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*Student satisfaction
in a higher education
context*

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Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this study is to find out to what extent the business administration students of Kristianstad University feel satisfaction in regard to service quality. Also, we want to find out if the impact of positive news about the university affects the students' level of satisfaction.

Approach/methodology - In order to be able to answer these questions, a quantitative research was conducted. Additionally, we used a 7-point Likert scale to measure the students' opinions.

Findings - The study found that the students were satisfied with the university, despite a negative service quality-gap. Furthermore, service quality only affected customer satisfaction to a small degree. Also, we found a positive relation between the impact of positive news and the level of satisfaction amongst the students.

Research limitations/implications - The University may look at this paper's findings and use them to realize its strengths and weaknesses. Future research may be conducted to find out if other factors have greater impact on customer satisfaction than service quality does.

Originality – This study is unique in the sense that it investigates the service quality-gap in a higher education context. Also, the study brings new knowledge of the impact of positive news on customer satisfaction.

Social implications - Hopefully, the impact of this study will increase the public's insight of Kristianstad University. A study similar to this one is useful to any organization in the world, in order to establish the level of satisfaction from time to time.

Keywords - Customer satisfaction, service quality, positive news, student satisfaction, higher education.

Paper type - Research paper

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Introduction

Service quality has been examined to measure customer satisfaction (Lassar, Manolis and Winsor, 2000; Abu Hasan, 2008; Khodayari and Khodayari, 2011). At the same time, marketing has made a shift from product-oriented marketing to a more service-oriented marketing approach. Almost every company today has a service-oriented marketing approach, even product companies. Nowadays, the customer requires more than just the core product, and companies have to add additional services to the product in order to satisfy the customers (Grönroos, 2007; Grönroos, 1998). Since competition has increased amongst service-minded companies, the quality of the service is crucial for companies in order to satisfy and maintain customers. Furthermore, it is possible to argue that the higher educational system (colleges and universities) is a type of service company/service provider. Services offered by a university include, but are not limited to, teaching. It is of great importance that the teaching quality is significantly high, since competition to attract, maintain and foster students amongst universities are fierce today (Abu Hasan, 2008). When it comes to higher education, many researchers have argued that it is possible to consider a student as a customer (Shank, Walker and Hayes, 1995; Joseph, Yakhou and Stone, 2005). In addition, it is not only the meeting between teacher and student that constitutes the service quality evaluation; it is the complete and full offering from the university. In other words, it is the student's evaluation of *everything* the university offers that is of importance.

Besides service quality, customer satisfaction has also been under the scope the last three decades (Devasagayam, Stark and Valestin, 2013). Many researchers have found strong links between service quality and customer satisfaction (Lee, Lee and Yoo, 2000; Sureshchandar, Rajendran and Anantharaman, 2002; Ooi, Lin, Tan and Chong, 2011). Previous research has stated that customer satisfaction may be seen as a process, and not only as a final evaluation in retrospect (Oliver, 1997). In other words, it is possible to measure customer satisfaction *during* the process of consumption of the service.

Previously, Kristianstad University, which is the subject of this study, including all its various programs, was ranked very low in comparison to other universities in Sweden (Kristianstadsbladet, 2008; Handelskammaren, 2009). However, in the spring of 2012, Kristianstad University received a positive piece of news from the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (SNAHE) (HKR.se, 2012). Along with two other universities in Sweden, Kristianstad University received the highest rating “very high quality” for its business administration program. As the award received indicates, Kristianstad University in general has improved significantly, particularly its quality in the business administration program.

To summarize, we want to investigate if the business administration students are satisfied with their business administration programs. To establish if the business administration students are satisfied, we will investigate their perceptions of the service quality at Kristianstad University. Additionally, we want to find out if the positive piece of news affects the business administration students’ satisfaction. Finally, after establishing what the students are satisfied or dissatisfied with, the university may use this information to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses in order to further improve. Therefore, we want to primarily investigate; “To what extent are the students at the business program in Kristianstad University satisfied with the service quality?” and secondarily; “Has the impact of positive news affected the students’ satisfaction?”

