Winning Through Service Excellence
Centre's Mission

To serve as a catalyst for fostering service excellence in multiple domains through stimulating and supporting (a) research scholarship, (b) managerial action, and (c) pedagogical innovation, pertaining to service excellence.
The Centre's Raison d'etre and Mission

**Background**: Service organizations are constantly seeking unique ways to differentiate their offerings and benchmark against the best. With an intensification of competition and increasing customer sensitivity in today's service economy, coupled with increasing adoption of technology-led service delivery, the pursuit of service excellence is becoming an important goal for an increasing number of firms.

Since the 1970s, researchers in developed countries have been conducting comprehensive studies on the topic of customer satisfaction. In 1989, Fornell and his colleagues at the University of Michigan helped Sweden build the first nation-level measurement system of customer satisfaction – the Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer (SCSB) (Fornell, 1992). In 1994, the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) was launched (Fornell, 1996). In the middle of the 1990s, the notion of creating a Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) was gradually recognized by governments and companies worldwide as a good overall measure of a nation's or company's ability to satisfy customers. Many of the mature and emerging economies have adopted nation-level CSIs such as the German Customer Satisfaction Barometer (GCSB), Norwegian Customer Satisfaction Barometer (NCSB), Swiss Index of Customer Satisfaction (SWICS), Korean Customer Satisfaction Index (KCSI) and Malaysian Customer Satisfaction Index (MSCSI). Given its apparent objectivity, parsimony and simplicity, a CSI-type metric has even been backed by some governments as a tool for benchmarking and improving customer satisfaction in various sectors. The national CSIs such as American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and European Customer Satisfaction Index (ECSI) are widely accepted as an important indicator of the overall health of economies, industries and individual firms.

**The “Gap”**: In India, thus far there has not been any comprehensive effort to assess customer satisfaction at the national level as well as across and within various sectors. At the same time there has been rapid growth in services as a share of the overall Indian economy, along with growing interest from companies as well as public-sector organizations in improving customer service. Thus there is a need and an opportunity in India to even move beyond mere customer satisfaction towards achieving service excellence.

**Centre’s Inaugural Step in Closing the Gap**: IFIM Business School in Bengaluru, India, in collaboration with the Academy of Indian Marketing (AIM) has taken the lead in developing the Index of Service Excellence in India (iSEI), under the mentorship of Prof. A. Parasuraman, whose pioneering work in the area of service quality measurement and improvement (e.g., the SERVQUAL model) is globally known in both academic and practitioner circles. Anchored in the underlying principles of that work, the iSEI is intended to generate sectoral service excellence scores at the national, regional, sector and company levels. At this time a pilot version of the iSEI focused on two sectors (retail banking and e-commerce) has been developed. Based on learnings from this pilot effort and further refinements to the iSEI, it will be gradually rolled out to other sectors in subsequent waves of data collection and computation.
of the index. Eventually the iSEI is expected to become a national benchmark for assessing and improving service excellence across sectors and companies on a regular basis. While many individual companies and some industries monitor customer satisfaction on a continual basis, there is no credible general index of service excellence at present at a national level in India. The iSEI is intended to fill this general void.

The Centre believes that the iSEI will serve as a strategic business tool for the corporates, benchmarking service excellence insights across sectors and geographies, besides providing diagnostic capabilities by identifying drivers that can make the most significant impact on overall service excellence. The Academy of Indian Marketing (AIM) and IFIM Business School have collaborated to set up AIM Parasuraman Centre for Service Excellence on IFIM Campus in Bengaluru to take this initiative forward. This Centre is being registered as a section 8 company in India, under the Companies Act 2013. The Centre will have a governing board consisting of members drawn from its industry and institutional founding partners.

AIM - PARASURAMAN CENTRE FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Dr Jagdish Sheth unveiling the AIM Parasuraman Centre for Service Excellence on July 26, 2019 in Bengaluru, India
Centre’s Vision and Objectives

The aspirational vision for the Centre is to serve as a catalyst for bringing together and facilitating interactions among academic scholars, companies and students (who are would-be managers and/or scholars down the road) with the goal of promoting and nurturing service excellence in multiple areas. This Centre can be envisioned as a three-pillared structure, with the Centre’s vision atop the structure and supported by three interlinked pillars:

(a) research scholars from academic institutions,
(b) practitioners from various industry sectors and
(c) students being trained at academic institutions.

The overall aim of the Centre is to serve as a catalyst for making significant contributions relating to service excellence in three intertwined areas – research scholarship, managerial insights and pedagogy. Consistent with the three-pillared structure supporting its vision, the Centre’s broad objectives are three-fold, focusing on knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination and knowledge implementation in the service-excellence domain:

1. Foster ongoing research that leads to new theoretical, managerial and pedagogical insights pertaining to service excellence (knowledge creation);

2. Propagate those insights through publications, presentations, press releases, etc. (knowledge dissemination); and

3. Enable application of those insights to (a) stimulate further scholarly discourse and research (e.g., through research symposia and conferences); (b) improve managerial practice in various organizations (e.g., through consulting assignments and practitioner forums); and (c) enhance student learning (e.g., through case studies and class projects) (knowledge implementation).

