

A Study on Client's Perception on the Services Rendered by Advocates

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Abstract

Profession of law is essential in a complex society. Legal profession unlike other profession, which are generally taken up with the sole objective of earning money is a profession of high dignity. The motive in legal profession is safeguarding liberty and attaining justice. A key purpose of the lawyer profession is to maintain the integrity of the profession. Client expectations are beliefs about service delivery that function as standards or reference point against which performance is judged. Clients hold different types of expectations on the services of the lawyers. Clients compare their perceptions of service delivery with these reference points when evaluating service quality and therefore knowing what clients' expects is critical in gaining competitive advantage. Clients' assess service performance on the basis of two boundaries: what they desire and what they consider acceptable. In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the perception of clients on the services rendered by the advocates. For this purpose, clients were approached in the court campus and questionnaires were issued to identify their perception towards their advocate's services. The sample size of the study was 50 and the sample design adopted was convenience sampling. The researcher has used percentage analysis to interpret the collected data. This paper tried to find out the perception of the clients on the services rendered by their advocates and gives suggestions to improve the same.

Keywords: Advocates, Clients, Perception, Services, Expectations

Introduction:

Law is the system of rules of conduct established by the sovereign government of a society to correct wrongs, maintain the stability of political and social authority, and deliver justice. Lawyer is "a person learned in the law and who is practicing law. He is also known as Lawyer, Counsel or Solicitor. Working as a lawyer involves the practical application of abstract legal theories and knowledge to solve specific individualized problems, or to advance the interests of those who retain (i.e., hire) lawyers to perform legal services. The role of the lawyer varies significantly across legal jurisdictions, and so it can be treated here in only the most general terms. Lawyers are knowledgeable about the law and can help clients navigate the legal system.

Client is the one to whom a lawyer formally renders legal advice, pursuant to an oral or written agreement for such advice to be given or any individual to whom a lawyer provides advice about legal matters. Perception is awareness, comprehension or an understanding of something. Client's Perception refers to the client's awareness,

comprehension or an understanding of the services provided by a service provider (i.e.) the lawyer. Lawyers are familiar with the responsibilities and duties of their clients. A law student applying for the bar understands that lawyers and law students must show honesty, trustworthiness, diligence, and reliability. A key purpose of the lawyer profession is to maintain the integrity of the profession.

Legal Population Density:

The Indian legal profession has grown over a short period of less than 50 years to become the world’s largest and most influential in the governance of the country. India has the world’s largest legal profession with more than 600,000 lawyers. The predominant service providers are individual lawyers, small or family based firms. Most of the firms are involved in the issues of domestic law and majority work under country’s adversarial litigation system. The conception of legal services as a ‘noble profession’ rather than services resulted in formulation of stringent and restrictive regulatory machinery. These regulations have been justified on the grounds of public policy and ‘dignity of profession’.

Country	No: of Lawyers	Population (in million)	GDP \$(bn)	Population per lawyer	GDP per lawyer \$ (Mn)
India	1200000	1210	1632	1008	1.4
Brazil	677967	190	2090	280	3.1
Israel	40469	8	217	192	5.4
US	1201968	312	14527	260	12.1
Australia	99696	23	1237	228	12.4
South Africa	20077	51	364	2520	18.1
UK	1,18869	62	2250	525	18.9

Source: Ahmed Raza Khan/Mint

Review of Literature:

Penn & Schoen Associates (1990) observes that a key underlying factor in determining individual’s perceptions of attorneys is their own experiences with the attorneys. Thus, an effort to improve client-attorney relationship would have a positive impact on the impressions individuals carry of attorneys as a whole. Clients interaction with an attorney is largely related to the impressions client carry of the legal system as a whole.

Ross S (1998) identifies some of the perception of lawyers which includes Lawyers are portrayed earning high incomes and manipulating the law for the benefit of rich clients. Lawyers are often privy to personal information of clients. Create feeling of fear and resentment in client. Furthermore, lawyers are required to be objective and will not empathize nor sympathize. Clients approach lawyers to solve problems, which give lawyers control.

American Bar Association (1999), states that it is also important to work to improve people's perceptions of lawyers, which is based on their own experiences. If their experience was positive, they are more likely to have positive perceptions of lawyers. If their experiences were negative, they are more likely to have negative perceptions. Further, lawyers are often perceived to be more concerned about their own interests than the publics or the clients. Finally, lawyers are not considered as civic-minded as judges, and as a result, people do not have much confidence in them.

