

Satisfaction Survey of a State University Among Its Clients

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Abstract. This study aimed to determine the customer satisfaction of a state university in a highly urbanized city. Specifically, it aimed to answer the level of customer satisfaction when grouped according to tangible reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. When grouped according to age, sex, types of participants, and types of services availed. The research utilized the descriptive design. The study's participants were the local clients of a state university in a highly urbanized city. A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used to collect information, and the answers to these questions constitute the data and information collected from 384 participants. The researchers used stratified random sampling to identify 310 student clients and quota convenience sampling to identify 74 clients other than the students who had received services from the state university. The statistical tools used to treat and analyze the gathered data were the frequency count, mean, Kruskal Wallis, and Mann-Whitney U test. The study result showed that the customers were very satisfied with the state university's services in terms of tangible, reliable, responsive, and empathetic services. Student customers were very satisfied with the BSMA, BSA, BSOA, AEP programs, and BSE and BSBA programs. Customers other than students like alumni, faculty, SK, and Barangay officials, as were the parents, were very satisfied. Age and sex do not influence customer satisfaction, while the type of participants and services availed influence customer satisfaction.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction; Service quality; State university; Highly urbanized city; Descriptive design.

1.0 Introduction

The United Nations approved the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, referred to as the Global Goals, as a global call to action to end poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee that by 2030 all people live in peace and prosperity. 17 SDGs are interconnected, and decisions made in one area will impact others. Nations pledged to give the least developed nations' development the highest priority while striking a balance between environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Among the seventeen SDGs, the Quality Education Goal increases customer satisfaction (Sustainable Development Goals, 2024)

Customer satisfaction deals with the perception of customers regarding services that meet their expectations (Ferreira et al., 2021). With this, higher education institutions engage with various stakeholder groups, such as students, faculty, alumni, and external partners, to ensure that their needs are met and that they are satisfied with the services provided (Buditjahjanto, 2020). Students interact with the educational institution throughout the application, registration, and education processes, making it crucial for the institute to monitor and assess its service quality to ensure student satisfaction and identify areas for improvement (Kobero & Swallehe, 2022).

According to Ferreira et al. (2021), service quality positively and significantly influences stakeholder satisfaction, highlighting the need for higher education institutions to regularly monitor service quality to maintain students' and other stakeholders' satisfaction. Customer Satisfaction Surveys (CSS) are useful tools for gauging service quality, measuring consistent satisfaction levels, determining the significance of different service features, and analyzing gaps between anticipated and actual service quality. They have become essential for acquiring insights into customer contentment and the importance of service attributes (Silveira et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) requires organizations to screen data relating to client feedback to evaluate whether the organization has met client necessities. This can be utilized as a viable quality indicator of quality administration and management, although confronted with the challenge of formulating a standardized questionnaire for the state university's clients' satisfaction level. Thus, this customer satisfaction study was conceived and executed with a commitment to quality.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive research design. According to Pawar (2020), a descriptive research design includes the phenomena being researched and the characteristics of the population. It is used for data statistics, averages, and frequencies. The descriptive research design is considered an appropriate method because this study only intends to determine customer satisfaction with the state university.

2.2 Research Participants

The study participants were students and other stakeholders of the state university, such as alumni, parents, faculty, Sangguniang Kabataan barangay officials, and barangay officials. An adopted survey questionnaire was used to collect information from 384 participants. The researchers used stratified sampling to identify student clients 310 and quota convenience sampling to find clients other than students 74 who had received personnel services from the state university.

2.3 Research Instrument

This researcher adopted the institutional questionnaire the student affairs and services office used according to the study's needs to determine the clients' satisfaction level. The questionnaire has two parts. Part I contains the profile of the participants. Part II contains the study's specific questions. It was designed to measure the client's level of satisfaction, particularly in the following service quality areas: tangible, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. The primary aim of using a questionnaire is to gather pertinent data as dependably and credibly as possible; therefore, ensuring the precision and uniformity of the survey or questionnaire is a crucial component of research methodology, referred to as validity and reliability (Taherdoost, 2016). The researcher adopted the institutional Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) form, which had undergone and passed the validity and reliability tests.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Since the adopted instrument's validity and reliability are accepted, the researchers disseminated the questionnaire to the study's participants via a self-administered approach and an online platform, specifically Google Forms. The data collected were meticulously encoded, systematically recorded, and thoughtfully categorized. Subsequently, the results underwent a thorough analysis and interpretation, which was in alignment with the study's objectives and facilitated by the expertise of a statistician. In the treatment and analysis of the gathered data, the following statistical tools were used: for problem 1, which sought to determine the level of customer satisfaction with the state university in terms of tangible, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy as a whole and when grouped according to age, sex, types of participants, and types of services availed, frequency and mean were used; and for problem 2, which sought to determine the significant difference in the level of customer satisfaction with the state university when grouped according to age and sex, Mann-Whitney U test was used, and when grouped according to type of participants and types of services availed, Kruskal Wallis test was used.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

