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SERVICE QUALITY GAP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF MANAGEMENT STUDENTS**DR. S. P. SINGH****PROFESSOR****FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES****GURUKULA KANGRI UNIVERSITY****HARIDWAR****SAVITA MALIK****RESEARCH SCHOLAR (SRF)****FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES****GURUKULA KANGRI UNIVERSITY****HARIDWAR****ABSTRACT**

The objective of the study was to assess the service quality gap between the perceptions and expectations of the management students across business management institutes. The sample for the study consisted of 270 management students from five management institutes of Uttarakhand. The service quality questionnaire has been used on a five-point Likert scale to collect data from the randomly selected 270 management students. Data was analyzed by applying paired sample t-test, mean, percentages and standard deviation. The results of the study show that there is a significant gap in the perception and expectations of management education. Management students are dissatisfied in respect of empathy, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and tangibility.

KEYWORDS

expectations, management students, perceptions, service-quality, student satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

 Student satisfaction is an important aspect of higher education institutions and particularly, it is highly related to service quality (Lee & Hwan, 2005). Universities have experienced that higher education has turned into a product and are driven by competition to look at the quality of their services, to measure student satisfaction and to redefine their product in a way familiar to service marketing specialists (Kotler, 1985). Institutions have understood that without providing quality services their long-term continued existence is difficult (Aly and Akpovi, 2001; Kanji et al., 1999). Increasingly organizations are emphasizing on quality services due to its strategic role in improving competitive advantage in the context of attracting students and developing and enhancing a relationship with existing students (Hokanson, 1995).

LITERATURE REVIEW

So many researchers conducted studies on student's perceptions and expectations (Ravindran, S.D., & Kalpana M, 2012; Saif, N.I., 2014; Khan, M.M. et al., 2011; Alnaser, A.S. et al., 2014; Alam Malik, S., Hassan, S., & Zahid Iqbal, M., 2012; Borghi, S. et al., 2016; Farahmandian, S. et al., 2013; Rouf, Md. A., et al, 2016). Saif, examined the effect of service quality on student satisfaction by using 490 students of higher diplomas, bachelor's and master's degrees. The study revealed that the effective communication with students is a significant approach to ensure quality in the administration colleges. To increase staff awareness of the importance of quality levels, colleges must apply ongoing comparable programs for all pertinent staff regarding the benefits of implementing quality standards. Khan, analyzed students' perspective of service quality in higher learning institutions by using the SERVQUAL model. The study found a significant relationship between Assurance, Reliability, Empathy and Responsiveness with the student satisfaction while Tangibility was found contains an insignificant relationship with the satisfaction of students. This study also revealed that higher the level of students' satisfaction better was their willingness to put greater efforts towards their studies. Alnaser, evaluated service quality dimensions and satisfaction of students. Results revealed that there are eight critical variables (university facilities, tuition fees, location, information resource, lectures, registration, assurance and curriculum) need further investigation. The service quality dimensions identified a broad picture of the relationship between service quality dimensions and students satisfaction which is supporting higher education institutions to develop suitable approaches aimed to build up their talent to survive with the market challenges and demands. Malik, studied difference between students' perceptions and expectations in business schools and found a significant relationship between implicit service, lecture room facilities and facilitating goods, and overall satisfaction. These variables collectively explained 22.9 percent variation in overall satisfaction. Females were found more satisfied as compared to males in overall satisfaction. Ravindran, evaluated students' expectation, perception and satisfaction towards the management institutions and found that the institution quality factors (location, academics, image, infrastructure, cost and personnel) lead to the overall satisfaction of the respondents. Borghi, evaluated expectations of higher education students, found the difference of thinking among students and professors. While amongst the 32 tested variables, 19 were statistically different and in 13 variables students specified that they anticipate more than the faculty believes them to, with the overall expectations in relation to the course and to the institution. Farahmandian, analyzed perceived service quality and student satisfaction found that the factors of advisory services, facilities, financial assistance, tuition costs and curriculum have a significant and positive impact on the satisfaction of students. Farahmandian, analyzed perceived service quality and student satisfaction found that the factors of advisory services, facilities, financial assistance, tuition costs and curriculum have a significant and positive impact on the satisfaction of students. Rouf, Md. A., et al, (2016) evaluated student satisfaction and service quality provided by universities found a significant relationship between the tangibility, empathy, assurance, responsiveness, reliability and student satisfaction. The majority of the students are satisfied with the facilities provided by universities. Ahmed & Nawaz (2010) evaluated that service quality is a key performance to assess the educational excellence and is a major strategic variable for institutions to create a strong perception in customers' mind. Hasan & Ilias (2008) analyzed that actually students' satisfaction consists of issues and experiences of students through the college years. Parasuraman, et al., (1991) accepted that service quality is one of the important factor of consumer satisfaction. This study would help the management institutes to provide better service to the students. The students would get satisfactory accurate service when management would attentive towards their services. The study helps to find lacuna in management institution's services and provide suggestions to overcome the problems.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

A sample of 270 management students was randomly selected from the list of 600 management students, of the five selected management institutes.