Research foundations

Since the main aim with this report is to find out to what extent the business administration students of Kristianstad University are satisfied, it is important to understand what is meant by customer satisfaction. In order to measure customer satisfaction through service quality, it is common to use the SERVQUAL method. Also, we introduce the term positive news in the report, and we want to find out if it affects the students’ satisfaction of their program. In the following section, we will first introduce the different concepts, which are customer

satisfaction, perception of service quality in higher education, and positive news. We will also introduce a model based on these three concepts.

Customer satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined differently depending on the researcher. However, there are also many similarities. Abu Hasan (2008, pp. 165) cites Kotler and Clarke (1987) when he states that “satisfaction is a state felt by a person who has experienced a performance or an outcome that fulfill his or her expectation”. Satisfaction can also be said to cover students’ perception and experiences during the college years (Carey, Cambiano and De Vor, 2002; Abu Hasan, 2008). Oliver (1997, pp.13) defines satisfaction as “the consumer’s fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under- or over fulfillment”. Moreover, Oliver (1997) has found that customer satisfaction may occur during the consumption of the service. In other words, customer satisfaction is the general evaluation of a service after it has been completed or *during* the consumption of it. To further bolster the argument that customer satisfaction can be measured during the process of consumption, Devasagayam et. al (2013, p. 3) state that “satisfaction is an ongoing, dynamic process”. Thus, customer satisfaction can be achieved during the process of the consumption of the service, and not only after it has been consumed. Since we are examining whether the *current* business administration students of Kristianstad University are satisfied with the service quality provided, the aspect of viewing customer satisfaction as an interim factor is important.

Perception of service quality in higher education

One definition of service quality is found in Sultan and Wong’s (2012, p. 764) article where they are citing Johnson and Winchell (1988), saying that service quality is “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs”. A second definition explains service quality as the sum of perceived quality minus expected quality, which in turn, if positive, leads to satisfaction (Grönroos, 1984;

Lewis and Booms, 1983; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985; Smith and Houston, 1982). However, Theodorakis, Kambitsis, Laios and Koustelios (2001, pp. 434) establish that “even quite satisfied spectators can rate service quality generally lower”. Also, “individuals are often driven by the I-have-high-expectations social norm and this creates a bias towards social desirability (Brandon-Jones and Silvestro, 2010, pp. 1295). In other words, even though the difference between perceived quality and expected quality may be negative, the customer may still be satisfied with the service.

According to Abu Hasan (2008, pp. 165), perceived quality is defined as “the consumer’s judgment about an entity’s overall experience or superiority”. Other researchers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1990) conclude that the perception of service quality is the comparison between a consumer’s expectations and the perception of the service. We assume that students consider their past experiences into account when they evaluate their expected service quality. Sultan and Wong (2012, pp. 759) state that “past experience provides a brief cognitive standard and helps in evaluating the standard of service quality of present and/or future service encounters”. In short, the customers’ or the students’ expectations of service quality is affected by their past experiences (Sultan and Wong, 2012; O’Neill and Palmer, 2003; Biedenbach and Marell, 2010).

Clearly, many researchers have failed to agree on one definition of service quality (Harvey and Green, 1993; Khodayari and Khodayari, 2011; Holbrook, 1994; Wang and Lo, 2002; Cheng and Tam, 1997). Depending on the context, the definition of service quality varies. For instance, the definition from Grönroos (1984) is appropriate in a higher education context, and fits our research best. Since we want to establish if the students at Kristianstad University feel that their expectations have been exceeded, it is important to measure the difference between their expectations and perception.

To this day, the most frequently used method of measuring service quality is SERVQUAL, which measures service quality using five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness,

assurance and empathy (Parasuraman et. al, 1990; Lassar et. al, 2000; Kim, Kim and Yun, 2003; Chen, Deng, Chung and Tsai, 2008; Rodrigues et al., 2010; Martin, 2012; Abu-EISamen et al., 2013). Tangibility is the physical evidence of the service, for example the physical facilities or appearance of personnel. The reliability dimension examines if promises are kept by the service supplier, accurate services are delivered, and the actual delivery is mistake-free and on schedule. The responsiveness dimension is the willingness to respond to the requests of the customers. Assurance gives the feeling of confidence, and enables trust and safety. There is also a need of knowledge to respond to the customers correctly. The last dimension is empathy, which involves taking responsibility for the customers' problems, and giving them individual attention (Lassar et al., 2000).