This research study followed ethical guidelines. The research and its methodology placed Significant emphasis on upholding ethical considerations. Before obtaining the research questionnaire from participants, they were

assured that their personal information would be treated with utmost confidentiality. Clear explanations about the purpose of the research, the data collection process, and the intended use up to the disposal of the data were provided to them to ensure transparency and informed consent. Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) was complied with in this research context, which sets forth important provisions and guidelines for protecting individuals' personal data and privacy rights in the Philippines. Hence, the researchers conducted this study and handled the participants' information in strict adherence to data privacy principles of transparency, legitimate purpose, and proportionality.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Customer Satisfaction in terms of Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Empathy

Table 1 indicated that customers are generally very satisfied ($M=4.54$, $SD=0.58$) across all measured aspects of service, which includes Tangible ($M=4.52$, $SD=0.60$), Reliability ($M=4.54$, $SD=0.65$), Responsiveness ($M=4.52$, $SD=0.63$), and Empathy ($M=4.56$, $SD=0.60$). Based on the results, the highest mean score was stated as attending staff employee displays kindness, politeness, and willingness to help throughout the service ($M=4.61$, $SD=0.60$), and the item's lowest mean score was stated as customers' expectation/s is/are met during the delivery of service ($M=4.49$, $SD=0.75$).

Table 1. Level of customer satisfaction in terms of tangible, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy

Variables	Mean	Interpretation	SD
Tangible			
A queuing facility with adequate provisions of chairs and signage is available.	4.52	Very satisfied	0.68
An express lane for PWD/Pregnant Women/Senior Citizens is provided.	4.51	Very satisfied	0.72
The instructions posted are clear, concise, and specific.	4.53	Very satisfied	0.68
Payment options are provided. (if applicable)	4.53	Very satisfied	0.69
The payment fee for the service requested is reasonable. (if applicable)	4.53	Very satisfied	0.70
Mean	4.52	Very satisfied	0.60
Reliability			
The feedback mechanism is available.	4.53	Very satisfied	0.73
Attendant exhibit knowledge and accountability of his/her duties and functions.	4.56	Very satisfied	0.66
Mean	4.54	Very satisfied	0.65
Responsiveness			
Attending to staff employees prompts the processing of requests.	4.54	Very satisfied	0.61
Customers expectation/s is/are met during the delivery of service.	4.49	Very satisfied	0.75
Mean	4.52	Satisfied	0.63
Empathy			
Attendant display kindness, politeness, and willingness to help throughout the service.	4.61	Very satisfied	0.60
A "First come, first serve" basis policy is observed.	4.51	Very satisfied	0.73
Mean	4.56	Very satisfied	0.60
Overall Assessment	4.54	Very satisfied	0.58

This suggested a strong customer satisfaction profile for the university, and this very high level of satisfaction is consistent across various service dimensions of tangible, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. The applaudable aspect of service was the Empathy dimension, where staff or program members' kindness and helpfulness indicate that the customers particularly appreciate interpersonal skills and customer care. Customers value not just the functional quality of the service but also the emotional support and personal attention they receive. However, meeting customer expectations suggested room for improvement, which could lead to potential dissatisfaction if not addressed in a timely manner.

The study by Buditjahjanto (2020) supported the findings that service quality, including Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Empathy, can be applied to determine user satisfaction in a State University. Service quality positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction (Ferreira et al., 2021). Customer satisfaction primarily hinged on the quality of service provided and customers' overall experience with that service (Vo-Thanh et al., 2024). Service experience contributed to sustainable customer engagement by mediating green perceived value and customer satisfaction (Yan et al., 2024). Agile methodologies, characterized by their adaptability to changing

requirements, contributed to enhancing customer satisfaction (Ogundipe et al., 2024). Service quality affects customer satisfaction (Arevin et al., 2024; Halawa et al., 2024; Hariyanto et al., 2024; Wardana, 2024).

Customer Satisfaction in terms of Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Empathy by Age Group

Table 2 indicated that customer satisfaction levels are very high across both 18-22 years ($m=4.52$, $sd=0.57$) and 23-62 years ($m=4.55$, $sd=0.59$) age groups for the aspects of tangible ($m=4.51$ for 18-22 years old; $m=4.55$ for 23-62 years old), reliability ($m=4.53$ for 18-22 years old; $m=4.56$ for 23-62 years old), responsiveness ($m=4.51$ for 18-22 years old; $m=4.52$ for 23-62 years old), and empathy ($m=4.54$ for 18-22 years old; $m=4.58$ for 23-62 years old).

Table 2. Level of customer satisfaction in terms of tangible, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy when grouped as to age

Age Group		Customer Satisfaction	Tangible	Reliability	Responsiveness	Empathy
18-22 years old	Mean	4.52	4.51	4.53	4.51	4.54
	N	235	235	235	235	235
	SD	0.57	0.58	0.65	0.61	0.61
23-62 years old	Mean	4.55	4.55	4.56	4.52	4.58
	N	149	149	149	149	149
	SD	0.59	0.63	0.66	0.66	0.60
Total	Mean	4.54	4.52	4.54	4.52	4.56

The result suggested that the mean scores are well within the range of “very satisfied,” indicating that the customers, regardless of age, perceive the service quality positively. It is also worth noting that the total mean scores across all age groups are consistent, reinforcing the service provider’s success in maintaining high customer satisfaction, tangible, reliable, responsive, or empathetic. The above corroborated the findings that age significantly moderated the relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction (Joshi & Dabas, 2022).

