THE EXPECTATION, PERCEPTION AND BRAND LOYALTY OF STUDENTS OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH-EASTERN THAILAND

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Abstract - The objectives of this research were 1) to study students' expectations and perceptions of services provided by public universities in north-eastern Thailand. 2) to compare students' expectations and perceptions of services provided by public universities in north-eastern Thailand. 3) to study the relationship between perceptions of service quality and brand loyalty of students to public universities in north-eastern Thailand.
The populations were 60,834 undergraduate students in public universities in north-eastern Thailand. The samples were 402 undergraduate students chosen by Taro Yamane's formula. The research instrument was a questionnaire. Data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation (S.D.), Pearson correlation coefficient, and t-test.
The results were: 1) the students' expectations and perceptions of services provided by public universities in north-eastern Thailand were at the 'the most satisfied' level. 2) The comparison between students' expectations and perceptions of services provided by public universities in north-eastern Thailand was not different. 3) The relationship between perceptions of service quality and brand loyalty of students to public university in north-eastern Thailand was related in a 'high' level statistical significant different at 0.01 level.

Index Terms - Brand Loyalty, Public Universities in North-Eastern Thailand, Service Quality.

I. INTRODUCTION

All universities in Thailand find that the volume of their students decreases due to many causes. Firstly, the born rate of baby decreases. There are more universities. Therefore, all university need to research, plan and administrate or manage learning process to be competitive more than other universities to attract students as much as they can.
Therefore, the objectives of this research were 1) to study students' expectations and perceptions of services provided by public universities in north-eastern Thailand. 2) to compare students' expectations and perceptions of services provided by public universities in north-eastern Thailand. 3) to study the relationship between perceptions of service quality and loyalty of students to public universities in north-eastern Thailand.
The results of this study should help the university in making decisions on learning process to succeed and survive in a competitive environment. This research consists of Introduction, Review of Literature, Methodology, Analysis and Presentation of Findings, and Summary and Conclusions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

The definition of quality may vary from person to person and from situation to situation. The definitions of service quality vary only in wording but typically involve determining whether perceived service delivery meets, exceeds or fails to meet customer expectations (Cronin and Taylor, 1994; Oliver, 1993; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1993).
Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) define service quality as the degree and direction of discrepancy between the consumer's perceptions and expectations, or the extent to which a service meets or exceeds customer expectations. The quality of a service depends on that service consistently conforming to customers' expectations (Witt and Stewart, 1996).
Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988, 1990) projected a service quality model that identified perceived service quality into five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Tangibles involve the appearance of physical facilities, including the equipment, personnel, and materials. Reliability involves the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Responsiveness involves the willingness to help customers. Assurance involves the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. This assurance includes competence, courtesy, credibility and security. Empathy involves the provision of caring, individualized attention to customers. This empathy includes access, communication, and understanding the customer.

Loyalty

The most used definition for loyalty comes from Jacoby and Kyner (1973) who described loyalty as "a biased behavioral response expressed over time by a decision making unit with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of brands and being a function of psychological processes". Oliver (1999) has developed

the definition further by describing loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, causing repetitive same brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences or marketing efforts." Reichheld's (2001) definition emphasizes somewhat different aspects in defining loyalty as the willingness of someone to make a personal sacrifice or other investment for the strengthening of a relationship. One of the newest definitions of brand loyalty comes from Chegini (2010) who describes it as "theory and guidance leadership and positive behavior including, repurchase, support and offer to purchase which may control a new potential customer". Furthermore, the American Marketing Association defines brand loyalty as "the situation in which a consumer generally buys the same manufacturer originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from multiple suppliers within the category" or "the degree to which a consumer consistently purchases the same brand within a product class" (Moisescu, 2006).

Day (1969) introduced the two-dimensional concept of brand loyalty. Many researchers, such as Dick and Basu (1994), state that brand loyalty should be seen as a combination of purchase behavior and attitude. One of the first researchers that used a two-dimensional definition of loyalty was Day (1969), who opines that brand loyalty should be evaluated on the basis of attitudinal as well as behavioral criteria. Although literature offers plenty of definitions of loyalty, there seem to be two basic approaches to the customer loyalty concept (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). These are described as the behavioral approach and the attitude-based approach. The characteristics of a two-dimensional definition of loyalty are Attitudinal Loyalty and Behavioral Loyalty. Attitudinal Loyalty is what customers feel and Behavioral Loyalty is customers do.

