Research-design texts such as Punch (2014), Howorth and Newell (2007) and Riley (2014) have been consulted to design this study. The design is detailed in section 3.

2.2 Literature on Service-design and Marketing-mix elements

Service-design literature emphasises that services must be constructed holistically, integrating both visible and invisible components of the service system to shape customer experience and perceived value (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2018). Foundational service-design models such as the Servuction Model (Hoffman and Bateson, 2017), Servicescape (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2018), Molecular Model (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016) and Service Blueprint (Shostack, cited in Hoffman and Bateson, 2017), provide structured ways to visualise how décor, staff behaviour, backstage systems and customer interactions jointly create value (Karim, 2026)

The 7Ps framework (Booms and Bitner, 1981) extends the traditional marketing mix to better reflect the complexity of services, (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2018; Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016) and includes three extra 'P's or elements, People, Process and Physical Evidence . The

frontstage and tangible aspects (e.g. ambiance, interface) form part of Physical Evidence (Bitner, 1992; Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2018). Backstage elements and support systems enhance the 'Process' and 'Place' elements of the offering, ensuring smooth and reliable delivery (Karim, 2026), as illustrated in Shostack's service blueprinting (Hoffman and Bateson, 2017). Employees contribute to a service's 'People' and 'Product' elements (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2016) while customer participation influences both 'Product' and 'Process' elements (Karim, 2026)

2.3 Literature on Teacher-Value

The literature on service design clearly establishes the importance of human-resource. In an educational service, such as online tutoring, the significance of 'teacher-value' can thus be inferred, suggesting an in depth knowledge of what constitutes *Teacher-value*. In online tutoring environments, teacher value is shaped by a multidimensional set of instructional, interpersonal, and professional attributes that collectively influence learner outcomes and perceived (educational) service quality. Central to this value is **Teacher Expertise**, defined as the tutor's integrated subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, and digital competence, enabling effective delivery of online instructions (Shulman 1987; Koehler & Mishra 2009; Tomlinson 2014, Jung, 2022). Another contributing attribute to TV is **Teacher Communication and Clarity**, which encompasses the ability to provide structured, comprehensible explanations and actionable feedback that supports cognitive processing and learner progression (Hattie 2009; Shute 2008). Equally important to TV is **Teacher Professional Conduct**, reflecting punctuality, preparedness, ethical behaviour, responsiveness, and the capacity to manage virtual learning environments effectively (Hoy & Miskel 2013; Hrastinski 2008; Marzano 2007). Another factor that shapes TV is **Teacher Interpersonal Support**, which is characterised by warmth, empathy, and supportive communication that fosters emotional safety of the learners and strengthens their engagement (Cornelius White 2007; Pianta et al. 2012). Finally, through energetic, enthusiastic, and motivational behaviours, **Teacher Engagement and Energy** contributes to TV to sustain learner interest and participation (Patrick, Turner & Meyer 2003).

To summarise, the following five constructs form a coherent framework for conceptualising teacher value in online tutoring

1. **Teacher Expertise** (subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skill, digital competence)
2. **Teacher Communication & Clarity** (provide structured, comprehensible explanations and actionable feedback)
3. **Teacher Professional Conduct** (punctuality, preparedness, ethical behaviour, responsiveness)
4. **Teacher Interpersonal Support** (warmth, empathy, supportive communication, foster emotional safety)
5. **Teacher Engagement & Energy** (energetic, enthusiastic, motivational, sustain interest and participation)

2.4 Literature on Buyer's Perceived-Value in Services and online education

Buyer's perceived value is traditionally defined as a benefit-sacrifice trade-off, where consumers judge what they receive relative to what they give (Zeithaml, 1988). Classical work emphasises price-quality inference and reference pricing as core mechanisms shaping value perceptions (Monroe, 1990; Dodds et al., 1991). In online education, perceived value has broadened to include content quality, platform usability, interaction, flexibility, and trust. Studies show that learners assess value holistically across functional, emotional, and social dimensions (Sweeney et al., 2018; Lee, 2020) assessing factors such as feedback quality, ability to socialise, and the user-friendliness of the system (Martin et al., 2023). The students' evaluation and perception of an online-tutoring service is therefore one that is holistic and well balanced, and not solely dependant on just one factor.

3. Research Design and Methods

The study will use a quantitative experimental design with a sample of 300 students, chosen through stratified-random sampling from the population of first-year students in Bangladeshi universities. The sample will then be grouped into 5 experimental and 5 control groups (through random assignment). Both the groups will attend an online lesson. Other than the *teacher-value* attributes of the service, all other value affecting service-elements (e.g the LMS, video quality, lesson materials, etc). will be identical across the groups. Moreover, the teachers conducting the lessons will have similar appearances and language-proficiency levels, and will not be renowned among the students. This is to ensure that a pre-existing 'teacher-brand' or other factors do not affect the perceived value .