Leo J. Shapiro (2002) identifies Americans Positive and negative perceptions of the lawyers. Positive perception of the Americans includes lawyers are knowledgeable about the law, and can help clients navigate through difficult situations. Personal experiences with lawyers substantiate these positive beliefs. The Americans also believe that law is a good and even respectable career. Negative perception of the Americans includes lawyers are greedy, manipulative, and corrupt. Personal experiences with lawyers substantiate these beliefs. Americans are also uncomfortable with the connections that lawyers have with politics, the judiciary, government, big business, and law enforcement. Americans also believe that lawyers do a poor job of policing themselves. Bar associations are not viewed as protectors of the public or the public interest, but as clubs to protect lawyers.

Kimberly M. Cahill (2006) says that the general public dislikes and distrusts lawyers as a group, but they like and trust their individual lawyer. Each of us has the ability to influence public perception of our profession by our own acts and behaviors. I think that we must first highlight what our individual members do, trumpet those achievements, and rely on that to affect public perception. I think we, as a profession, must accept that doing the job of a lawyer, being a zealous advocate for the cause of our client, popular or not, does not always guarantee a place at the top of the "most admired" lists. Those who defend the rights of the minority against the sentiment of the majority are not destined to be universally accepted.

Mark Powers & Shawn Mc Nalis (2012) say that managing client perceptions is just as important for lawyers. Potential clients are nervous and feel at a distinct disadvantage when seeking legal services. They generally have a problem and want someone they trust to help them. As they sit in the reception area, their eyes wander as they unconsciously form that all-important first impression. When a potential client walks into an office, is impressed by the décor and feels warmly welcomed by the staff. Their first impression is a positive one and confers all manner of wonderful attributes on the firm – whether they deserve them or not. Here the power of perception is made to work for you, not against you. All of this is to say: manage the perceptions of your clients. They are drinking in the look, the feel and the sound of your firm at all times. Your signage, how hard you are to find, what the parking is like, whether or not your website and letterhead match, the sound of the receptionist's voice when she answers the phone -- all must be welcoming.

Objectives of the Study:

- To identify client's perception on the services rendered by legal professionals
- To analyze factors influencing client's perception on the performance of legal professionals
- To study the client's level of satisfaction on the services rendered by legal professionals
- To suggest measures to improve the services of legal professionals towards clients

Research Methodology:

The Researcher used Descriptive Research Design in this research. Primary Data's were collected using questionnaire and Secondary data's were collected from journals, books and websites. The collected data were edited, coded, classified and tabulated for analysis. The sampling technique used by the researcher is convenience sampling. Sample size taken for the study is 50. Technique used for analysis is Percentage analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table No: 1: Clients Perception on Services Rendered by Lawyer:

Options	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Total	
	No: of Responses	% of Responses	No: of Responses	% of Responses	No: of Responses	% of Responses	No: of Responses	% of Responses
Lawyer sees each and every factor of the case	24	48	16	32	10	20	50	100
Lawyers are always courteous when dealing with me	14	28	12	24	24	48	50	100
Lawyer is always approachable for the case	27	54	13	26	10	20	50	100
Lawyer clearly explains on complex legal issues	30	60	08	16	12	24	50	100
Clarification on the case given by the lawyer	25	50	12	24	13	26	50	100
Effective in arguments in case	26	52	10	20	14	28	50	100
Shows interest and involvement in case	24	48	16	32	10	20	50	100

Source: Author's Source

Interpretations:

- 48% of the respondents perceive that their advocates see each and every factor of the case while 20% of the respondents disagree to the same
- 48% of the respondents perceive that their advocates are not always courteous when dealing with them while 24% have neutral opinion on the same
- 54% of the respondents say that their advocates are always approachable for the case while 20% of the respondents disagree to the same
- 60% of the respondents feels that their advocates clearly explains complex legal issues involved in their case while 16% of the respondents are neutral in this regard
- 50% of the respondents states that their advocates gives clarification on the case while 24% of the respondents are neutral in this regard
- 52% of the respondents feel that their advocates are effective in their arguments in court while 20% have neutral opinion in this regard
- 48% of the respondents say that their advocates show involvement and commitment in their cases while 20% contradict this statement

Table No: 2 - Factors Influencing Clients Perception

Options	Yes		No		Sometimes		Total	
	No: of Responses	% of Responses	No: of Responses	% of Responses	No: of Responses	% of Responses	No: of Responses	% of Responses
Courteousness when dealing with Client	30	60	05	10	15	30	50	100
Approachability to the case	27	54	10	20	13	26	50	100
Knowledge in the proceedings of the case	43	86	0	0	07	14	50	100
Involvement and commitment shown by the lawyer	37	74	03	06	10	20	50	100
Technique of handling the case	30	60	08	16	12	24	50	100

