Students' Satisfaction on Facilities in Universiti Utara Malaysia

[1]Muhamad Shah Kamal Ideris, [1]Lim Ting Yi, [1]Safarina Mohd Rodzi, [2]Abd Rahim Romle,
[2]Mohd Akmal Hakim Mohamad Zabri and [2]Nor Azlindamazlini Mahamad

[1]School of Tourism, Hospitality and Environmental Management,
Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia
[4]School of Government, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Abstract: Service quality is one of the most important criteria to measure consumers' satisfaction. They are not only concerned with how a service is being delivered but also with the quality of output they received. Positive perception on quality of services being delivered occurs when it exceeded customers' expectation. A review of the literature revealed that the general description of service quality attributes are (a) tangible, (b) reliability, (c) responsiveness, (d) assurance and (e) empathy. For the purpose of indicating student's satisfaction on the service quality of facilities in UUM, questionnaires have been distributed to students at University Utara Malaysia to explore their perception. Results from the survey were examined to see whether there is any relationship between the five service quality attributes and students' satisfaction.

Key words: Service Quality · Student Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Service quality is one of the most important research topics for the past decades [1]. Consumers are not only concerned with how a service is being delivered but most importantly with the quality of output they received. Positive perception on quality of services being delivered occurs when it exceeded customers' expectations.

Customer satisfaction is an important facet for service organizations and specifically, it is highly related to service quality. Such development is highly related to the intensity of rivalries of today's business environment [2].

In this study, University Utara Malaysia (UUM) is selected to measure the service quality of facilities and students' satisfaction. UUM is an institution that not only provides higher education for students to advance their knowledge but also provides a complete facility for their usage. The service quality of education system and facilities in UUM is very important because it is directly related to the students' satisfaction. The importance of both service quality (SQ) and customer satisfaction (CS) has received considerable attention in the recent years [3][4].

In line with that, [5] revised and defined the service quality in terms of five dimensions such as tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. These dimensions have been put in place to improve services and this study seeks to investigate the satisfaction level with UUM's services quality and facilities and tests the relationship between service quality and students' satisfaction.

Nowadays, student's opinions about all aspects of academic life are sought by educational institutions worldwide. University becomes a place to provide services to fulfill the student's needs. Student's demand is at a higher level not only in relation to the quality of teaching but also to the condition of facilities. Thus, a strategy of continuous improvement with regard to service quality is very important.

Customers' services are considered as a major tool for customers' satisfaction [6]. In order to deliver high quality services to students, university must manage every aspect of the student's interaction with all of the service offered. Services are delivered to people by people and the moments of truth can make or break a university's image [7].

Corresponding Author: Muhamad Shah Kamal Ideris, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Environmental Management,
Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia.
Tel: +60122722916.

In order to deliver total students' satisfaction, all employees of the university should adhere to the principles of quality customer service, whether they be front-line contact staff involved in teaching or non-contact staff in management or administrative roles [8].

From the fore-mentioned notion, Universities has to provide the best quality of service for their students. However, to date there have been very limited number of studies addressing the issue of service quality in higher education sector, following an increasing in the number of universities in Malaysia. Based on the statement above, it is very important to carry out a research to address this issue. Thus, the objective of this current study is to investigate the relationship between the service quality attributes and students' satisfaction on UUM's facilities.

Literature Review

Service Quality: The service quality in the field of education and higher learning institution particularly is not only essential, but also an important parameter of educational excellence. It has been found that positive perceptions of service quality has a significant influence on student satisfaction and thus will attract more students through word-of-mouth communications [9]. The students can be motivated or inspired from both academic performance as well as the administrative efficiency of their institution. As mentioned by [10], service quality is a key performance measure in educational excellence and it is a main strategy variable for universities to create a strong perception in consumer's mind.

According to [11] most of the well-established higher learning institutions focus highly on strategic issues like providing excellent customer services. It is important because by doing so, they would be able to make and build a good relationship with clients who are very important in determining their future in the industry. Higher learning institutions are like other service based firms which is dependent on students' perception and one of the easiest yet powerful marketing strategy through positive word of mouth.

Moreover, performance measurement of service quality at higher learning institutions is strongly embedded to the matching between students' expectation and their experience of a particular service [12]. Normally, students will evaluate and judge the service quality to be satisfactory by comparing what they want or expect against what they are really getting. Higher learning institutions need to have appropriate infrastructure such as admin and academic buildings, residential halls, catering facilities, sports facilities and recreation centre [13]. Apart from that, human interaction element is essential to determine whether students consider service delivered satisfactory or not.

