

SERVICE QUALITY AND STUDENT LOYALTY OF STUDENTS IN GUANGXI PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The quality of education, management, and services in universities is an important indicator for measuring the educational achievements of universities. This study conducts a literature review on the concept of the impact of education, management, and service quality on student loyalty in universities from the perspective of student-perceived service quality, as well as the relationship between the two variables. It further analyzes the relationship between education service quality and student loyalty in universities and constructs a preliminary research concept model. Through literature review, research has found that the quality of education, management, and services in universities has a significant impact on students' loyalty, i.e. behavioral intention. Finally, based on the results of the theoretical analysis, suggestions were proposed to improve the comprehensive service quality, student satisfaction, and loyalty to university education, management, and services.

Keywords: Universities, Service quality, Student Loyalty

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

With the implementation of the enrollment expansion policy in Chinese universities, the number of higher education institutions has gradually increased in recent years, and competition has also been very fierce (Baokuan, 2017). In the past, higher education institutions often only focused on teaching quality, research achievements, and other aspects, but now the success of universities is closely related to student satisfaction and loyalty. With the rapid expansion of higher education in China, universities are facing various new opportunities and challenges in the new era, and the differentiation of demand for university service quality among college students is highlighted as one of the main characteristics (Tingyan, 2018). Because the vast majority of private universities in Guangxi receive income from student enrollment, competition for enrollment is very fierce, and the severe enrollment situation may endanger the competitive advantage of universities.

Therefore, universities must improve the quality of education management services and identify student needs. By providing efficient and satisfactory services to students, universities can enhance their satisfaction and loyalty. This can then support these students to maintain positive behavioral intentions (Peter Sin Howe Tan, 2023). Enhancing the positive reputation of students and enhancing the long-term sustainable development and competitiveness of universities. In addition to competing for student resources, universities are also increasingly competitive in terms of educational resources, student employment, and student satisfaction. Faced with complex situations and new situations, building a distinctive and satisfactory image for students is necessary for universities to achieve sustainable development (Gewanda, 2016). With the advancement of teaching reform, the pursuit of excellence in education, increasing the competitiveness of universities, creating excellent teaching quality, and striving for parental recognition and student satisfaction have become the direction of efforts for major universities (Wei, 2018).

Problem Statement

Therefore, the motivation for this study is to comprehensively analyze the impact of the comprehensive service quality of higher education and management on student loyalty (Eliana Sari, 2022). It is hoped that this study can innovate the service concept of higher education, comprehensively improve the quality of higher education, management, and service, and continuously improve student satisfaction and loyalty. Domestic and foreign scholars have conducted empirical research on student satisfaction, involving ordinary universities, and vocational colleges. Specific cases such as undergraduate students in normal universities and ethnic minority universities are mainly studied through theoretical research or econometric analysis (Zhai Chunjuan, 2020). However, previous literature mainly selected relevant variables from a single perspective such as textbooks, teaching content, teaching methods, and teaching environment to establish factor analysis that affects student satisfaction. There is a lack of a comprehensive perspective on service quality to examine the influencing factors of student satisfaction and loyalty in universities. There is a lack of comprehensive exploration and analysis of the impact of service quality in various aspects such as university management, education, and services on student satisfaction and loyalty, and there is a lack of research on the antecedents and degree of impact of comprehensive service quality and student satisfaction and loyalty in universities. The research question is: What is the relationship between the service quality and student loyalty of universities in Guangxi?

The purpose of this study is: to analyze the relationship between service quality and student loyalty in Guangxi private universities.

Significance of the Study

Satisfaction with undergraduate teaching quality in higher education institutions is an important basis for evaluating teaching quality, which is of great significance for improving teaching

quality and cultivating innovative talents in higher education institutions (Putu Yudi Setiawan & Toshikatsu, 2019). Studying the quality, satisfaction, and loyalty of university services from a student perspective is an important tool for monitoring the teaching quality and talent cultivation level of universities. It has important theoretical value and practical significance for improving service models and enhancing service levels in universities (Yong Rao, 2018).