Service quality has been measured in several ways during the past years. A research study by Chowdhary and Prakash (2007) showed that it is hard to generalize the importance of the service quality dimensions. They say that "there is no clear consensus on the number of dimensions and their interrelationships" (Chowdinary and Prakash, 2007, p.494). Their study found that service quality has been measured and researched using different numbers of dimensions. In this research, however, we will use the five major dimensions usually found in the SERVQUAL model (Rodrigues, Barkur, Varambally and Motlagh, 2010; Asubonteng, P., McClearly, K.J. and Swan, J.E., 1996; Ladhari, R., 2009). Previously, SERVQUAL has been used for measuring service quality in the concept of higher education (Abu Hasan, 2008). Using five dimensions, we will receive a more comprehensive image of how the respondents perceive service quality, in contrast to only using two or three dimensions.

Positive news

The notification that Kristianstad University has one of Sweden's top three business administration programs is in this paper seen as a piece of positive news. Having one of the top three business administration programs in the country, this piece of news is naturally positive, rather than negative. Though the nature of this piece of news is positive, it is important to understand the definition of the term news. According to Hannabuss (1995), news is not a reflection of reality, but a construction and interpretation made by a journalist

who is reporting an event. However, the news constructed and interpreted by the journalist is not a false production or a misguidance for the reader. Although, it is important to note that certain words or images selected by the journalist will affect the reader differently, depending on the individual (Allen and Johnson, 2008). Moreover, Hannabuss (1995, p. 30) states that the impact of news is “complex and dramatic, and has important effects on the way in which people think about themselves and the world they live in”.

Also, depending on the location and proximity of the news, it has greater impact on people if they are close to the occurrence (Knobloch-Westerwick, Carpentier, Blumhoff and Nickel, 2005; Hannabuss, 1995; Allen and Johnson, 2008). Additionally, news is very often about current events, which indicates that the fresher the piece of news, the more interesting it is. Conclusively, whether it is a positive or negative piece of news, it will affect an individual’s perception of reality, which will lead to a state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Hannabuss, 1995). In other words, the positive piece of news that Kristianstad University received in the spring of 2012 may affect the satisfaction of the students positively. Thus, we will refer to this piece of news as *positive news*.



Figure 1 - The customer satisfaction model in a higher education context

The customer satisfaction model in a higher education context

As the model above indicates, we want to find out if the business administration students of Kristianstad University experience customer satisfaction. In order to determine this, we will investigate if Service quality affects Customer Satisfaction. Many researchers have seen a link between service quality and satisfaction (Theodorakis et al. 2001; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Bigne, Moliner and Sanchez, 2003; Sultan and Wong, 2012). Service quality consists of two parts: *perception* and *expectations*. Furthermore, *past experience* is included within the *expectations* part. This is because students consider their past experiences when evaluating their expectations (O'Neill and Palmer, 2003). The other part of service quality is *perception*, which is what the students actually feel regarding the service. Oliver (1993) integrates the two concepts of service quality and satisfaction. Moreover, Spreng and Mackoy (1996) tested Oliver's (1993) integration and confirmed that satisfaction indeed is a consequence of service quality. Also, some researchers have argued that the main determinant of perceived satisfaction is perceived quality (Carlson and O'Cass, 2010; Sultan and Wong, 2012). If an individual's perception exceeds his/her expectations, this positive sum is assumed to affect the state of satisfaction positively. However, respondents may rate service quality lower, despite being quite satisfied (Theodorakis et al., 2001). Therefore, we hypothesize: **H1: The perception of service quality positively affects the students' satisfaction in a higher education context.**

News, whether positive or negative, will affect people and their perceptions of reality (Hannabuss, 1995). In other words, news will affect an individual's level of satisfaction. Consequently, we want to find out if this particular piece of positive news affects the business administration students' satisfaction at Kristianstad University. The arrow between *positive news* and *Customer satisfaction* in Figure 1 indicates that positive news affects customer satisfaction. Therefore, we hypothesize: **H2: Positive news about the university positively affects students' level of satisfaction with their university.**