An Illustration of the Centre's Contributions: The iSEI

The types of contributions the Centre is capable of making along the aforementioned lines are embodied in the pilot version of the Index of Service Excellence in India (iSEI) that was released on 26th July 2019 under the auspices of the IFIM B-School and Academy of Indian Marketing (AIM) in conjunction with the announcement of the formation of this Centre. The iSEI is a robust and rigorous benchmarking tool for making within-sector and across-sector comparisons of companies vis-à-vis their extent of service excellence. The underlying theoretical foundation for the iSEI is the well-established SERVQUAL methodology for measuring service quality along the dimensions of tangibles,
reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy in the form of “gaps” between what customers believe true service excellence represents in a given sector and the level of service they believe a given company actually delivers on each of the dimensions. The dimension-level gap scores are weighted by the relative importance of the five dimensions (as assessed by the customers) and then aggregated to derive an overall 100-point index score.

The pilot version of the iSEI covered just two metro areas (Bengaluru and Mumbai) and two sectors (e-commerce and retail banking), with five companies in each. Nevertheless, despite the pilot version’s limited scope, the overall index values and the patterns of underlying gap scores for the ten companies revealed several interesting patterns that raise intriguing questions for researchers, managers and students. For instance, across both sectors and all ten companies:

- The under-30 age group consistently rated the service as being worse (i.e., they had significantly more negative gap scores) than did the 31-45 and over-45 age groups. Why? Do millennials have higher service expectations than the others?

- Customers with longer associations with the companies (greater than six months) generally rated the service as being worse than did newer customers. Why? Are companies paying more attention to customer acquisition and newer customers at the expense of customer retention and longer-term customers?

Intriguing questions such as the above can (a) provide issues for further research by academic scholars, (b) prompt companies to take a more in-depth look at their customer service efforts, and (c) serve as pedagogical aids for stimulating in-class discussions by students.

**Benefits to the members:**

1. Affiliated with and acknowledged in the generation of index
2. Participation in exclusive annual think tank symposium
3. Access to iSEI benchmarking reports
4. Text mining support for service failure alerts
5. One customized research relevant to the partner’s organization
6. Opportunity to interact with Dr. A Parasuraman on service excellence
7. One day training program on service excellence

**The proposed membership structure for institutional members is as follows:**

**Regular Institutional Members:** Regular institutional members of the Centre will pay an annual membership fee for a minimum period of three years.

Besides, the Centre encourages global institutions of repute to join this program as **International Institutional Member** paying an annual membership fee.
A similar membership structure is proposed for corporate sponsorships:

**Regular Corporate Sponsors**: Companies within various verticals will be invited to become regular corporate sponsors for an annual sponsorship fee for a minimum period of three years.

The institutional and corporate sponsors will be appropriately acknowledged in the Centre’s website as well as in collaterals, etc.

**Centre's Proposed Products/Services**

The Centre will offer a variety of products and services such as the ones listed below (some of them – e.g., the first two items – will be made available in the public domain free of charge, while others will be fee-based and/or provided as part of the membership benefits to institutional and corporate members).

1. **iSEI Benchmarking Reports**: These reports, published on a regular basis and released to the business press, will provide overall service excellence scores for companies in all major sectors and offer a comparative discussion of those scores within and across sectors. Companies can make use of this publicly available information as a starting point to conduct deeper, within-company analyses to diagnose service shortfalls and develop corrective actions to enhance their customers’ service experience.

2. **State-of-the-Field Reports**: The Centre will publish periodic reports on the latest developments and findings on service excellence and create a community of researchers and practitioners to advance adoption of best practices for achieving service excellence.

3. **Customised Reports**: The Centre will provide customised reports to individual companies that seek the Centre’s assistance in addressing specific questions that can be researched with the help of data generated for computing the index scores.

4. **Customised Research and Consulting**: The Centre will also provide customised research and consulting services to organizations wanting to bridge gaps and build excellence in their service delivery. The iSEI methodology can be adapted and customised to suit a variety of business needs, such as providing data-driven insights to enhance service designs and processes, to improve the customer experience journey, and to develop service-based strategies for achieving and sustaining competitive advantage.

5. **Service Excellence focussed conferences and roundtables**: These will be knowledge-sharing events that will bring together academics and practitioners to share research findings, engage in panel discussions, present real-world exemplars of service excellence, etc. The first of such conferences – tentatively titled “Service Excellence: Theory and Practice” – is already being planned for mid-2020 and will be hosted by the IFIM Business School.