The research on the relationship between the quality of university uniforms and student satisfaction and loyalty can not only promote the development of universities but also have profound implications for social harmony and stability, as well as the sustainable development of universities (Nursaid, 2019). The study utilizes a literature review approach to explore, preliminarily construct a research conceptual model, analyze the causal relationship between dimensions, and finally propose research results to improve the quality of university services and enhance student loyalty, providing a theoretical basis and decision-making reference.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Theoretical Foundation of Research

The Social Exchange Theory is a sociological theory that has gradually flourished and become popular in the Western sociological community since the 1960s. It believes that the exchange of resources is an imp (Miles, 2012) of the social field in which all parties are driven by a certain reward in social interaction (Miles, 2012). The continuous action of people's "pay return pay again" shapes social relationships and structures (Runzhao, 2020). In this study, the main reference is Peter Blau's structuralist exchange theory. In Peter Blau's structuralist exchange theory, social exchange refers to voluntary actions in an exchange relationship with another party that is motivated by one's expectation of receiving rewards in the exchange relationship (Phillip Dangaiso, 2022). It excludes behavior that is subject to physical coercion and follows internalized norms, the continuation or termination of an exchange relationship depends on whether the beneficiary fulfills their obligation to repay (Jinzhi, 2022).

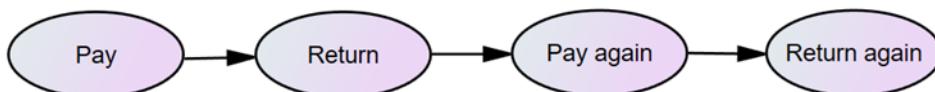


Figure 1 Continuous Action Process of Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory has certain applicability to the issues to be explored in this study. This is because this study explores the social interaction relationship between students and universities, and the social exchange theory focuses on the "provision" and "reception" relationship of interests between people and organizations in society, emphasizing the exchange of resources and the satisfaction of needs (Ping, 2023). Universities provide education to students. The educational achievement value of management services is exchanged for students' investment in resources such as money, time, and effort, obtaining utilitarian values such as tuition fees and donations, as well as symbolic values such as reputation and emotion (Jinzhi, 2022). This study focused on testing the influences of structural models of service quality on student loyalty.

Service Quality

The concept of service quality proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) has inspired other researchers to investigate this concept in various fields of service. The difference between the perceived service quality of customers and the actual service quality is the meaning of service quality (Endeshaw, 2019). Service quality can be defined as a series of parameters, such as Tangibles, Customization, Access, Communication, Understanding/knowing the customer, Security, Courtesy, Competence, Credibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Cost (Filho,

2020). Miah (2021) found in his study of service quality in the banking industry that these banks' customers are very sensitive to their services in Bangladesh. Service quality has become an important component of customer satisfaction. Day in and day out, this has proven that customer satisfaction and loyalty are related to service quality (Miah, 2021). Literature Review on Service Quality of Internet Providers Based on Emotional Analysis: The Role of Service Providers Highly Depends on Continuously Meeting Customer Expectations (Hasian, 2022). Higher education is a social practice activity with a service nature, and educational services are a service process in which the education provider provides knowledge skills, and labor services to the educated, promoting their physical and mental development (Runzhao, 2020). In this study, service quality refers to students' judgment of the overall advantage or superiority of educational services during their school years.

Some scholars measure service quality from the perspectives of technical quality, compensation quality, and process quality (Yuqian, 2018). Some scholars measure the service quality of universities from the perspectives of teaching resources, learning support services, curriculum and teaching quality, and student development (Jin Suling, 2020). Some scholars measure service quality from the perspectives of teaching quality, management quality, life quality, and employment quality (Xinghao, 2019). Some scholars measure service quality using three dimensions: information quality (IQ), service efficiency (SE), and teaching quality (TQ) (Rizwana Rasheed, 2023). By analyzing existing literature, the vast majority of scholars use the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality, which has been confirmed in their research (Hui, 2023; Peter Sin Howe Tan, 2023; Teddy Chandra, 2018; Tingyan, 2018; Zhai Chunjuan, 2020).

In the 1970s, three scholars, Berry, Parasuraman, and Zeithaml, created the SERVQUAL model, which is currently the most widely used and widely circulated model and has been unanimously recognized by researchers. Service quality will be divided into five dimensions in this model, namely responsiveness, tangibility, reliability, assurance, and empathy. SERVQUAL is still frequently used to measure service quality, even in the context of higher education research. The SERVQUAL model will continue to be used to measure the service quality of universities in this study.