MEASURES

The instrument consisted of 44 items measuring SERVQUAL, i.e. tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy adapted from Parasuraman, Zeithammal and Berry (1991). The scale employed five point Likert Scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. The internal reliability of the scale was Chronbach's Alpha $\alpha=0.925$.

ADMINISTRATION

The instrument was administered to measure the variables of the study on management students of management institutes. A total of 270 questionnaires were distributed out of 250 were recovered, giving a rate of return of 92.59 percent.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

For the purpose of analysis, the management institutes were coded as A to E. The demographic profile of the respondents was analyzed through frequency and percentage.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

| Respondent's profile | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 122 | 48.8 |
| | Female | 128 | 51.2 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |
| Marital Status | Married | 12 | 4.8 |
| | Unmarried | 238 | 95.2 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |
| Age | Below 20 | 61 | 24.4 |
| | 20-30 | 189 | 75.6 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |
| Educational Qualification | Graduate | 191 | 76.4 |
| | Postgraduate | 59 | 23.6 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |
| Work Experience | Below 5 | 242 | 96.8 |
| | 5-10 | 8 | 3.2 |
| | Total | 250 | 100 |

Results in **table 1** show that the majority of the respondents was females (51.2%), unmarried (95.2%), graduate (76.4%) belonging to the age group of 20-30 with work experience below 5.

Paired sample t-test was performed to predict the significant difference in the means of perceptions and expectations.

TABLE 2: PAIRED SAMPLES t - TEST

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------|--|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|-------|--------|-----|-----------------|
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 | Tangibility perceptions – Tangibility expectations | -.568 | 2.886 | .183 | -.927 | -.209 | -3.112 | 249 | .002 |
| Pair 2 | Reliability perceptions – Reliability expectations | -.828 | 3.373 | .213 | -1.248 | -.408 | -3.881 | 249 | .000 |
| Pair 3 | Responsiveness perceptions – Responsiveness expectations | -.480 | 3.326 | .210 | -.894 | -.066 | -2.282 | 249 | .023 |
| Pair 4 | Assurance perceptions – Assurance expectations | -.932 | 3.181 | .201 | -1.328 | -.536 | -4.632 | 249 | .000 |
| Pair 5 | Empathy perceptions – Empathy expectations | -.680 | 2.077 | .131 | -.939 | -.421 | -5.176 | 249 | .000 |

The results of the t-test show that there is a significant difference in the means of perceptions and expectations of tangibility (t=3.112, p<0.05), reliability (t= 3.881, p<0.05), responsiveness (t=2.282, p<0.05), assurance (t=4.632, p<0.05), and empathy (t=5.176, p<0.05).

To find out the service-quality gap, the overall means of the perceptions and expectations for the five service-quality dimensions i.e. tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance were calculated as follows:

TABLE 3: OVERALL MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND GAP IN THE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTES' SERVICE QUALITY

| Dimensions | | Perceptions | Expectations | Gap |
|----------------|------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| Tangibility | Mean | 14.81 | 15.38 | -0.57 |
| | S.D. | 2.717 | 2.448 | |
| Reliability | Mean | 19.20 | 20.03 | -0.83 |
| | S.D. | 2.959 | 3.009 | |
| Responsiveness | Mean | 20.34 | 20.82 | -0.48 |
| | S.D. | 3.020 | 2.675 | |
| Assurance | Mean | 19.00 | 19.94 | -0.94 |
| | S.D. | 3.109 | 3.027 | |
| Empathy | Mean | 11.23 | 11.91 | -0.68 |
| | S.D. | 2.038 | 1.790 | |

+ indicates satisfaction, - indicates dissatisfaction

Gap= Perceptions-Expectations

Management institutions wise means were calculated to find out the service quality gap for tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy across all the management institutes included in the study as follows:

