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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Acceptance Level Of Service Quality Among Undergraduate Student: The Case Of Public University In Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper to identify the level of service quality acceptance among undergraduate students in public university. Student as main focus in this research because of they were assumed as customer focus. Quantitative approach was employed through cross-sectional survey. A total 299 questionnaires were distributed. Random sampling technique was applied in determining the sampling frame. Hence, the data obtained was analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. From the result of mean score, the study suggested that the overall score of service quality acceptance among undergraduate students were of high. Finally, the implication and some suggestions for future research were also discussed.

Key words: Service quality, public university, undergraduate students

INTRODUCTION

Service quality as proposed by Zeithaml *et al.* [66], is provide different perception of customer expectation on service delivery. Meanwhile, Nitecki *et al.*, [39] defined that service quality as “meeting or exceeding customer expectation or the difference between customer perception and expectations of service. Parasuraman *et al.* [47], defined service quality as the comparative function between customer expectations and actual service performance. It can be synthesis that serving quality is to fulfil customer expectation [1,63] and needs in order to ensure customer feel satisfied either during or after receive the service [36,49]. From past studies, the result showed that service quality has positive correlation with customer satisfaction [2,4,7,9,12,18,51,61]. Besides that, service quality will also affect the trust and loyalty of customer [31,41].

Hence, in context of higher education, service quality becomes as crucial due to the existence of competition among universities [21,51,49]), internationalization spirit, higher expectation towards higher education institution and an increase in full fee payment and the classification of education as a marketable service [29]. In university, student is the main customer [26,56,64]. Allen and Davis [5] and Holdford and

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Patkar (2003), defined service quality in higher education as student's overall evaluation of services received as part of their educational experience. However Hill (1995) in his study reported that teaching, course content, teaching quality, teaching methods, personal contract with academic staff, feedback, student involvement, joint consultation, library service, financial service are key component of service quality in higher education. On the other hands, Owlia and Aspinwall [43], proposed a framework for quality measurement in higher education, emphasizing on the teaching aspects of engineering education which involved four dimensions: academic resources, competence, attitude and content.

Literature Review:

Past scholars has proposed that marketing concept will enhance to satisfaction towards on customer and organizational purposes then has been applied in university [3,6,11,42,67]. The university had adopted a marketing approach they are able to attract and retained top quality students. Hence, higher education sector has applied concept of service quality and customer satisfaction has moving the universities closer to their market needs [14,46,66].

Past study has been conducted by Qin and Prybutok [48], showed that service quality in fast food restaurant has indicated dimension that proposed by Parasuraman *et al.* [47]: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, empathy and assurance were significant. Thus, service quality and food quality are determinants towards customers' satisfaction. In this study, the researchers has employed structural equation modelling (SEM) in order to estimate the relationship among service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

Whilst, Angell, Heffernan and Megicks (2008), conducted the service quality study on postgraduate students by using an online survey. Findings on this study, showed about 20 service attribute were derived from qualitative stage. Hence, four service factors emerged such as academic, leisure, industry link and cost. By using the setting of importance-performance analysis (IPA) in a UK university, it found that the academic and industry link factors of service quality are most critical to postgraduates. Hence, this study conclude that IPA is an appropriate tool for measuring service quality in postgraduate education.

Methodology:

This study has employed quantitative approached as mentioned by Sugiyono [60, quantitative approach is to test theories through the independent variable and dependent variable and analyzed the data with the statistical tool. 299 questionnaires has distributed by using random sampling to undergraduate students in public university. The questionnaire will employed a 5 point Likert scale format that ranging from 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree and 5 – strongly agree. After all data collected, the questionnaires will be analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Finding And Discussion:

According to the table below, respondents for male student is 32.8% whilst female student recorded 67.2%. The age of overall respondents was classified into four group. Respondents who aged less than 20 years showed 37.5%, 21 – 25 years recorded 57.5%, 4.0% served the age between 26 – 30 years and the respondents who age more than 30 years represent 1.0%. Meanwhile, 63.6% represent for Malay, Chinese were 21.4%, Indian showed 9.0% and followed by others races which is non Malaysian citizen is 6.0%. Last demographic view is refer to year of study that recorded to first year student is 38.1%, meanwhile second year student represent 17.4%, third year student were 28.1% and fourth year student served 16.4%. A profile of the respondent can be referred in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Respondent's profile		Frequency	Percentage (100%)
Gender	Male	98	32.8
	Female	201	67.2
Age	< 20 years	112	37.5
	21 – 25 years	172	57.5
	26 – 30	12	4.0
	> 30 years	3	1.0
Race	Malays	190	63.6
	Chinese	64	21.4
	Indian	27	9.0
	Others	18	6.0
Year of study	1 st year	114	38.1
	2 nd year	52	17.4
	3 rd year	84	28.1
	4 th year	49	16.4

Table 2 below showed about the descriptive statistics of service quality aspects that has been employed to undergraduate students in public university. Hence, after collect the data all the aspect were analyzed through mean and standard deviation. As suggested by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) service quality is a scale for measuring consumer perception and expectation of service quality. Thus, a high number of mean showed high satisfaction or perception of students towards the service served by university, meanwhile low number of mean showed low satisfaction of student towards the service. Mean value 3.9-4.0 is the high satisfaction, while moderate mean value is 3.7-3.8 and 3.6 and below represent low satisfaction.