Research methodology

Research sample and data collection

Since SNAHE (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) handed out the “very high quality” award to Kristianstad University’s business administration program, we selected the business administration students at Kristianstad University as the empirical population for this study. The population of this study is 487 students, which represent the whole business administration program. Additionally, students attending single classes are also present in the study. In order to reach as many students as possible, we visited every class at the business administration program during their lectures when most students were present, and collected our data through self-administrated, *delivery and collection questionnaires*. This was selected since we were able to collect all data at the lessons which also gave a high response rate from the respondents who were present. Another positive thing about delivery and collection questionnaires is that the respondents were able to ask us questions if they had any queries. The lessons we visited were those with the highest frequency of students, according to the lecturers. 330 students represent our research sample, which is 68% of the population. The missing data was due to absence of illness or the students were simply not present at the specific lessons for other reasons, although we had a 100% response rate of the students who were handed our questionnaire.

Research design and measures

The aim of the study is to see if the students at Kristianstad University’s business administration program are satisfied with their program, and if positive news about the university’s award affects the students’ level of satisfaction. Since we want to be able to generalize, as well as reach out to as many students as possible, we used a quantitative study. Additionally, since our study aims to measure the relationships between the dependent (customer satisfaction) and independent variables (service quality, and positive news), an explanatory research was chosen. Also, we wanted to have a structured and objective research.

The study used a standardized structured questionnaire with the aim to measure service quality, customer satisfaction and positive news. Questions were based on previous studies within the research subject which have measured service quality in the past. Since the questions from previous studies have been proven to be relevant in a higher education context, we chose to base our questionnaire on these. The questions were also based on our hypothesis. For example, we wanted to establish the level of service quality of the university. In order to do this, we collected information about how to measure service quality in higher education. We found that SERVQUAL was primarily used, and therefore we based our questions on research already conducted in a higher education context. Abu Hasan's (2008) study was used and was translated and adapted from English to Swedish to fit the research sample. The questionnaire included four main parts, which were demographic variables (1), service quality in higher education (2), measurements of customer satisfaction (3), and measurements of positive news (4). The demographic data included four variables including gender, age, class, and business administration program major (accounting, banking, international business, and management). Service quality was measured by 46 items/questions operationalized by the service quality dimensions from the SERVQUAL scale; tangibility, assurance, empathy, responsiveness, and reliability (Parasuraman et al, 1990). The 46 items measure the gap between expectations and perception, so each item was based on both their expectations and perception of the SQ items. Basically, 23 items are measured from different aspects. Customer satisfaction was measured by four questions regarding satisfaction. These customer satisfaction-related questions were based on existent literature (Sultan and Wong, 2012). There were also two questions regarding positive news. We asked if the respondent was aware of the news, and the level of knowledge of it. In total there were 56 items/questions measured. The questionnaire included only quantitative questions using a seven point Likert scale which measured their attitudes between 1 (strongly disagrees/very low) and 7 (strongly agrees/very high). The questionnaire was checked by a pilot test group who studied the questions and added their comments to increase the validity of the questionnaire. We considered the pilot group's comments, and changed the questionnaire accordingly before the real launch of the official questionnaire to the research sample.

Data analysis and results

Demographic profile

The division of gender in the sample was 192 female and 138 male. Mean age was 23.52, with a missing value of eleven respondents. Throughout the four years of the business administration program, 90 respondents were from the first year, 127 from the second, 72 from the third, 31 from the fourth, and ten were enlisted in single classes.

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha test was used in the study to establish the reliability of grouping our questions into the groups of the SERVQUAL scale (tangibility, assurance, reliability, responsiveness and empathy) (see Table 1). Furthermore, these groups are also divided into expected, and perceived values. All groups, except two, had good values in Cronbach's alpha test (higher than 0.7). The perceived reliability and tangibility had a lower value than 0.7 (0.654 and 0.630 respectively). Although these values were under the definite acceptance level (0.7), they could be accepted since they are close to 0.7. The missing values are due to the fact that some people that did not answer all questions. An explanation could be that the respondents were unfamiliar with the service that was being asked about, and thus could not respond properly.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha test on service quality dimensions