Student Loyalty

Oliver (1997) defines loyalty as customers having a strong preference for a specific product or service, and even if the opponent's marketing efforts induce other purchasing behaviors, they will continue to patronize the product or service (Gewanda, 2016). The concept of student loyalty comes from customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is manifested by consumers' tendency to purchase and repeat a certain product, and correspondingly, student loyalty is also manifested as students' willingness to recommend schools to others, continue to pursue their courses or degrees, and so on (Baokuan, 2017). Student loyalty is crucial for the development of a school, as it means that students have the intention to reciprocate their alma mater in various forms in different identities (current students or alumni) in the future, and the development of a school cannot do without the support of the alumni group and the alumni group (Runzhao, 2020). Student loyalty is a positive emotional connection between students and their school of study, trust in the school, and a willingness to promote the school's responsibility. It can be the intention to return to the school and purchase school services again, or the initiative to recommend family and friends to study at the school, manifested in various beneficial behaviors that promote the development of the school (Meng, 2020).

In this study, student loyalty refers to a deeply ingrained internal commitment to give back to the school in the future, specifically referring to the student's intention to give back to the school.

Analysis of the measurement dimensions of student loyalty in existing literature, some scholars use three dimensions to measure, while others use two dimensions to measure. Researcher

Gewanda (2016) divided customer loyalty into emotional, intentional, and behavioral loyalty (Gewanda, 2016). Meng (2020) divided student loyalty into two dimensions: recommendation and re-selection (Meng, 2020). In this study, By analyzing existing literature on the measurement dimensions of student loyalty, scholars have not yet formed a unified dimension for measuring student loyalty. Based on the actual situation of private universities in Guangxi, this study adopts two dimensions to measure student loyalty: attitude loyalty and behavior loyalty.

Attitude loyalty: Refers to the willingness to recommend to family, friends, and acquaintances around you for admission to this school; Praising and spreading positive word-of-mouth about the school to others; Full of confidence in the development of my alma mater. Behavioral loyalty: refers to the willingness to pursue further education at the university if there is an opportunity in the future; Give back to your alma mater through donations or other forms after graduation; proactively maintain the reputation of the school; Join alumni associations and other organizations.

The Relationship between Service Quality and Student Loyalty

The social exchange theory views customer satisfaction and loyalty to the organization as a relational response from the receiving party to the giving party during the exchange process. Ursaid1, Sapta Hadi Purnomo, and Nurul Qomariah (2019) found in their study of the impact of service quality and university image on the satisfaction and loyalty of management master's students that service quality in universities has a positive impact on student satisfaction and loyalty (Nursaid, 2019). According to Pelelu's (2021) research on the impact of service quality, service innovation, and brand image of Indonesia Telecom Corporation on customer satisfaction in Meilai, it was found that the service quality of telecom companies has a positive impact on customer loyalty. High quality and efficient service quality can improve customer satisfaction, help maintain customer resources, and enhance customer loyalty (Pelealu, 2021). The same conclusion has also been proven in the hotel service industry. In the study of the impact of online booking systems and online customer evaluations on brand image, trust, and hotel booking decisions, Nurul Falihah (2021) found that hotel service quality also has a positive impact on customer loyalty (Nurul Falihah, 2021). The sustainable development practices of universities have a positive and direct impact on service quality, student satisfaction, university image, and student loyalty. Moreover, service quality has a positive and strong impact on students' loyalty. In addition, service quality, student satisfaction, and university image play a mediating role in the relationship between sustainable development practices and student perception in universities (DOAN, 2021).

The perceived USR is associated with higher student loyalty, which will be mediated by perceived service quality, student satisfaction, and student trust (Khawaja Fawad Latif, 2021). From the perspective of social exchange theory, in the relationship between universities and students, universities can exchange students' future feedback behavior towards universities by providing high-quality educational services. In the field of higher education, some scholars' research results also confirm the relationship between the two (Teddy Chandraa, 2020; Yoyok Cahyono, 2020). In the field of higher education, a large number of studies have pointed out that the quality of educational services is the foundation of student satisfaction. Various components of educational service quality (including teaching service quality, administrative service quality, life service quality, etc.) can greatly affect students' satisfaction with schools. Moreover, satisfaction, as an important factor in evaluating the quality and intensity of customer service provider relationships, is also considered to have a close relationship with the quality of educational services.

