Perceived educational service quality and its effects on students' satisfaction and loyalty

Choi, Young Keun
Kim, Pansoo

Abstract

This research investigated the relationship between service quality, student satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in higher education settings in Korea. SERVPERF and the service quality model for higher education were used to conduct an analysis of a conceptual framework comprised of six dimensions of service quality: administration, faculty, tangibles, reliability, assurance, and curriculum. Of these dimensions, tangibles, faculty, and administration were the important factors for student satisfaction, and they, in turn, showed significant influences on behavioral intentions toward the universities to which the students belonged. These results partially confirmed the linkage between service quality, student satisfaction, and behavioral loyalty in higher education settings in Korea.

Keywords Service quality, Higher education, SERVPERF, Students’ satisfaction, Behavioral intention
1. Introduction

Nowadays, universities in Korea are facing a big challenge because of a reduction in student intakes. This is reflected in the fact that the number of incoming students at the nation’s universities will exceed the number of high school graduates in 2018. In this context, efforts made by universities to recruit new students are an important task. A strong trend that has emerged is that the universities are changing focus from a provider-oriented way of thinking to a student-oriented way of thinking. This study was prompted by these new trends of “student centered-ness” (Elliott & Healy, 2001) in Korea’s universities—students’ perceptions of the higher education experience have become increasingly important as a key factor for the recruitment and retention of students (Khodayari & Khodayari, 2011). Service quality management would be a good solution for dealing with these market challenges, and for responding to internal and external stakeholders. This study thus posited that ensuring service quality would have positive effects on student satisfaction and loyalty (Douglas, Douglas & Barnes, 2006; Navvarro, Iglesias & Torres, 2005; Yeo & Li, 2014). Based on this conceptualization, this study empirically tested the relationship between service quality, student satisfaction, and loyalty, based on students’ behaviors and intentions in higher education settings in Korea. The SERVPERF model developed by Cronin & Taylor (1992) and a service quality model for higher education were used for the analysis, which was premised on a framework comprised of six dimensions of service quality: administration, faculty, tangibles, reliability, assurance, and curriculum.

2. Literature review

Overall satisfaction describes a customer’s general dis/satisfaction with the organization, based on all encounters and experiences with that particular organization, and overall service quality is defined as the customer’s overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its services (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994). Quality plays a very important role in the service industry, for differentiating between competing services. However, unlike tangible products, it is very hard to measure service quality, and often it cannot be assessed before having experienced it. Many researchers pay attention to the service quality of higher education (Koni, Zainal & Ibrahim, 2012; Sultan & Wong, 2012; Jain, Shina & Sahney, 2011; Lee, 2010) and support the notion that education can be improved using the principles of quality management (Bath, Smith, Stein & Swann, 2004; Koch & Fisher, 1998; Peat, Taylor, & Franklin, 2005). Numerous researchers have shown that the perceived quality of higher education has an influence on student satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Stodnick & Rogers, 2008; Sojkin, Bartkowiat & Skuza, 2012; Navvarro, Iglesias & Rivera Torres, 2005; Yeo & Li, 2014; Douglas, Douglas & Barnes, 2006; Eagle & Brennan, 2007).

Stodnick and Rogers (2008), for example, measured perceived quality along five dimensions: assurances, empathy, responsiveness, tangibles, and reliability. They found that the reliability of an instructor’s way of lecturing, assurances of the