| SQ Dimensions | Expectations | Items | Missing | Perceptions | Missing | Items |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| | Cronbach's | | expectations | Cronbach | perception | |
| | alpha | | | alpha | | |
| Tangibility | 0.798 | 6 | 17 | 0.630 | 24 | 6 |
| Assurance | 0.840 | 6 | 17 | 0.820 | 17 | 6 |
| Reliability | 0.791 | 3 | 10 | 0.654 | 16 | 3 |
| Responsiveness | 0.862 | 5 | 29 | 0.796 | 36 | 5 |
| Empathy | 0.775 | 3 | 23 | 0.742 | 26 | 3 |

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha test on service quality sum and customer satisfaction

| Variables | Cronbach's alpha | Items/questions | Missing respondents |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| SQsum | 0.852 | 5 | 4 |
| Customer satisfaction | 0.950 | 4 | 4 |

Table 2 is somewhat different. *SQsum* is the grouping of all the mean gaps of the service quality dimensions. In order to see if it was possible to group all these dimensions into one, we consulted Cronbach's alpha test. Clearly, with a score of 0.852, the grouping of the SQ-dimensions was possible. The same procedure was conducted on the customer satisfaction-related questions. Similarly, the grouping of the CS-questions was possible (0.950 in Table 2).

Gap Analysis: Comparison of Expectations and Perceptions on Service Quality

Table 3. Gap Analysis

| SQ Dimensions | Expectations Mean | Perception Mean | Mean gap (P-E) |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Tangibility | 5.54 | 4.75 | -0.79 |
| Reliability | 5.62 | 5.38 | -0.24 |
| Responsiveness | 5.23 | 4.81 | -0.42 |
| Assurance | 5.81 | 5.53 | -0.28 |
| Empathy | 5.17 | 4.83 | -0.34 |
| Average | 5.47 | 5.06 | -0.41 |

As seen in Table 3, the difference between perceived SQ and expected SQ is illustrated. The largest difference is found in the Tangibility row, where the mean gap is -0.79. Moreover, the

smallest difference is found in the Reliability row, where the mean gap is -0.24. The average mean gap is -0.41. In other words, the respondents had slightly higher expectations on the SQ than they perceive. This could mean that the students are dissatisfied, even though the gap is rather small. However, interestingly, the mean of customer satisfaction (5.52; see Appendix 3) exceeds the mean of expectations (5.47), which indicates that the students are generally satisfied after all, despite the negative mean gap between P-E (Perception – Expectations).

Hypothesis testing

The Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ) test reported in table 4 below illustrates the strength and direction of the linear relationships (correlations) between Service Quality (SQ) and Customer Satisfaction (CS), and News and CS. If you consider the P-value column, those values prove that the relationships are significant ($P < 0.05$). Furthermore, as seen in the ρ column, the strongest relationship/correlation was 0.427, which is between the CS variable and the SQ variable. Meanwhile, a correlation of 0.318 between the CS variable and the News variable is displayed. According to Cohen (1988, pp. 79-81), a value between 0.30-0.49 is ranked as a medium strong correlation between two variables. In our case, both hypotheses end up within this interval, suggesting a medium strong correlation between SQ and CS, and News and CS.

Table 4. Correlation between variables

| Hypothesis | Path | n | Coefficient (ρ) | P-value |
|------------|------------|-----|------------------------|---------|
| H1 | SQ--->CS | 323 | 0.427 | 0,000 |
| H2 | News--->CS | 312 | 0.318 | 0.000 |

Out of 312 respondents that were aware of the news, 289 rated the CS-related questions between four (medium level of satisfaction) and seven (very high level of satisfaction),

meaning the impact of positive news on CS is positive. This shows that those who did know more about the positive piece of news did have a higher level of satisfaction than those who did not know much about it. We made a cross table to compare the customer satisfaction mean with the awareness of the positive piece of news. The hypothesis (H2) was supported. For more details, see Appendix 1.

