Level of Satisfaction Towards Five Dimension of Service Quality in Private Learning Institutions in Perak

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Abstract

This study is a survey conducted on students' study at the two of private higher learning institution. The purpose of this survey is to measure the level of satisfaction of students towards the quality of study private higher learning institution through the five-dimension quality which is tangible, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy in Perak. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to students staying at this universities. The data obtained were analysed using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0 and the analytical methods used were frequency and descriptive analysis. Furthermore, the SERVQUAL model is used in this study in order to measure the level of student satisfaction towards the quality of universities services. The quality dimensions tested are tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The overall findings show that the level of satisfaction of students towards the quality of universities services at two of the private higher learning institutions in Perak is too low

Keywords: Tangible, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy

Introduction

There are various names referring to student studies in this field. On average in Malaysia, it is usually an institution of higher learning using the term service universities or college as a residence to their students. It serves as residence and place of study for students during the period of study at the university. Service quality is the attributes of service which helps in satisfying the demands of the customers. Demands of the customers could be specified, implied or obligatory on the part of service provider. Different authors have explained the concept of service quality. Under TQM, quality is defined in terms of conformance to the requirements of the customer (Kumar et. al. 2011). Parasuraman (1988) defines service quality as difference between customer's perceptions and expectations of service (SQ= P-E). Service quality is an attitude formed by a long-term, overall evaluation of a firm's performance (Hoffman and Bateson,2010). With commercialization of education sector, it is considered as business and all the concepts and theories of business are applied to this sector as well. Education now has been recognized as money making industry in many parts of the world. In early literature, there has been a debate whether students are the consumers or the product. Some see them as the

product and employers as the consumers (Kotler and Fox, 1985). Other see students as customers and university programs as products (Levit, 1980). Parasuraman et.al., (1988) constructed a multiple-item scale for measuring consumers 'perception of Service Quality. Athiyaman, (1997) discussed conceptual basis of consumer satisfaction and perceived quality.

The results clearly indicate that perceived quality is the result of consumer satisfaction. Joseph and Joseph, (1997) measured service quality in education using importance performance analysis. Chua, (2004) assessed the quality attributes of higher education from various perspectives, i.e., from parents, students, faculty members and employers. These quality attributes were then classified using the Input–Process–Output-framework. Nadiri et.al., (2009) surveyed Students' perceptions of service quality in higher education to diagnose the applicability of the perceived service quality measurement scale to students and to diagnose the student satisfaction level in higher education. Hence, the main purpose the researcher conducted this study to measure the level of student satisfaction with the quality services at X Universities.

Then to measure the quality of services in this study, researchers used the SERVQUAL model from Parasuraman (1988) or also known as dimensions of service quality. The pioneers of this SERVQUAL model have identified five dimensions service quality i.e., real dimensions, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Dimensions the real is about the physical facilities, condition of the equipment and the personal appearance of the person provide service. The reliability dimension refers to the ability to perform services correctly and accurately and reliably. Responsive is willingness to act while assisting customers and passing services at a rate immediate while the assurance dimension is the knowledge and decency of the employee as well as the ability to convince customers. The empathy dimension is the last dimension which is about concern individually provided by the service provider to the customer. All these dimensions used in this study.

Literature Research

The Fourth Edition Hall Dictionary has explained that a dormitory is a building accommodation for certain groups such as school children, college students, nurses and others. Accommodation includes not only the residence but covers the entire place learning, lodging and socialization. The development of a student is influenced by objectives educational institutions, dormitory size, faculty and administration of educational institutions and culture formed or practiced among students. An environment for effective learning is an attractive form of environment with its design, facility management perfect and take into account the occupants as well as the activities in it. Therefore, the educational institution who provides the facilities of this dwelling should achieve the satisfaction desired by students. Nariza and Boon (2006), define an institution of higher learning as a canter the development of knowledge to students in imparting knowledge and even skills in whatever field they are interested in. Ahmad (2014) conducted a survey to identify the key service factors that determine the satisfaction of students and to know the extent to which students are satisfied.