TABLE 4: MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONS WISE MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND GAP ANALYSIS

| Dimensions | | A | | | B | | | C | | | D | | | E | | |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | P | E | Gap | P | E | Gap | P | E | Gap | P | E | Gap | P | E | Gap |
| Tangibility | Mean | 13.9 | 18.5 | -4.6 | 15.1 | 19.5 | -4.4 | 15.5 | 19.5 | -4 | 14.6 | 19.4 | -4.8 | 14.9 | 19.1 | -4.2 |
| | S.D. | 2.97 | 2.81 | | 2.57 | 3.30 | | 2.07 | 2.52 | | 2.99 | 3.15 | | 2.70 | 2.91 | |
| Reliability | Mean | 18.2 | 19.3 | -1.1 | 19.4 | 20.8 | -1.4 | 19.2 | 20.8 | -1.6 | 19.5 | 20.4 | -0.9 | 18.8 | 20.5 | -1.7 |
| | S.D. | 3.36 | 2.90 | | 2.29 | 3.49 | | 2.74 | 2.79 | | 2.88 | 2.97 | | 3.50 | 3.26 | |
| Responsiveness | Mean | 10.8 | 14.9 | -4.1 | 11.6 | 15.6 | -4 | 11.2 | 15.5 | -4.3 | 11.3 | 15.2 | -3.9 | 11.3 | 15.7 | -4.4 |
| | S.D. | 1.83 | 2.31 | | 1.94 | 2.62 | | 2.17 | 2.48 | | 1.86 | 2.69 | | 2.37 | 2.07 | |
| Assurance | Mean | 18.8 | 19.2 | -0.4 | 19.3 | 19.6 | -0.3 | 19.6 | 20.5 | -0.9 | 19.5 | 19.6 | -0.1 | 20.0 | 20.5 | -0.5 |
| | S.D. | 2.69 | 2.59 | | 3.40 | 4.00 | | 2.73 | 2.79 | | 3.14 | 3.51 | | 2.76 | 2.49 | |
| Empathy | Mean | 11.2 | 19.5 | -8.3 | 11.9 | 19.3 | -7.4 | 12.0 | 20.6 | -8.6 | 11.9 | 19.8 | -7.9 | 12.1 | 20.4 | -8.3 |
| | S.D. | 3.01 | 1.71 | | 3.33 | 1.84 | | 2.82 | 1.93 | | 3.12 | 1.68 | | 2.71 | 1.75 | |

In **table 4** looking into the institutions-wise means of the service quality dimensions, the mean of the perceptions of the management students for the service quality dimension of tangibility is highest in case of institution C followed by B, E, D and the least in the case of A. The expectations for tangibility are highest for institution B and C with the same mean followed by D, E and least in the case of A. In the case of reliability, the highest mean for perception is of institution D followed by B, C, E and the least being institution A. For the expectations in reliability, the highest mean is of institution B and C both have same mean followed by E, D and least in the case of institution A. For the dimension of responsiveness in case of perceptions institution B have highest mean score followed by D and E with the same mean, then C and A. In the case of expectations for responsiveness, the highest mean is of institution E, then B, C, D and A. For the dimension of assurance, the highest perceptions mean of institution E followed by C, D, B and A. In the case of assurance expectations, the highest mean is of institution C and E with the same mean followed by B and D with the same mean and least in the case of institution A. In the case of empathy the highest mean for perceptions is of institution E, then C, B and D with the same mean followed by A. For the expectations in empathy, the highest mean is of institution C followed by E, D, A and B.

DISCUSSION

In **table 2** the overall results of the t-test show that the students gave higher importance of empathy ($t=5.176$), assurance ($t=4.632$) and reliability ($t=3.881$), while tangibility ($t=3.112$) and responsiveness ($t=2.282$) were not accorded that much importance respectively. The significant difference between the means of expectations and perceptions implies the dissatisfaction of the management students.

In **table 3** to find out the service-quality gap, the overall means of the perceptions and expectations for the five service-quality dimensions were calculated. It showed that 'responsiveness' had the highest mean in perceptions followed by reliability, assurance, tangibility and empathy. Looking into the means of expectations, 'responsiveness' had the highest mean followed by reliability and assurance. Tangibility and empathy had the least means for expectations. The gap for all the five dimensions were found negative with the highest gap for assurance followed by reliability, empathy, tangibility and responsiveness. The gap analysis of the data reveals that the management students are dissatisfied in all the five dimensions. The level of dissatisfaction is higher in the case of assurance, then reliability, empathy, followed by tangibility and responsiveness.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study imply that there is a significant gap in the perception and expectations of management education. The management students are dissatisfied in respect of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Management has to reduce the gap by providing good infrastructure, highly educated faculty and placement opportunities. In all the cases of institutions' management students expect better modern equipment, more number of books in the library, a timely solution of students' problem, experienced faculty, industry visits, relevant course curriculum and placements. The supporting study is Prasad, R.K., & Verma S., (2013) they also found dissatisfaction among the students for service quality providing by their institutes. Further, Rasli A. et al., (2012) also found a significant gap between all five dimensions of SERVQUAL. Therefore, the institutions should focus on the service-quality for increasing the level of management students' satisfaction. The management institutions should conduct management students' survey regularly studying their perceptions and expectations to identify appropriate methods to reduce the service quality gap.

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