In the regression analysis, we wanted to find out to what extent the independent variables (SQ and News) affect the dependent variable (CS). The values in the B column in table 5 indicate the extent of which the dependent variable (CS) is affected by the independent variables (News and SQ). As shown in the B-column, the coefficient of H1 is 11.2%, while the coefficient of H2 is 31%. In other words, if SQ increases with one unit, CS will increase accordingly with 11.2%. In the R-square column, 18.7% of CS is explained by SQ, while 12.4% of CS is explained by News. Moreover, the values in the P-value column display that the relationships are significant ($P < 0.05$). Due to our curiosity, we also did a regression test of the SQ dimensions in order to see which dimensions had the biggest effect on CS (see appendix 2). The results showed that reliability had the highest impact on CS with a B value of 0.207. This test was conducted in order to further understand the relationship between SQ and CS, and more specifically which SQ-dimensions affect CS the most.

Table 5. Regression

| Hypothesis | Path | B (coefficient) | R-square | P-value |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| H1 | SQ--->CS | 0.112 | 0.187 | 0.000** |
| H2 | News--->CS | 0.310 | 0.124 | 0.000** |

Discussion

As our analysis has shown, our hypotheses have been supported. Although the relationship between the variables is supported and significant, it is noteworthy that some values are rather low. For instance, the R-square value of H1 in Table 5 suggests that only 18.7% of CS is explained by SQ. In our opinion, this is noteworthy since one may assume that this figure would be higher, since the link between SQ-CS may seem strong and logical to some people. An explanation of this low value could be an effect of a low value in a single dimension. In turn, this would have decreased the relationship. Also, one dimension alone could have been more important than another. Another explanation could be the number of questions we used for each dimension. However, the effects from these explanations did not make the result negative, since the hypothesis wanted to investigate the link between SQ and CS. Although, it could have been higher and thus more trustworthy. Moreover, an R-square value of H2 in Table 5 indicates that 12.4% of CS is explained by News. Based on the regression analysis, both hypotheses are supported and significant, meaning that they both have a positive effect on CS. In other words, this means that the students felt that their level of satisfaction was increased after they heard about the notification from SNAHE. In addition, it also means that the service quality has an effect on CS. Almost all of the students did already know about the positive piece of news. There were only a few who were unaware of the news so we figured it was unnecessary to make any different measurements on just. All in all, the most important thing was to see if there were any links between positive piece of news and CS. The study showed that it is possible that news can have affected the students' satisfaction by just reminding them about it. Even though there was a low relationship between positive piece of news and CS in this case, the relationship was still positive which can be seen as a theoretical contribution for future researchers.

Furthermore, if you consider Table 3, interesting figures are shown regarding the students' expectations and perception, and the difference between these. You can see that the largest difference between the students' means of perception and expectations comes from the tangibility dimension, where the expectations exceeded the perception by 0.79. In other

words, the students generally expected more from the university than they perceive. Although all means of expectations are exceeding the means of perception, the absolute figures are still very positive. For instance, an average value of 5.06 in the Perception mean column in Table 3 indicates that on a scale from 1-7, the mean is over five. Clearly, this is very positive and indicates that the students are satisfied with the service quality provided. However, one must look at these figures with caution, since despite the aforementioned positive mean of 5.06 in the perception column; the mean gap difference ($P-E=-0.41$) is still negative. Similarly to what Theodorakis et al. (2001) established, customers may still be satisfied despite generally lower ratings of service quality. Additionally, as Brandon and Silvestro (2010) stated, people tend to have generally high expectations, since this attitude seems to be a social norm. Depending on the context (i.e. industry, market or country) the general expectations on a service may vary. For instance, the general expectations on service quality from a university in such a developed country as Sweden *may* be unrealistically high, especially in combination with the notification from SNAHE. This would both explain as well as justify the negative mean gaps between service expectations and service perception. To further bolster our argument that the students are satisfied despite the negative mean gap between perception and expectations, consider the mean of customer satisfaction of 5.52, which is higher than the mean of expectations (See Appendix 3).

According to our regression analysis, we found that the reliability dimension had the greatest impact on CS, with a B-value of 0.207 (See Appendix 2). This means that out of the five different service quality dimensions, reliability is the most influential on the student's perception, and thus most crucial to CS. Included in the reliability dimension, questions regarding the easiness of class registration were asked. Also, questions were asked if the staff and lecturers were willing to give individual attention to a student's needs. Evidently, these questions were the most important ones with the highest impact according to our regression analysis.