Seven dimensions. University reputation/image, program quality, lecturers and teaching quality, student learning environment, effective use of technology, counselling and academic advising support, and social life (direct/indirect) facilities provided by the universities were examined during survey. Kontic, (2014) measured Service Quality in higher education to investigate the potential to apply the SERVPERF scale for assessing service quality during higher education reform in Serbia. Krsmanovic et. al., (2014) applied SERVQUAL model in high education to determine quality of high education services at Faculty of organizational sciences, Belgrade University in Serbia and to compare it with results of such research in other faculties. Results of the study showed the rank of quality characteristics according to gap score from lowest to highest as (tangibility – empathy – assurance – responsibility – reliability). Oldfield and Baron, (2018) investigated Student perceptions of service quality in higher education in a UK university business and management faculty, particularly of the elements not directly involved with content and delivery of course units. SERVQUAL-based survey is conducted where students' perceived service quality has three dimensions: ``requisite elements", "acceptable elements", "functional elements", which are of a practical or utilitarian nature. Therefore, some facilities are provided for example dormitory or student residence as accommodation or house for students to live throughout their studies at the university. The university management is responsible for providing comfortable service to its occupants. Lokman and Shamsiha (2011) assert that the importance of an educational institution in order to conduct research on the role of parties' management of residential colleges aimed at improving basic facilities such as infrastructure i.e., all basic facilities and services such as transportation facilities and communication, electrical power supply and others as it will affect development of students' learning. Therefore, the university should complete all the facilities at the residential college in helping to facilitate the students undergoing life as long as they are at university. Scholars of the past such as Chickering (1969) has stated that the importance of influence and the role played by management college in aspects of student development in residential colleges. The self -development of this individual influenced by the objectives of the university, the layout of hostels in the university, faculty and administration universities as well as cultures formed or practiced among students. About the subject residential college services, when referring to the Third Edition Hall

Dictionary (2000: 674) service is about serving (duty) or work (effort, facility) for charity, needs, interests of the people.

Student Satisfaction.

Zeithaml and Bitner (1996) define service quality as a service that provided to customers where the results obtained are not in the form of physical products but as a level of customer acceptance of the service. Every individual has different levels of satisfaction with a service or product. Referring to the study Kotler and Clarke (1987), they describe satisfaction as a condition felt by someone who has the experience or results as expected. Meanwhile, Hishamuddin and Azleen (2008) state that satisfaction is a function of the level of expectation relative to performance perceived by students. Carey, Cambiano and De Vore (2002) believe in satisfaction actually covers issues such as students 'perceptions and experiences during their years being in college.

Service Quality (SERVQUAL).

The basic theory of this study is based on the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988). This model was chosen because it is commonly used to measure the quality of a service offered by an organization. The model proposed by Parasuraman is wrong a well -known model in which the five dimensions discussed are reliability (reliability), responsiveness (responsiveness), assurance (assurance), empathy (empathy) and tangibles (Shahid, Irshad and Juhari, 2012).

Tangible Dimension.

Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) define tangible as the physical appearance of a service, staff, communication materials, equipment and so on. They further explained that service providers generally use this dimension for the purpose of enhancing the image of the company as well as a sign of the quality of their services. While Shahid, Irshad and Juhari (2012) interprets this dimension as a thing that physically represents a service, which used by the customer in real time This dimension also describes all the real features and can be clearly seen. In addition, it is an impactful physical facility existential/tangible element that can be felt by the customer.

Reliability Dimension.

Reliability is the ability to perform a service correctly and can reliable. Referring to Parasuraman et al., (1988), reliability is the ability of the provider services to perform a service accurately and reliably. Between aspects what can be emphasized in this dimension is how service providers can fulfil their promises to the university occupants, the sincerity shown by the staff, perform services to students properly, ensuring no current record of errors provide services to students and so on. (Shahid, Irshad and Juhari, 2012). Dimensions this is definitely able to help service providers to make their customers stay use the services provided. As confirmed by Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), customers may expect to continue dealing with organizations that are always firm with promises them.

Responsive Dimension.

Responsive is a willingness to act to help customers and perform services at an immediate rate. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), have stated that responsiveness is readiness service providers expedite a service and are ready to assist customers them. Among the things to take into account when testing this dimension is how immediate residential college management staff provide services to students, management staff readiness residential colleges help students and so on (Shahid, Irshad and Juhari, 2012). As inside Na'asah's (2006) study on the assessment of student responsive elements at the inquiry counter, majority students expect staff at the counter to provide prompt responses to inquiries and their needs. Such non -response includes punctuality, efficient staff and professionals, visible facility materials as well as the support provided by the staff themselves (Yuliarmi and Riyasa, 2007).

Assurance Dimension.

This dimension refers to the courtesy and knowledge of the staff as well as their ability to obtain customer confidence and trust. It is supported by Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), which they argue that, service providers need to ensure the delivery of something relevant the service is provided politely, so that customers can trust and feel confident with them. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) further explain that the linkages between providers their service and customers can be created when that trust and confidence has been ingrained in the minds of customers. An example of this dimension is the courteous attitude of the staff while serving customers, ensuring customer safety when dealing with staff and staff knowledge that solves the customer's problem.

Empathy Dimension.

Empathy is the concern given by a service provider to its customers on a regular basis individual and try to animate the customer's problems. All-effort organizations need to give attention and solve customer problems. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), empathy is necessary developed by the service provider itself so that it can have a positive impact on in the mind of the customer because indirectly the customer will feel like getting special attention individually.

Model of Service Quality Gap.

Gap model explains how customers assess quality of service. It explains five gaps of poor service quality. These should be closed in order to deliver quality service and thus satisfy customer (Parasuramanet al., 1985). The subsequent studies applied this model to study service quality in almost all service sectors. Below is table for this study.