Research Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

Measurement and Instrument

Measurement

Service quality will be measured according to how well perceptions of service quality match expectations of service quality. The multiple dimensions of service quality will be captured using the SERVQUAL instrument. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988, 1990) identify the five dimensions of service quality which are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. SERVQUAL will be used to assess customer expectations and perceptions based on the service quality gap model. Parasuraman and his colleagues (1993, 1994) concluded that the expectation section of the SERVQUAL survey instrument also questioned the perception section to capture the customer's opinions of expectation. Subtracting the expected items from the perceived items will produce a gap score. Brand loyalty will be measured by using the brand loyalty concept of Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993) as the basis for the measurement.

Population and Study Sample Size

Population

The population of this research was 60,834 Bachelor degree students of The public university in North-Eastern Thailand consists of Kalasin University, Nakhon Phanom University, Mahasarakham University, and Ubon Ratchathani University.

Table 1 Population: Divided students by universities and year of study.

Sample

The sample target for the study was 398 students computed by formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$n =$ Size of sample

N = Pupolation

e = Eror

$$n = \frac{60{,}834}{1 + 60{,}834\ (0.05)^2}$$

$$= 397.3 \text{ or } 398$$

The population of this research are 60,834 Bachelor degree students of The public university in North-Eastern Thailand consists of Kalasin University, , Nakhon Phanom University, Mahasarakham University and Ubon Ratchathani University. The Random Sampling was used with Probability Sampling.

Table 2. Number of sample of students in each university by portion of population.

Instrument

A questionnaire was developed and administered to a sample of 398 students from the population of this research who was 60,834 Bachelor degree students of the public university in North-Eastern Thailand consists of Kalasin University, Nakhon Phanom University, Mahasarakham University, and Ubon Ratchathani University.

The development of the instrument is based on a through literature review, and investigated by three experts. The questionnaire, which was using in this study, describes the expectations and the perceptions of service quality and Loyalty. The survey questionnaire includes three parts. Part I contains information involving classification variables. The classification variables are gender, age, degree and field, university and reason to continue to study in a

university. Part II contains 10 items, which represent 5 dimensions of service quality: tangibles (item 1 and 2), reliability (item 3 and 4), responsiveness (item 5 and 6), assurance (item 7 and 8) and empathy (item 9 and 10). This part represents both the expectation of service quality and the perception of service quality. Part III contains 8 items, which represent Attitudinal Loyalty (item 1, 2, 3 and 4) and Behavioral Loyalty (item 5, 6,7 and 8).

Testing the quality of instrument

To test the quality of instrument, three Experts considered the content of the instrument. Then 30 students of school of management science was requested to collected data to test the reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 3. The Reliability of Instrument

IV. DATE ANALYSIS

The demographic classification of current study respondents analyzed frequency, percent, valid percent and cumulative percent. Expectation Scale, Perception Scale and Service Loyalty Scale compute Cronbach's Alpha for reliability Test.

Paired samples t-statistics test method will be used to test the differences and similarities of the mean response between service quality expectations and students' perceived service quality. The research used descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and ANOVA to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS

Table 4-7

In conclusion, the results of this research show 1) the students' expectations and perceptions of services provided by public universities in north-eastern Thailand were at the 'the most satisfied' level. 2) The comparison between students' expectations and perceptions of services provided by public universities in north-eastern Thailand was not different. 3) The relationship between perceptions of service quality and loyalty of students to public university in north-eastern Thailand was related in a 'high' level statistical significant different at 0.01 level.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research support the theory of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) that the most important gap is the gap between expectation and perception. The results of this research also support the theory of Gronroos (1990) that the expectation and experience is important. The results of this research also support the theory of Gremler and Brown (1996); Mowen and Minor (1998); Chaudhuri (1999); Buttle and Burton (2001); and Lu and Tang (2001) that loyalty is the positive thinking of quality and value which customers receive.

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