6. **Symposia on Service Excellence**: The Centre plans to organize regular research symposia, aimed primarily at academics, for advancing new knowledge in the service-excellence domain (e.g., by generating research priorities), for promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration and research on service excellence, etc. The Centre will work closely with its institutional members and encourage their active participation in setting the agendas for these symposia so as to do full justice to the notion of creating a truly effective consortium of research institutions that are committed to knowledge-creation and knowledge-dissemination in the service-excellence domain. While the Centre will serve
as the focal point for organizing these symposia, it will also encourage its institutional members to take turns in hosting the symposia.

7. **Introducing a Journal to advance practice of Service Excellence**: After the Centre garners a critical mass of support, and gains sufficient visibility and stature through its various offerings such as the aforementioned ones, it will consider launching a high-quality journal that is academically rigorous and managerially impactful. At such time it will also consider other publication-related projects (e.g., serving as catalyst for generating and publishing cases and other pedagogical aids pertaining to service excellence).

8. **Training on Service Excellence**: The Centre can provide regular training to corporates and institutions on service excellence.

This Centre is being registered as a section 8 company in India, under the Companies Act 2013. The Centre will have a governing board drawing members from its industry and institutional founding partners. The following are the existing Board Members.

### Founding Members

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Jayant Shah**  
Executive Director- Academy of Indian Marketing (AIM)

**Faculty Chair- iSEI Initiatives**

**Dr. Asit K Barma**  
Chairperson and Professor-Marketing Area

**Dr. A Parasuraman**  
Pro-Chancellor, Vijay Bhoomi University; Emeritus Professor of Marketing and James W. McLamore Chair Emeritus, University of Miami

**Dr. Jagdish Sheth**  
Charles H. Kellstadt Chair of Marketing in the Goizueta Business School at Emory University

**Sanjay Padode**  
Secretary, Centre for Developmental Education and Patron, iSEI initiative

**Dr. Atish Chattopadhyay**  
Director, IFIM Business School
Established in 1995, IFIM Business School, Bangalore, is currently amongst the top 6 Business Schools in India to have been awarded the AACSB accreditation. IFIM is also accredited by National Board of Accreditation (NBA), and South Asian Quality Assurance System (SAQS), and is ISO 9001:2008 certified. Various programmes at IFIM includes (1) Two-year full-time residential Post Graduate Diploma in Management with options to do Major in Marketing, Finance, Digital Business, Analytics, HRM and International Business (2) PGDM (Data Science), (3) PGDM for Working Professionals. Actively engaged in research and consulting, IFIM hosts several Centres of Excellence such as AIM-Parasuraman Centre for Service Excellence and Centre for Consulting in Digital Leadership. IFIM has an elite set of international academic partners including leading institutes such as ESCP-London, Darden Business School (University of Virginia) and McCombs Business School (University of Texas at Austin). IFIM Business School has four distinct anchors that support its overall educational philosophy:

- Grooming T shaped professionals with a unique curriculum aligned to the needs of industry 4.0. In this 'T', the top bar represents the broad skills such as the people skills, the social skills, and an appreciation of multi-functional capabilities and how the functional areas play among themselves, whereas the pillar on which the top bar rests, represents deep knowledge and skills in an area of specialization.

- A mix of recent PhD trained and experienced practice oriented best-in-class faculty.

- Global connect with partnerships with world renowned business schools offering super-specialisations in new-age courses.

- Industry connect programmes to groom “Beyond Tomorrow” professionals.
Salient Features

- 6th Business School in India to receive the prestigious AACSB International accreditation.

- Ranked 28th in India by Business Today 2018 – only institute to jump 20 places.

- India's 1st Business School to set up a Digital Business academic area.

- One of the strongest Finance and Marketing faculty in the country.

- Pioneer of India’s only service excellence index (index of Service Excellence in India – iSEI)

- IFIM’s Research Incubation Program figured on AACSB’s ‘innovations that inspire’ list of 2019 for Asia Pacific region.

- Only Business School to offer a Bespoke Curriculum model which provides a tailor-made learning path for each student.

- Super Specialisation - A unique opportunity for students to study the most relevant and contemporary subject from top business schools in the world. A 10-credit program curated for a multi-generational cohort consisting of students and executives for learning by solving real life problems at our partner global schools Darden School of Business (University of Virginia), McCombs School of Business (University of Texas, Austin) and ESCP London to groom 'T' shaped professionals for next-gen roles in next-gen industries.

- 33% of the curriculum comprises of Practice Course.

- The fastest Business School to complete 100% placements in 2018

- A wellness and personality/communication centric program to nurture life skill and lifestyle in each student is integrated into the curriculum.

Academy of Indian Marketing (AIM)

Founded in 2009, Academy of Indian Marketing (AIM) is a consortium of leading management institutions offering world class management education and research activities through doctoral and equivalent programs. It’s vision is to be the world’s leading research and practice driven academic organization recognized for generating and disseminating unique marketing perspectives on emerging markets including India. Dr. Jagdish Sheth is the Founder and Chairman of AIM.

www.academyofindianmarketing.org