

A Study On Customers View On Dimension Of Service Quality Of Educational Consultancy Firm

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Abstract

Service quality has become an important element in every sector especially in service industry. Service quality contributes to the satisfaction of various stakeholders across various service organisations. Today everyone is travelling to various places for education, but finding it difficult in selecting the best college and courses. Here Educational Consultancy plays an important role in helping them to select the best college and course. This research paper seeks to examine the dimensions of quality of service offered by educational consultancy firm. The study is conducted with the help of the primary and secondary data and the primary data was collected through structured questionnaire from the clients of educational consultancy firm. A sample 450 customers was selected using random sampling. ANOVA was used to check the significant influence of independent various (Type of course and Gender) on various service quality dimensions (Tangibility, Responsiveness, Reliability, Empathy and Assurance). The outcome of the research shows that dimension of service quality like Reliability, Tangibility, Assurance, Responsiveness and Empathy are highly influenced by Gender and Type of course and found that Assurance is the key dimension of service quality.

Keywords: Service Quality, Education, Consultancy Firm

Introduction

India provide a great opportunity for education sector, comprising of world's largest population of about 500 million in the age group of 5-24 year with over 250 million school going students.

India has approximately 981 universities, 9700 total AICTE approved institutions which consists of 4100 undergraduate, 4951 post graduate and 4514 diploma courses(2020-2021) in 2018-2019, 37.4 million Students are enrolled in higher education. Institutes of Technology ranked the 7th position in 2020 out of top 10 institutions in National Institutional Ranking Framework.

Government has initiated many programmes in transformational reforms in education. Under many programs is National Education Policy which was approved in 2020. Compared with 2020-21 Union Budget Rs 59,845 crore, Rs. 54,873.66 crore has been allocated for Department of School Education and Literacy and Rs 38,350.65 crore expenditure budget for higher education and Rs. 54,873 crore for school education and literacy and Rs 3,000 crore. under RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan)

According to the data released by DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) equity inflows stood at US\$ 4,495.19 million from April 2000 to March 2021.

Huge changes in Indian education sector and an improved financial outlay is transforming our nation into a knowledge paradise and significant gain in human resource in the development of the educational infrastructure and overall development of the country.

Accordingly in India, there are over thousands big and small consulting firms of which six thousands of them is in the four metros of Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Delhi. Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry estimated that between 500 and 600 high-value consulting contracts, worth \$250 million to \$300 million, are awarded every year by Indian companies, including 30 or 40 projects worth over \$2 million each (IBEF, 2021)

Growing competitions with population helped the education consultancy to develop their roots with their best network of top reputed colleges.

Around 2.2 lakh human beings are operating on this area over the following three years within the 8,500-9,000 consultancy companies throughout the country. The leading educational consultancy organizations are in the four metropolitan cities: 1. Delhi (25.7%) followed by, 2. Mumbai (25.5%), 3. Chennai (12.1%) and 4. Calcutta (9.1%). (scribd).

Today Indian market depends on educational consultancy services for the selection of the colleges, courses based on customer requirements and totally personalised service by customers' preferred location, budget and preferred choice. In today's competition it's very difficult to meet the customer needs. Hence this study is an effort to explore the customers view on the dimension of service quality of educational consultancy services.

Literature Review

The following literature reviews were collected from an authorized research papers/journals/articles to understand and obtain more information for better clearness about the study on Consultancies service gap for the purpose of research.

(Twum&Peprah, 2020), have highlighted that dimensions of service quality like responsiveness, tangible, and assurance provided at the School of Business were very satisfied. The result confirmed that SERVQUAL dimensions: reliability, tangibles, empathy, responsiveness and assurance have established a major impact on students' satisfaction at the School of Business.

(Chattopadhyay, 2019), opined that product quality, service quality, price strategy, store attributes and value for money are the major factor which influences customer satisfaction. Their study found that value in the total service is the key factor in maintaining the satisfaction and loyalty of the customers. He says that understanding these two-core element help company to build good will.

(Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp, & Oláh, 2019), states that by adding three dimension to SERVQUAL model like access, economic aspects and employee competencies, resulted in four subscales to measure the customer satisfaction, they are: first (access, reliability, employee competences and assurance), second (empathy and responsiveness), third (financial aspect), and fourth (tangibility).

(Králová & Suchánek, 2018), confirmed that there is lots of distinction with in the assessment of customer satisfaction from the view point of company and their customers. They found that the customers are capable to differentiate the companies from high-performance to low performing bur companies were not. They found that customer satisfaction as assessed by the company is very unclear; it provides the company with inadequate and false view of customer satisfaction. This may creates the risk which may lead to the unfulfilled expectations of customers.

(Alabduljader S. A., 2018), examined the influence of dimension of service quality on the organisational excellence. The study found that dimensions of service quality can help in achieving organisational excellence. The most influencing service quality dimensions on organisational excellence are (Reliability, Tangibles, Responsiveness, Empathy and Assurance).