Similarly to other researchers, we are aware of the risk that the respondent may have evaluated certain questions after critical incidents during their time as students at Kristianstad

University. Despite this possible risk, we still see similarities with other researchers' work. Since we had a rather large sample of 330 respondents, we are of the opinion that our findings are reliable and valid.

Conclusively, based on our different tests, it is safe to say that the business administration students of Kristianstad University are generally satisfied with the service quality. Also, it is established that the impact of positive news has a positive effect on CS, in this case.

Managerial implications, limitations, critical review and future research

Some of our findings may be of interest to the university in order to maintain and perhaps improve the students' experiences during their time at the university. For example, the relatively low rating of 4.75 on the mean perception of tangibility in Table 3 indicates that the university may have some improvement potential in this aspect. Again, even though 4.75 is above moderate, there is evidently room for improvement. Additionally, the university may opt to focus its attention on the reliability dimension, since this was the most important one for the students. With a mean perception rating of 5.38 (Table 3), the students are clearly satisfied with this aspect of the service quality. This shows that the university is successful in providing individual help to its students, and that they really care about them. However, the highest mean perception was found in the assurance dimension, with a mean value of 5.53. It is noteworthy that assurance had a higher mean perception value than reliability; although it was proven that reliability had the greatest impact on CS (see appendix 2). Basically, the assurance-related questions dealt with staff competence, lecturers' competence in teaching, and the helpfulness of the staff and lecturers. While the reliability-related ones dealt with the genuine willingness to help from the staff and lecturers. This shows that the staff and lecturers of the university really care about the students. It also means that the students feel that both their lecturers and staff have the right competence. Suggestively, it would be important to the university to maintain and perhaps improve these ratings. If the university improves their ratings on these criteria, they might maintain the high rating of SNAHE to improve the students' level of satisfaction if the rating has been further improved.

Even though the statistic results showed a positive relationship between SQ and CS, and positive news and CS, we could critically say that it could have been so that those who were satisfied in general might have rated the service quality statements very low and vice versa. This could have other effects, like image, trust and other aspects which were not investigated.

There were also some students that were not present at the lessons we visited which could have had different opinions which in turn could have affected the results.

Some students which we interviewed may also have rated low results on both SQ and CS since they did not care and did not put their whole mind into it which could also have had an effect on the results. The small group of students who did not know about the positive news may also have been satisfied because they were satisfied even before the news occurred. Even though there are some critics about the answers from the respondents we could not have affected them since it is their own thoughts, which we assume is right.

This study is limited to what the business administration students feel regarding the service quality. Additionally, since we also wanted to investigate the impact of what the specific piece of positive news from SNAHE had on CS, the choice to limit ourselves to the business administration students seemed natural.

Future researchers may investigate if other factors are antecedents to CS in a higher education context, since SQ only represents 18.7% of CS, according to our study. Although our respondents seemed to be dissatisfied with the SQ at Kristianstad University, they were still satisfied in general. Consequently, other factors such as image, reputation, probability of employment after graduation (and so on) may have a greater impact on a student's level of satisfaction than SQ does.

Conclusion

This study has identified the strengths and weaknesses of the service quality provided by Kristianstad University. Also, we found that there is a positive relation between SQ and CS, as well as News and CS. Despite the negative mean gaps between expected quality and perceived quality, Kristianstad University's business administration students still feel satisfied in general with the university, even though, naturally, there is room for improvement. Furthermore, our tests proved that the impact of the positive piece of news had a positive effect on student satisfaction.