3.1 Sampling

3.1.1 Population

The population for this study is first-year undergraduate students enrolled in Bangladeshi universities. In Bangladesh, primary and secondary school education is often characterised by a high dependency on teachers, which probably makes *teacher-value* a more instrumental determinant of the overall perceived value of a learning institute. On the other hand, university life marks the transition towards learner autonomy, possibly reducing the significance of TV in the latter years. This makes the first year undergraduate students the most appropriate population to test the significance of TV on the overall perceived value of a tutoring service.

3.1.2 Sampling and the sample

Sampling is the process of drawing from the total population a small but representative sample to be studied, and then to 'infer the findings back to the population' (Punch, 2014, p. 244). This study follows stratified random sampling, which according to Punch (2014) is 'stratifying the

population along different dimensions before random selection. Following this process, the population (i.e. all 1st year undergraduate students in Bangladeshi universities) will first be stratified into 6 strata - 3 leading public universities and 3 leading private universities. Each of these six strata will be further stratified into 5 major departments/schools of the universities (e.g. Business, Computers, English, etc). The resulting 30 strata will be further stratified by gender into male and female, resulting into a total of 60 strata. Finally, 5 students will be selected randomly from each strata using the university department's list of 1st year students.

To summarise, there will be 5 students in each of the 60 strata, making the total sample size equal to 300.

3.2 The Experiment

The experiment will involve 10 groups, each having 30 students. Five of these groups will be experimental groups who will attend a lesson where teacher-value (TV) will be manipulated. The other five groups will be control-groups who will attend a lesson where TV will not be manipulated.

To ensure internal validity, the teachers teaching these lessons will be highly trained but not renowned among the students to ensure that the perceived value is not biased due to a pre-existing teacher-brand (which is not the subject of measure in this study). Moreover, the teachers of all the lessons will have the same language proficiency level, and will have very similar appearances to avoid unwanted bias from confound variables. All other service-mix elements (other than TV attributes) such as the LMS interface, visuals, lesson structure, duration, materials, and support processes (i.e. internet speed, electricity backup, sound and video quality, etc) will remain identical across groups.

3.2.1 Group Allocation

The allocation of the students to these groups will be done by first listing all the 60 strata and then listing all the 10 groups (experimental and control). Then a student from strata 1 will be randomly selected and assigned to group 1, and then to group 2 and so on, until all the students of strata 1 have been equally distributed among the groups. This will be repeated for all the remaining strata. This will ensure that the groups accurately reflect the heterogeneity existing within the sample (thereby neutralising sampling biases which could other affects internal validity).

3.2.2 Experimental Groups

The five experimental groups will attend a lesson taught by a trained but less renowned teacher who will conduct a lesson where the TV score is intentionally kept low. The manipulation of TV in the experimental groups will include:

- Reduced clarity
- Lower teaching energy
- Less interpersonal support
- Minimal professional conduct
- Limited expertise cues

3.2.3 Control Groups

The five control groups will attend a lesson taught by a trained teacher who will conduct the lesson while maintaining high professional standards. This means, the teacher will demonstrate the TV attributes listed below (also discussed in section 2.3):

- High clarity and structured explanations
- Strong subject expertise
- Flawless professional conduct
- Supportive interpersonal behaviour
- High engagement and teaching energy

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Each student will rate their experience and perceived value with a score between 0 – 9. right after the end of the lesson. This will be analysed to check if the relationship between teacher-value and perceived value is statistically significant. While the data analysis for this particular study is relatively simple, the data set can be used to analyse more complex relationships and consumer behaviour.

3.4 Limitations and Validity Concerns

Several limitations may affect internal and external validity:

Internal validity could be compromised when teachers instructed to keep low TV are unable to naturally replicate genuine low-quality teaching. Students may detect the intentional low performance and provide inaccurate values based on demand bias. This could be mitigated by providing the teacher detailed orientation and a lesson plan that includes recommended conduct and language. The teacher will be expected to be very familiar with the lesson plan.

External validity could be questioned as the artificial lab-based online lessons may not fully represent real tutoring environments. Similarly, the study conducted on 1st year students may not be generalisable on students at advanced stages of their university life. These are not actually problems because the purpose of the experiment is to test two variables and their relationship. This is nearly impossible in real tutoring scenarios where the effect of confounding variables cannot be eliminated. As for the choice of 1st year students for the sample, its rationale has been discussed in section 3.1.1.

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4. Schedule and Budget

4.1 Research Schedule

Phase Activity	Duration
1 Literature review	No extra time
2 Preparation of experiment, tools, labs, teachers, ethics	4 weeks
3 Accessing samples	2 weeks
4 Experimentation & data collection	8 weeks
5 Data organisation & analysis	4 weeks
6 Writing the report	2 weeks

Total: 20 weeks

4.2 Budget

Item	Cost (BDT)
Access to journals & textbooks (20 weeks)	10,000
Experimental classrooms & LMS access	10,000
Access to sample students	15,000
Research tools & software	10,000
Professional teachers	30,000

Total Estimated Budget ≈ BDT 75,000

===== **End of the assignment** =====

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5. References

5.1 References on Research Design

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