Furthermore, [14] identified that the main factors that could affect the level of students' satisfaction were, students' perception on learning and teaching, support facilities for teaching and learning (libraries, computer and lab facilities), learning environment (rooms of lectures, laboratories, social space and university buildings), support facilities (health facilities, student accommodation, student services) and external aspects of being a student such as finance, transportation. The capabilities, an institution to provide and manage these, would enable able to meet student expectations and gain competitive advantage.

The Service Quality Attributes

Tangible: For instance, [15] defined tangibles as physical appearance of facilities, personnel, communication materials, equipment and others. This dimension may help to increase an institution's image. In the context of this study, the physical facilities and equipment that are needed to provide services such as the ambiance of cafeteria, class layout and decoration of the furniture. The quality of service may influence the students' satisfaction. In fact, there is a relationship between the tangible dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction.

Reliability: According to [5] reliability is the ability of service provider to deliver the desired services dependably, accurately and consistently. In the context of this study, the example of reliability is the services of administration and examination department make the results of students reliable and correct. The quality of service may influence the students' satisfaction. In fact, there is a relationship between the reliability dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction.

Responsiveness: Responsiveness defined as the willingness to help students and to provide a prompt service, whilst capturing the notion of flexibility and the ability to customize the service to student's needs [15]. In the context of this study, it explains how efficient responsive towards the service providing for the students. For instance, the response of lecturers and staffs towards student's needs. The quality of service may influence the students' satisfaction. In fact, there is a relationship between the responsiveness dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction.

Assurance: Assurance referred to the ability of service provider to convey trust and confidence to students toward the services provided by the institution. Thus, [15] argued the service providers must assure the delivery of knowledge in a courteous manner. In this way, they can inspire more trust and confidence of their customers. In the context of this study, the example can be the safe transaction of students with the hostel staff and banker and the officers should have the skills and become professional to handle the problems. The quality of service may influence the students' satisfaction. In fact, there is a relationship between the assurance dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction.

Empathy: Empathy defined as the ability of service provider to show personal caring and individualized attention to the students. In the context of this study, the example of empathy can be officers should understand the needs of students; officers should be fair and unbiased in their treatment. The quality of service may influence the students' satisfaction. In fact, there is a relationship between the empathy dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction.

Students' Satisfaction: Students' satisfaction is a compelling interest to colleges and universities as they seek to continually improve the learning environment for students, meet the expectations of their constituent groups and legislative bodies and demonstrate their institutional effectiveness. Higher education needs to care about students' satisfaction because of its potential impact on student motivation, retention, recruitment efforts and fundraising.

As mentioned by [16], the student satisfaction is an evidence to measure how well effective an institution administrates itself as well as its educational system. Students are likely to be satisfied in their educational institution when the services provided fit their expectations, or services that are beyond their expectations. On the contrary, students who are dissatisfied with the educational institution when the services are less than what they expected and when the gap between perceived and expected service quality is high, they tend to communicate negative aspects [17].

In additional, [18] mentioned that education quality is not only limited to the lectures and notes received in class or advice and guidance given by lecturers during the consultation hours, but it also includes students' experience while interacting with the various non-academic personnel and components in the university, the physical infrastructure provided by the university and others.
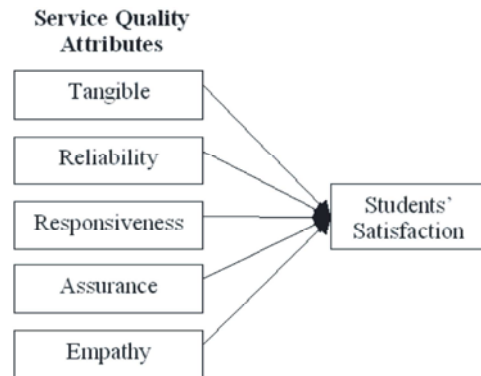

Fig. 1: Theoretical Framework
Source: Adapted from Chuah Chin Wei and Subramaniam Sri Ramalu (2011)

Furthermore, academic reputation of the institution, quality of lecturers the provision of facilities and market orientation is found to be a crucial precedent for student satisfaction. It was indicated that satisfied students provide positive word of mouth and recommend prospective students to the institution at which they are studying [19].

Hyphoteses: From the theoretical framework (Figure 1) one dependent variable, was identified which is represented by five independent variables. The variables were service quality attributes and students' satisfaction. From the conceptual framework of the study five (5) hypotheses were formulated:

H1: There is a relationship between tangible dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction.

H2: There is a relationship between reliability dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction.

H3: There is a relationship between responsiveness dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction.

H4: There is a relationship between assurance dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction.