(Park, You, & Choi, 2018), in their study showed that the consulting service quality like responsibility, assurance, empathy, responsiveness and tangibility are high in influencing consulting satisfaction.

(HSIEH, 2016), research showed that service quality like tangibility, reliability, reactivity, assurance & solicitude has a positive effect on customers satisfaction.

(Muresan, Arion, Rashid, & Chiciudean, 2016), found that the firm service has a good quality by considering all the dimension of SERVQUAL like tangibles, communication, professionalism, competence and courtesy, but customers are not satisfied on how company execute their services from the first time, as one dimension (professionalism) recorded negative.

(Shi & Omachnu, 2016), stated that there is a lot of dissimilarities in the perceived level of satisfaction between consultants and clients. Their research showed that consultant and clients have different opinion in the gap that exist, consultant believe that a gap exist in the available data clients provide and the required data consultant want, the actual results and the results consultants presumed and solutions implemented and solution consultants develop sensitivities and opinions are different among consultants and clients and the clients believe that the gap exist in available data clients provide and the required data consultant want and the clients expected results and clients presumed results.

(Ammar, Mateen, Ghaffar, & Rehman, 2015), stated that product quality, product attributes and perceived values are the key aspects towards loyalty. So the company should give importance on product quality, product attributes and perceived values in to create customers loyal towards their product. They found that product quality and perceived values are the key influence on customer loyalty. They suggested that the company's focus point should be on product attributes so that they can retain the customers.

(Dr.D.Deepa, 2015), attempted to compare the expectations and perceptions towards service quality in private banking sector. She tried to analyze it on five scope of service quality in the service sector especially in the banking industry like responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, reliability and empathy. It was found that there is gap in the perception and expectation on service quality for private sector in assurance and tangibility where the mean difference is - 2.57 and -2.47 and customers are happy with the service quality of banking sector.

(Manna, Singh, & Bhargava, 2015), studied the perceptual gap of service quality dimension (sales person's competence, delivery standards and brand image) among tyre manufacturing company and its retail clients service for predicting the customer satisfaction. They found that there is no perceptual gap between manufacturer and retail clients for all the three dimensions of service quality (sales person's competence, delivery standards and brand image), their research also indicated that competency of sales person and customer satisfaction are the key scope to make the referral marketing successful and sales person competency is the key factor in achieving customer satisfaction and customer referral.

(Prasad, 2015), found that understanding of the service quality attributes is necessary for the bank employees to retain their customers. Customer retention is dependent on the following factors of SERVQUAL tangibles and reliability and it was also found that there is need for open and expressive about their thoughts and feeling for establishing relationship to retain the customers.

(Singh, 2013), found that customers are dissatisfied in dimension tangible in the service quality and also it was found that as the banks are taking more efforts to understand its customers, the customers are satisfied on the empathy dimension. They also found that the banks are making any efforts in terms of responsiveness, reliability and tangibility.

(Bharwana, Bashir, & Mohsin, 2013), they state that students are highly satisfied with tangibles, responsiveness, assurance and reliability of SERVQUAL and less in Empathy. From the above literature review it was found that understanding the dimension of SERV QUAL like tangibles, communication, professionalism, competence and courtesy plays an important role in attracting and retaining new and old customers.

Statement of the Problem

Service quality plays an important role in sustainability of any firm, especially more in service industries. Educational consultancy firm is one of recent developing consultancy Firm. Previous researchers many focused on analysing the service quality of Service industries but there is no much study on Educational consultancy firm. In order to get higher / professional education, students are travelling to Tier 1 cities of India. But they are finding it difficult in selecting the colleges and get admission in college. There comes the Educational Consultancy Firm, who helps them in selection of college as well as gets admission. So it very important for the Firm to satisfy the customer with their service. So this study is done to assess the customers view on various elements of service quality of Educational Consultancy.

Objectives

The study is to find out the dimensions of service quality and to know the influence of location and type of course on various dimension of service quality of an Educational Consultancy Firm.

Research Methodology

The study has been conducted in coordinating with an Educational Consultancy firm. A survey has been conducted with total of four hundred and fifty respondents. To carry out the survey a questionnaire was used. 15 variables were included based on literature review. The key variables are Presentable staff appearance, Visual attractiveness of equipment in the consultancy, Materials allied with the service, e.g., pamphlets, statements, Ability to perform the promised service, Right service at the first time, Service as per the promised time, readiness to help customers, Prompt service to customers, promptness to respond to customers' request, Ability to inspire trust and confidence, Feeling of safety in transactions, expert knowledge and expertise of consultants, Company concern for the best welfare of the client, Giving customers personal attention and Convenient business hours.

Sample size: Samples of 450 respondents were selected form different places of India using purposive sampling techniques.