Therefore, based on the analysis or findings, it found that four items which has high scored mean value between 3.9-4.0 (*I believe that an excellent university has have modern-looking equipment, I believe that an excellent university physical facilities are visually appealing, I believe that employee in excellent university will tell students exactly when services will be performed, and The behavior of employees in excellent university will instill confidence in students*) were indicate to high satisfaction from students' perspective. These high satisfaction items were from tangibility aspect, responsiveness and assurance.

Furthermore, 11 items showed moderate mean value ranging of satisfaction acceptance which is the value between 3.7-3.8 as followed (*I believe that employees at an excellent university will be neat-appearing, I believe that the materials associated with the service (i.e pamphlets or statements) will be visually appealing at an excellent university, I believe that an excellent university promises to do something by certain time, they does so, I believe that if students have a problem, an excellent university show sincere interest in solving it, I believe that employee in excellent university will give prompt service to students, I believe that employee in excellent university will always be willing to help students, I believe that students of excellent university will feel safe in their transactions, I believe that employees in excellent university will have the knowledge to answer students' questions, I believe that excellent university will give students' individual attention, I believe that excellent university will have operating hours convenient to all their students, and I believe that the employees in excellent university will understand the specific needs of their students*).

Whilst, the low satisfaction acceptance referred to low mean value which is 3.6 and below. These indicate to seven items were (*I believe that an excellent university will perform the service right the first time, I believe that an excellent university will provide their services at the time they promise to do so, I believe that an excellent university will insist on error-free records, I believe that employees in excellent university will never be too busy to respond to students' requests, I believe that employees in excellent university will be constantly courteous with students, I believe that excellent university will have employees who give students personal attention, and I believe that excellent university will have the students' best interest at heart*).

Observing from the mean score, the acceptance level of service quality in public university was proposed to be neutral to agree. The mean score ranged from 3.6054 to 4.0234 on a 5 point Likert scale. Besides that, the variability of the rating exhibited to relatively low with the standard deviation range of 0.77580 to 0.97563, proposing the consistencies in understanding of service quality in public university through students' perspectives. From these, four items were rated as high satisfaction among respondents, 11 items categorized as moderate and seven items were ranked low satisfaction.

The finding exposed high mean value in serving the service quality in public university. Later on, from the value or score, it assumed that the items showed strong mean concentration, probably the public university able to served proper service and facilities as expected by students before their entering to public university. Besides that, modern-looking equipment provided by public university are able to attract local students and international students to pursuing their study at public university in Malaysia. Furthermore, physical facilities also important and also able to attract student either local or international to study in public university. All these practices have been well answered by students of all genders, age, race and year of study.

On the other hand, the staffs of public university are encourage to join interpersonal skill courses that will enhance them being more skilful during consult with student [25]. Perhaps, the public university also should recruit highly competent, skilful staffs in order to satisfy students who study in public university. By participating training course it will educate staffs be more concerned during serving their service [10,15,55,62] to students and understand situation that has faced by students.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Service Quality Aspects

Service quality aspects		Mean	SD
Tangibility	I believe that an excellent university has have modern-looking equipment.	4.0234	.85302
	I believe that an excellent university physical facilities are visually appealing.	3.9933	.79846
	I believe that employees at an excellent university will be neat-appearing.	3.8027	.78012

	I believe that the materials associated with the service (<i>i.e</i> pamphlets or statements) will be visually appealing at an excellent university.	3.7793	.85419
Reliability	I believe that an excellent university promises to do something by certain time, they does so.	3.8060	.87230
	I believe that if students have a problem, an excellent university show sincere interest in solving it.	3.7625	.84373
	I believe that an excellent university will perform the service right the first time.	3.6856	.86399
	I believe that an excellent university will provide their services at the time they promise to do so.	3.6722	.92664
	I believe that an excellent university will insist on error-free records.	3.6856	.92404
Responsiveness	I believe that employee in excellent university will tell students exactly when services will be performed.	3.9197	.85936
	I believe that employee in excellent university will give prompt service to students.	3.8896	.77580
	I believe that employee in excellent university will always be willing to help students.	3.7926	.83373
	I believe that employees in excellent university will never be too busy to respond to students' requests.	3.6421	.90988
Assurance	The behavior of employees in excellent university will instill confidence in students	3.9498	.82789
	I believe that students of excellent university will feel safe in their transactions.	3.7793	.84629
	I believe that employees in excellent university will be constantly courteous with students.	3.6120	.88423
	I believe that employees in excellent university will have the knowledge to answer students' questions.	3.7391	.97563
Empathy	I believe that excellent university will give students' individual attention.	3.8963	.84302
	I believe that excellent university will have operating hours convenient to all their students.	3.7358	.82358
	I believe that excellent university will have employees who give students personal attention.	3.6054	.92219
	I believe that excellent university will have the students' best interest at heart.	3.6555	.90339
	I believe that the employees in excellent university will understand the specific needs of their students.	3.8294	.95591

Conclusion:

The result showed that the modern-looking equipment and physical facilities giving positive impact [22,35,36]. to attract student either from local and international to pursuing their study in public university [34,33,32,51,57]. Besides that, suggesting staffs to join interpersonal skills [16,23,24] might be enhanced the student to be more confident to interact with staff to solve their problem. Moreover, management team of public university must aware [37]. about problem that might facing by student. Thus, the finding may add the literature on service quality in higher education institution mainly public university in Malaysia.

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