H5: There is a relationship between empathy dimension of service quality and student' satisfaction.

The survey instrument for this study was divided into three major sections. The first part of the instrument in this study is presented in Section A, which consists of four (4) items. Items were designed using nominal scale and focused on the respondent's demographic profiles. Section B was designed to understand students'

evaluations of the service quality in UUM. There are five dimensions used in this study to measure service quality, namely tangible (5 items), reliability (5 items), responsiveness (5 items), assurance (4 items) and empathy (3 items). Section C was designed to measure students' satisfaction. There were four (4) items used to measure students' satisfaction and items were adapted from Hishamuddin Fitri and Abu Hassan (2008). Reviews of related studies that provided measurement items for this part have been modified to suit the study. Respondents were asked to evaluate on a numerical five-points Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The style and type of the questionnaires for this study were close ended questions using a numerical Likert scale. The questionnaires for this study were distributed among the UUM students. A Total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the students and convenience sampling method was chosen.

Data Analysis: All 400 questionnaires were returned. Table 1 exhibits the descriptive statistics of the demographic profiles of the respondents. Male students represent 40.8% (163) of the study sample and the remaining 237 (59.2%) were female. For students age (64.8%) contribute for 21 to 23 years old group. Followed by 18 to 20 years (26.8%) for range 24 to 26 (5.4%) and 27 and above (3.0%) Majority of the respondents were Chinese (51.5%), followed by Malay (40.0%), Indian (5.5%) and (3.0%) were others. Semester seven students represent the biggest group of the study sample

(31.5%), which is followed by semester one students (25.5%), semester five student (19.8%) semester three students (14.2%) semester two and six have a same percentage which is (3.5%) and semester four students (2.0%) Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

RESULTS

Relationship Between the Food Quality Attributes and Customer Satisfaction: Referring to Table 2, all the attributes of service quality were significant and posed positive relationship with students' satisfaction, which are tangible (p-value = 0.679), reliability (p-value = 0.673), responsiveness (p-value = 0.730), assurance (p-value = 0.660) and the empathy (p-value = 0.679).

DISCUSSION

This hypothesis testing revealed important findings. First of all, H1 is supported indicating a positive relationship between tangible dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction. It is because a higher learning institutions need to have an appropriate infrastructure, facilities and learning environment so that students can study in a good condition. This finding is similar to a study by [12,13,20].

Secondly, H2 is also supported where the reliability dimension of service quality has been found to have a positive relationship with students' satisfaction. It is because students are concern with the knowledge, courtesy and ability to inspire trust and confidence. The finding is supported by [21].

Thirdly, H3 is supported indicating a positive relationship between responsiveness dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction. It is because students were attached on the willingness of lecturer and staff to help students and provide prompt service for them. This finding is similar to the study by [22].

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Respondent's profiles		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	163	40.8
	Female	237	59.2
Age	18 – 20 years	107	26.8
	21 – 23 years	259	64.8
	24 – 26 years	22	5.4
	> 27 years	12	3.0
Race	Malay	160	40.0
	Chinese	206	51.5
	Indian	22	5.5
	Others	12	3.0
Current Semester	Semester 1	102	25.5
	Semester 2	14	3.5
	Semester 3	57	14.2
	Semester 4	8	2.0
	Semester 5	79	19.8
	Semester 6	14	3.5
	Semester 7 and above	126	31.5

Table 2: Relationship between the Food Quality Attributes and Customer Satisfaction

Attributes	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	n
Tangible	.679**	.000	400
Reliability	.673**	.000	400
Responsiveness	.730**	.000	400
Assurance	.660**	.000	400
Empathy	.697**	.000	400

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Fourthly, H4 is supported indicating a positive relationship between assurance dimension of service quality and students' satisfaction. It is because students are very concern with the knowledge, courtesy and ability to inspire trust and confidence. The finding is supported by a study by [21].

Furthermore, H5 is supported where the empathy dimension of service quality has been found to have a positive relationship with students' satisfaction. It is because students are concern with the personal caring and individualized attention. This finding is similar to a study by [23].

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, it is clear that service quality attributes (a) tangible, (b) reliability, (c) responsiveness, (d) assurance and (e) empathy has a positive and strong relationship with students' satisfaction. Overall, the dimensions of service quality are related to the students' satisfaction. This revealed that the better service quality provided by the institution, the higher students' satisfaction.