GAP No.	Reason for Gap	Remedial Measure
1	Management perceivesdifferent from what customer expect.	Proper market research, effective upward communication and CRM.
2	Management perceptions of customers' requirements and delivery specifications differ.	Proper service design and incorporating customer driven standards while designing servicescape.
3	Difference of delivery specifications written down by the management and service delivery.	Proper training of delivery personnel, educating customers and managing service intermediaries well.
4	Conflict of Service delivery and external communication to the consumers.	Integrated marketing communication.
5	Discrepancy between customer expectations and their perceptions of the service delivered.	Remove all the previous four gaps.

Source: Parasuraman et al., 1985

Figure 1: Model of Service Gap

Comparing perceptions and expectations is considered to be the major limitation of this model by many scholars. They believe that expectations can vary from person to person and may change with experience (Carman, 1990; Webb, 2000). There is ambiguity in the concept of expected service and perceived service. These are used as synonyms by various authors (teas, 1993). Competition is also significant which is completely ignored in Gap Model (Mauri et al., 2013). Despite criticism, this model is widely used by scholars even after forty years from its inception (Mauri et al., 2013).

Servaqual.

To measure the above-mentioned gaps, authors developed another scale named SERVAQUAL in 1988 (Parasuraman et al., 1988). A 22-item instrument was developed to measure customers' perceptions and expectations of service quality. These were later categorized into five dimensions: Below is table for this study.

Dimension	Meaning
Tangibles	Physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel
Reliability	Ability to perform the service accurately
Responsiveness	Providing prompt service and helping customer when required
Assurance	Courtesy of employees and their ability to build trust and confidence
Empathy	Care and attention towards customer

(Source: Parasuraman et al., 1988)

Figure 2: Instrument to measure customers' service quality

Perceived service quality was observed as the extent and direction of difference between consumers' perceptions and expectations i.e., service quality (Q) = Perception (P) – Expectation (E). SERVAQUAl model is criticized on the basis that perceptions and expectations were measured at the same time and after service delivery. This can change the expectations of the consumer subconsciously. Expectations assessed before service delivery may give different picture. (Carman, 1990; Gronroos, 1993). The 'should expectations wording' was also criticized (Carman, 1990; Brown et al., 1993) which was later revised by authors themselves in order to be less redundant and more user friendly (Parasuraman et al., 1991; 1994. Studies have also questioned the legitimacy of student ratings perceived service quality (Greenwald 1997).

Servperf.

Cronin and Taylor (1992) proposed a new model called 'SERVPERF' after invalidating the SERVAQUAL model given by Parasuraman. Many authors lend their support to performance-based measure of service quality (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Cronin and Taylor, 1992). According to this model, service quality is similar to consumer attitude. They provided the empirical evidences on the basis of four industries i.e., bank, pest control, dry cleaning and fast food to show the superiority of SERVPERF over SERVAQUAL. On the whole, SERVPERF scale is termed as 'superior' scale as it is capable in capturing the true customer's perceived service quality. Moreover, it is being a universal measure of service quality may not be a totally adequate instrument to assess perceived quality in higher education sector. General applicability of the model was questioned with regard to the most suitable model for each type of service (Abdullah,2005).

Hedperf.

Referring Firdaus Abdullah in 2005 offered a new performance-based scale called HEdPERF especially for determining perceived service quality from the point of view of students in higher education sector. So, it is industry specific 41 items scale especially designed for higher education sector for testing reliability and validity. As it is based on SERVPERF, it also takes service quality (Q) as function of Performance (P). HEdPERF questionnaire includes 41 statements out of which 13 are taken from SERVPERF scale which are categorized into six dimensions i.e., Non-academic aspects, Academic aspects, Reputation, Access or ease of contact and understanding (Abdullah, 2005, 2006). This model was criticized for overlapping questions in questionnaire and overemphasizing the administrative aspects. It is also criticized for being too restrictive and cannot be applied to other services (Brunson, 2010).

Conclusion

In Malaysia, both private and public institutions of higher learning strive to provide quality services to its students in order to develop and maintain their reputation. To gain competitive advantages, efforts to adopt the quality management system philosophy are fast spreading within the higher education institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia (Sohail, Rajadurai, Rahman, 2003). This is a conceptual paper where main objective is to understand the concept of service quality in higher education. The review of literature highlighted various models which can be applied to study service quality in

HEIs and studies of different scholars using different models. The quality of higher education must be viewed as a strategic issue for development of economy. The dimension of service quality is still debated among the academic researchers and last but not least the outcome of the findings indicates that each set of dimensions developed are relevant according to different expectations of customers. This study is expected to pave way for researchers who are interested to conduct further studies on the implications of service quality in Malaysian higher education environment. In many instances, understanding of students' perceptions and expectations would assist the institutions of higher learning to create a conducive study environment with minimum complains or dissatisfactions. Many researchers agree that it is important to understand expectations and values of students in higher education (Telford and Mason, 2005).

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