Research Concept Framework

Based on social exchange theory and previous literature, as well as literature analysis on the definition of service quality and student loyalty and the relationship between the two variables,

this study constructs a conceptual model for the study of service quality and loyalty in universities, as shown in Figure 2.

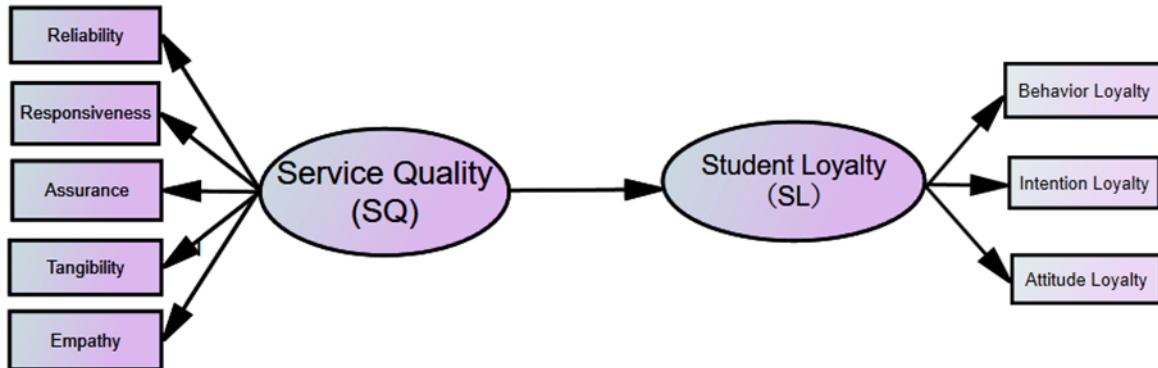


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

This study identified service quality as the independent variable and student loyalty as the dependent variable. The conceptual framework of this study assumes the relationship between service quality in universities and student loyalty and proposes research hypotheses.

H₁: The reliability of universities perceived by students can significantly affect students' loyalty.

H₂: The responsiveness of universities perceived by students can significantly affect students' loyalty.

H₃: The assurance of universities perceived by students can significantly affect students' loyalty.

H₄: The tangibility of universities perceived by students can significantly affect students' loyalty.

H₅: The empathy of universities perceived by students can significantly affect students' loyalty. The research hypothesis needs to be further validated through relevant empirical research.

CONCLUSION

Through literature review, it was found that the quality of education management services in universities has a positive impact on student loyalty, especially through targeted analysis of the five dimensions of perceived service quality. Each dimension has a positive impact on student loyalty, which requires universities to innovate their work thinking, strive to improve service quality, serve students well, and continuously improve their satisfaction and loyalty in the daily process of education management services. Enhance students' positive word-of-mouth, promote harmony and stability between campus and society, continuously enhance the school's social reputation, and further enhance the school's competitiveness, social influence, and sustainable development ability of universities. Based on the above conclusions and literature research on the impact of efficient service quality on student satisfaction and loyalty, education management services in universities should be targeted based on understanding student needs. This study proposes the following suggestions:

1) Pay attention to the improvement of the professional skills of the teaching staff. In addition to emphasizing the theoretical level of teachers' profession, it is also necessary to strengthen the practical level of their profession in society.

2) Increase school hardware facilities and strive to improve the teaching environment. Higher education is not compulsory education, but self-funded education.

3) Scientifically and reasonably set up professional courses and practical courses. The curriculum should not only focus on the systematic nature of the knowledge system but also

the application and cutting-edge nature of knowledge, timely understanding of the needs of social and economic development, and the trend of talent demand in social enterprises. The next step is to conduct further empirical research and analysis on the specific influencing factors of the quality of education management services in universities on student loyalty. The hypothesis proposed in the conceptual model needs to be validated through the structural equation modeling method, to more accurately analyze the specific impact of the quality of education management services in universities on student satisfaction and loyalty. At the same time, other influencing factors that affect student satisfaction and loyalty can also be added for comprehensive analysis, to provide a theoretical basis and decision-making reference for university managers and decision-makers to formulate scientific school management policies.

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