For the practical aspect, the finding helped educators and management of higher institution to highlight the important dimension of service quality that affects students' satisfaction. They can identify the strength and weaknesses in the present service quality offered and make necessary improvement to enhance their performance and increase students' satisfaction. This study contribute to a further knowledge and future references for researchers using finding and data from this study will help other researcher to understand on the relationship between service quality and students' satisfaction. The results showed that majority of the UUM students are satisfied with the service quality provided in UUM, but management still have to improve their weakness in the services offered and enhance the performance to maximize the students' satisfaction. The results of this study are important to university to improve their service quality in the future.

REFERENCES

1. Gallifa, J. and P. Batalle, 2010. Student Perceptions of Service Quality in a Multi-Campus Higher Education System in Spain. Quality Assurance in Education, 18(2): 156-170.

2. Lee, M.C. and I.S. Hwan, 2005. Relationships among Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction and Profitability in the Taiwanese Banking Industry. International Journal of Management, 22(4): 635-648.

3. Ibanez, V.A., P. Hartmann and P.Z. Calvo, 2006. Antecedents of customer loyalty in residential energy markets: Service quality, satisfaction, trust and switching costs. Service Industries Journal, 26(6): 633-650. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02642060600850717.

4. Sureshchandar, G.S. and R.N. Anantharaman, 2002. "The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction – a factor specific approach", Journal of Services Marketing, 16(4): 363-379.

5. Parasuraman, A., V.A. Zeithaml and L.L. Berry, 1988. SERVQUAL: a multi-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of the service quality. Journal of Retailing, 64(1): 12-40.

6. Kotler, P. and G. Armstrong, 1998. Principles of marketing. Pearson Education.

7. Banwet, D.K. and B. Datta, 2003. A study of the effect of perceived lecture quality on post-lecture intentions. Work Study, 52(5): 234-43.

8. Gold, E., 2001. Customer Service: A Key Unifying Force for Today's Campus, Netresults, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 22 January, available at: www.naspa.org/netresults, cited in D.K. Banwet and B. Datta, 2003. A study of the effect of perceived lecture quality on post-lecture intentions. Work Study, 52(5): 234-43.

9. Alves, H. and M. Raposo, 2010. The Influence of University Image on Students' Behavior. International Journal of Educational Management, 24(1): 73-85.

10. Ahmed, I., M.M. Nawaz, Z. Ahmad, M.Z. Shaukat, A. Usman, Wasim-ul- Rehman and N. Ahmed, 2010. Does Service Quality Affect Students' Performance? Evidence from Institutes of Higher Learning. African Journal of Business Management, 4(12): 2527-2533.

11. Malik, M.E., R.Q. Danish and A. Usman, 2010. The Impact of service quality on student's satisfaction in Higher Education Institutes of Punjab, Journal of Management Research, 2(2).

12. Tahar, E.B.M., 2008. Expectation and Perception of Postgraduate Students for Service Quality in UTM. Thesis, Unpublished.

13. Sapri, M., A. Kaka and E. Finch, 2009. Factors that Influence Student's Level of Satisfaction with Regards to Higher Educational Facilities Services. Malaysian Journal of Real Estate, 4(1): 34-51.

14. Ilias, A., H.F.A. Hasan, R.A. Rahman and M.R. Yasoa, 2008. Student Satisfaction and Service Quality: Any Differences in Demographic Factors? International Business Research, 1(4): 131-143.

15. Zeithaml, V.A. and M.J. Bitner, 2003. Services Marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm. (3 ed.). New York: Mcgraw-Hill.

16. Zeithaml, V.A., 1988. Consumer perceptions of price, quality and value: a means-end model and synthesis of evidence. Journal of Marketing, 52: 2-22.

17. Petruzzellis, L., A.M. D'Uggento and S. Romanazzi, 2006. Student Satisfaction and Quality of Service in Italian Universities. Managing Service Quality, 16(4): 349-364.

18. Devinder, K. and Datta, Biplab, 2003. A study of the effect of perceived lecture quality on post-lecture intentions. Work Study, 52(5): 234-243.

19. Mavondo, F. and M. Zaman, 2000. Student Satisfaction with Tertiary Institution and Recommending It to Prospective Students, pp: 787-792.

20. Cuthbert, P.F., 1996. Managing service quality in HE: is SERVQUAL the answer? Part 2. Managing Service Quality, 6(3): 31-35.

21. Pariseau, S.E. and J.R. McDaniel, 1997. Assessing service quality in business schools. International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management, 14(3): 204-18.

22. Abouchedid, K. and R. Nasser, 2002. Assuring quality service in higher education: registration and advising attitudes in a private university in Lebanon. Quality Assurance in Education, 10(4): 198-206.

23. O'Neill, M.A. and A. Palmer, 2004. Importance-performance analysis: a useful tool for directing continuous quality improvement in higher education. Quality Assurance in Education, 12(1): 39-52.