Limitation of the study: The study is limited to major Tier I cities from East, South, North and West.

Data Analysis

Below table 1 shows the respondents demography details. A total number of 235 of respondents were females, while 215 of respondents were males. It illustrated that the majority of them were females. The results also signified that the majority of them are aged from 26 to 30 years old and a high percentage of respondents are from North India who opted for engineering courses.

Table 1 showing Distribution of Respondents' Demography

Characteristics	Groups	Frequency
Gender	Male	215
	Female	235
Age Group	16-20 years	85
	21-25 years	115
	26-30 years	250
Location	South India	102
	North India	251
	East India	85
	West India	12
Type of course	Medical	126
	Engineering	269
	Management	50
	Architecture	5

Table2 showing mean and standard deviation of service quality dimension

Report						
Gender		Tangible	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy
1.00	Mean	4.6347	4.4080	4.3867	4.6333	4.3400
	N	250	250	250	250	250
	Std. Deviation	.34819	.41581	.41695	.27421	1.11637
2.00	Mean	4.6250	4.4317	4.4067	4.6300	4.2983
	N	200	200	200	200	200
	Std. Deviation	.34069	.40211	.40675	.27716	.34307
Total	Mean	4.6304	4.4185	4.3956	4.6319	4.3215
	N	450	450	450	450	450
	Std. Deviation	.34453	.40949	.41212	.27522	.86240

The above table indicates the difference of mean and standard deviation between various dimensions of service quality. The key elements of service quality that are considered for observation are Tangibility, Assurance, Responsiveness, Reliability and Empathy.

The finding indicate that Assurance has the highest mean valued (4.6319), followed by Tangible (4.6304), Reliability (4.4185), Responsiveness (4.3956) and Empathy (4.3215).

The above table indicates the significant mean difference among various dimension of service quality between male and female respondents. It is found that the Male respondents are happier from Tangible and Assurance dimension of service quality; where as female respondents are also from Assurance and Tangible dimension of service quality of Educational Consultancy firm.

Hypothesis for the Research

The following hypothesis were formed

H₀₁:There is no significance influence of gender on various service quality dimensions (Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy).

H₀₂:There is no significance influence of the type of course on various service quality dimensions (Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy).

Table 3 Gender of the respondents and its influence on various service quality dimensions of Educational Consultancy Firm

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangible	Between Groups	.010	1	.010	.087	.76
	Within Groups	53.286	448	.119		
	Total	53.296	449			
Reliability	Between Groups	.062	1	.062	.371	.54
	Within Groups	75.228	448	.168		
	Total	75.290	449			
Responsiveness	Between Groups	.044	1	.044	.261	.61
	Within Groups	76.213	448	.170		
	Total	76.258	449			
Assurance	Between Groups	.001	1	.001	.016	.86
	Within Groups	34.009	448	.076		
	Total	34.010	449			
Empathy	Between Groups	.193	1	.193	.259	.61
	Within Groups	333.744	448	.745		
	Total	333.937	449			

Table 4 Types of course and its influence on various service quality dimensions of Educational Consultancy Firm.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tangible	Between Groups	.344	3	.115	.966	.41
	Within Groups	52.952	446	.119		
	Total	53.296	449			
Reliability	Between Groups	1.172	3	.391	2.351	.07
	Within Groups	74.118	446	.166		
	Total	75.290	449			
Responsiveness	Between Groups	.981	3	.327	1.937	.12
	Within Groups	75.277	446	.169		
	Total	76.258	449			
Assurance	Between Groups	.300	3	.100	1.325	.27
	Within Groups	33.710	446	.076		
	Total	34.010	449			
Empathy	Between Groups	.132	3	.044	.059	.93
	Within Groups	333.804	446	.748		
	Total	333.937	449			

From Table 3 (ANOVA) it is seen that there is no significant influence of the Gender on various service quality dimensions as all the service quality dimensions p value is greater than the significant level 0.05; hence we do not reject the H_{01} .

Table 4 (ANOVA) shows that there is no significant influence of the Type of course on various service quality dimensions as all the service quality dimensions p value is greater than the significant level 0.05; hence we do not reject the H_{01} .

Result and Discussion

The study revealed that all the dimension of SERVQUAL like Reliability, Tangible, Responsiveness, Empathy and Assurance is essential in service. The study proved that Gender and Types of course have no influence on dimension of SERVQUAL.

Conclusion

The results of the present study have confirmed that the customers prefer Educational Consultancy firm to take advice and admission to different courses and colleges. As every companies aspire is to maintain the continuing relationship and retain the stakeholder, the company need to acknowledge the demands of them which have a greater impact on the entire business operation. So it's significant to be aware of what exactly they want and how to increase reliability for the successful business. As quality is one of the important factors for success of any organisation. From the research it was found that Assurance is the important element of service quality which plays a significant role in Educational Consultancy Firm.

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