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Appendix 1

Customersatisfactionsu * Grade of awareness Crosstabulation

| Count | | Grade of awareness | | | | | | | Total |
|-----------------------------|------|--------------------|---|---|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| Customersatisfactionsu m | 1,00 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | 1,75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 2,00 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 2,75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 3,00 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | 3,25 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | 3,50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | 3,75 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| | 4,00 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 14 |
| | 4,25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| | 4,50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 10 |
| | 4,75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 12 |
| | 5,00 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 12 | 31 |
| | 5,25 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 27 |
| | 5,50 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 9 | 18 |
| | 5,75 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 20 |
| | 6,00 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 17 | 36 | 63 |
| 6,25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 18 | 22 | |
| 6,50 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 10 | 12 | |
| 6,75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 8 | |
| 7,00 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 37 | 48 | |
| Total | | 3 | 2 | 9 | 26 | 49 | 50 | 173 | 312 |

Appendix 2

Coefficients^a

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 5,727 | ,074 | | 77,588 | ,000 |
| | Tangibility_sum | ,105 | ,066 | ,098 | 1,579 | ,115 |
| | Assurance_sum | ,099 | ,093 | ,078 | 1,059 | ,290 |
| | Reliability_sum | ,207 | ,076 | ,189 | 2,713 | ,007 |
| | Responsiveness_sum | ,012 | ,068 | ,014 | ,181 | ,856 |
| | Empathy_sum | ,155 | ,074 | ,166 | 2,106 | ,036 |

a. Dependent Variable: Customersatisfactionsu

Appendix 3

| Customersatisfactionsun | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| | | Value |
| Standard Attributes | Position | 57 |
| | Label | <none> |
| | Type | Numeric |
| | Format | F8.2 |
| | Measurement | Scale |
| | Role | Input |
| N | Valid | 326 |
| | Missing | 4 |
| Central Tendency and Dispersion | Mean | 5,5161 |
| | Standard Deviation | 1,17077 |
| | Percentile 25 | 5,0000 |
| | Percentile 50 | 5,7500 |
| | Percentile 75 | 6,2500 |

Appendix 4

1



Enkät om hur nöjda ekonomistudenterna är med deras ekonomiprogram på Högskolan Kristianstad

Vi är tre stycken studenter från Högskolan Kristianstad (HKR) och skriver just nu vår magisteruppsats.

Med den här enkäten så avser vi att mäta dina förväntningar på högskolan samt om vad du har för uppfattning om högskolan i nuläget.

Här är först några allmänna frågor.

Kön: Man Kvinna

Ålder.....

Årskurs: 1 2 3 4 Fristående kurs

Ekonomiprogram: Valfri Revisor/Controller Bank och Finans Internationell ekonomi

Följande påståenden handlar om service kvalitén och ska besvaras först utifrån dina förväntningar (vänster kolumn) som du har på utbildningen och sedan din uppfattning om utbildningen i nuläget (höger kolumn). Var vänlig och fyll i rutan för det alternativ som du tycker passar in på påståendena nedan. Svarsalternativen omfattar: 1= **instämmer inte alls**, och 7= **instämmer helt**.

Ur ett förväntningsperspektiv/uppfattningsperspektiv håller jag

med om följande påståenden att:

| | Förväntningar | | | | | | | Uppfattning | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Kursschemat är lättillgängligt | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Datorerna är moderna | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HKRs mailsystem (Firstclass) är användarvänligt | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Utbudet av kurser är bra | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HKR har en bra räckvidd av deras Wi-fi | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HKRs utbud av platser att studera på är bra | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Den administrativa personalen är hjälpsam | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Föreläsarna är hjälpsamma | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jag känner mig trygg på HKR | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Föreläsarna är duktiga på att lära ut | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Den administrativa personalen har den kompetens som behövs | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kursregistreringen går snabbt att göra | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Föreläsningarna hålls på ett lättförståeligt språk | <input type="checkbox"/> |

På en skala mellan 1-7 så kan jag hålla med om att:

(1= instämmer inte alls, och 7= instämmer helt)

Jag är generellt nöjd med HKR

Generellt sett så uppfyller HKR mina behov

Generellt sett så är jag nöjd med servicen från HKR

Generellt sett så är jag nöjd med kvalitén på HKR

Uppfattning

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Jag känner till att Högskolan Kristianstads ekonomiprogram

är en av de bästa i landet enligt Högskoleverkets undersökning 2012

Ja det gör jag

Nej det visste jag inte

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Om "ja" på föregående påstående svara på följande:

Jag är mycket väl informerad om att

Högskolan Kristianstads ekonomiprogram är en av de tre bästa i landet.

(1= instämmer inte alls, och 7= instämmer helt)

Vi tackar dig för din medverkan i denna undersökning!