Source: Author's Source

Interpretation:

- 60% of the respondents feel that courteousness of advocates towards them is one of the factors, which influence their perception towards services of the advocate While 10% are neutral in this regard
- 54% of the respondents say that their perception on the advocate’s service is influenced by the approachability of their advocates towards their case while 20% says approachability of their advocate does not influence their perception on their advocate
- 86% of the respondent’s perception on their advocate’s service is based on the knowledge of their advocates towards their case
- 74% of the respondents say that the involvement and commitment of their advocate influence their perception on the services rendered by their advocate While 10% of the respondents say it is not so
- 60% of the respondents say that their perception on advocate’s service is influenced by the techniques that are adopted by their advocates while 16% say that technique adopted by their advocate does not influence their perception on their advocate

Table No. 3 - Clients Level of Satisfaction on Lawyers Performance

Options	Satisfied		Neutral		Dissatisfied		Total	
	No: of Responses	% of Responses	No: of Responses	% of Responses	No: of Responses	% of Responses	No: of Responses	% of Responses
Professional approach of the lawyer in dealing the cases	14	28	12	24	24	48	50	100
Involvement of the Lawyer in the cases he/she handles	17	34	20	40	13	26	50	100
Preparation of the Lawyer for the case	20	40	16	32	14	28	50	100
Lawyers Commitment in the case	15	30	22	44	13	26	50	100

Source: Author’s Source

Interpretation:

- 48% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the professional approach of the lawyer in dealing the cases while 24% of the respondents are neutral in this regard
- 40% of the respondents have neutral opinion on the satisfaction with regard to the involvement of lawyers in their profession while 34% of the respondents are satisfied with the involvement and commitment of their advocates in their profession
- 40% of the respondents are satisfied with the preparation of their advocates in their case while 28 % of the respondents are dissatisfied in this regard
- 48% of the respondents have neutral opinion on the satisfaction with regard to the commitment of lawyers in their profession while 30% of the respondents are satisfied with the commitment of their advocates in their profession

Findings:

- 48% of the respondents perceive that their advocates see each and every factor of the case
- 48% of the respondents perceive that their advocates are not always courteous when dealing with them
- 54% of the respondents say that their advocates are always approachable for the case
- 60% of the respondents feel that their advocates clearly explain complex legal issues involved in their case
- 50% of the respondents states that their advocates gives clarification on the case
- 52% of the respondents feel that their advocates are effective in their arguments in court
- 48% of the respondents say that their advocates show involvement and commitment in their cases
- 60% of the respondents feel that courteousness of advocates towards them is one of the factors which influence their perception towards services of the advocate
- 54% of the respondents say that their perception on the advocate's service is influenced by the approachability of their advocates towards their case
- 86% of the respondent's perception on their advocate's service is based on the knowledge of their advocates towards their case
- 74% of the respondents say that the involvement and commitment of their advocate influence their perception on the services rendered by their advocate
- 60% of the respondents say that their perception on advocate's service is influenced by the techniques that are adopted by their advocates
- 48% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the professional approach of the lawyer in dealing the cases
- 40% of the respondents have neutral opinion on the satisfaction with regard to the involvement of lawyers in their profession

- 40% of the respondents are satisfied with the preparation of their advocates in their case. 48% of the respondents have neutral opinion on the satisfaction with regard to the commitment of lawyers in their profession.

Suggestions:

- Advocates should maintain client’s loyalty by continuing to offer information and advice so that the client grows to depend more and more on their knowledge
- Advocates should adequately communicate information about the client’s case and show real interest in the client’s needs to reduce their dissatisfaction
- Advocates should communicate legal information to their clients in ways that their clients can understand
- Advocate should be courteous with their clients and make them comfortable with the case
- Clients should be informed about the progress of their case so that the client will feel confident that the lawyer is keeping track of the affairs, even if things are not happening on schedule
- Advocates should get feedback from their client to know their satisfaction towards their services; this helps them to know that the lawyer values their views, opinion and care on the services rendered to them

Conclusion:

Excellent client service is the foundation of a successful law practice and the best competitive edge a lawyer could ask for. Great service is a leading source of client happiness. Clients are the most important people in the practice in person, by mail or by phone. Managing client expectations is the most challenging part of client services. Clients are not an interruption of our work; they are the purpose of it. Good client services are built on credibility and trust, integrity and honesty, communication, and commitment. Good client relations mean serving your clients according to their need.

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