Customer Satisfaction in terms of Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Empathy by Sex Group

Table 3 indicated that customer satisfaction levels are very high across both male ($M=4.55$, $SD=0.63$) and female ($M=4.55$, $SD=0.59$) sex groups for the aspects of tangible ($M=4.53$ for male; $M=4.52$ for female), reliability ($M=4.54$ for male; $M=4.55$ for female), responsiveness ($M=4.54$ for male; $M=4.51$ for female), and empathy ($M=4.59$ for male; $M=4.55$ for female).

Table 3. Level of customer satisfaction in terms of tangible, reliability, responsiveness and empathy when grouped as to sex

Sex		Customer Satisfaction	Tangible	Reliability	Responsiveness	Empathy
Male	Mean	4.55	4.53	4.54	4.54	4.59
	N	84	84	84	84	84
	SD	0.63	0.61	0.73	0.69	0.63
Female	Mean	4.53	4.52	4.55	4.51	4.55
	N	300	300	300	300	300
	SD	0.56	0.60	0.63	0.61	0.60
Total	Mean	4.54	4.52	4.54	4.52	4.56

The result suggested that the mean scores are well within the range of “Very Satisfied,” indicating that the customers, regardless of sex, perceive the service quality positively. It is also worth noting that the total mean scores across all sex groups are consistent, reinforcing that the service provided meets or exceeds the expectations of customers of both genders, be it Tangible, Reliable, Responsive, or Empathy. The findings above contradicted the study of Shamsi et al. (2023), explaining that sex does not moderate the effect of services on customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction in terms of Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Empathy by Participant Type Group

Table 4 indicated that customer satisfaction levels for student-customers were very satisfied for programs of BSMA ($M=4.56$, $SD=0.61$), BSA ($M=4.89$, $SD=0.26$), BSOA ($M=4.57$, $SD=0.47$), and AEP ($M=4.64$, $SD=0.45$) and were satisfied for programs of BSE ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.63$), and BSBA ($M=4.43$, $SD=0.52$). In contrast, customers other than students were very satisfied, like Alumni ($M=4.54$, $SD=0.75$), Faculty ($M=4.68$, $SD=0.46$), and SK and Barangay Officials ($M=4.52$, $SD=0.64$), and were satisfied like the Parents ($M=4.45$, $SD=0.80$).

Table 4. Level of customer satisfaction in terms of tangible, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy when grouped as to participant types

Types of Participants		Customer Satisfaction	Tangible	Reliability	Responsiveness	Empathy
BSE students	Mean	4.23	4.31	4.16	4.18	4.28
	N	40	40	40	40	40
	SD	0.63	0.59	0.80	0.68	0.68
BSMA students	Mean	4.56	4.51	4.62	4.55	4.57
	N	95	95	95	95	95
	SD	0.61	0.61	0.65	0.68	0.63
BSA students	Mean	4.89	4.89	4.90	4.87	4.91
	N	35	35	35	35	35
	SD	0.26	0.26	0.27	0.31	0.26
BSOA students	Mean	4.57	4.59	4.57	4.52	4.62
	N	46	46	46	46	46
	SD	0.47	0.46	0.49	0.54	0.47
BSBA students	Mean	4.43	4.42	4.45	4.43	4.41
	N	73	73	73	73	73
	SD	0.52	0.56	0.58	0.57	0.59
AEP students	Mean	4.64	4.65	4.71	4.67	4.55
	N	21	21	21	21	21
	SD	0.45	0.43	0.37	0.46	0.59
Parents	Mean	4.45	4.34	4.33	4.45	4.70
	N	20	20	20	20	20
	SD	0.80	1.08	1.10	0.72	0.50
SK and Barangay officials	Mean	4.52	4.56	4.57	4.46	4.46
	N	14	14	14	14	14
	SD	0.64	0.59	0.68	0.63	0.93
Faculty	Mean	4.68	4.58	4.68	4.70	4.75
	N	20	20	20	20	20
	SD	0.40	0.63	0.47	0.55	0.48
Alumni	Mean	4.54	4.60	4.50	4.48	4.54
	N	20	20	20	20	20
	SD	0.75	0.66	0.79	0.87	0.71
Total	Mean	4.54	4.52	4.54	4.52	4.56

The result implied a comprehensive view of how different participant groups perceive various aspects of service quality. The implications of this data are multifaceted, which aid in understanding where there is greater variability in satisfaction and can help target improvements to ensure a more consistent service experience. Overall, the goal would be to maintain high satisfaction for all academic programs while ensuring that all customers feel their needs are understood and met effectively. This could lead to increased loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and a stronger reputation for the university inside and out. This supported Gwelo (2019) that students, like other stakeholders, anticipate receiving services tailored to their specific needs and preferences.

Customer Satisfaction in terms of Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, and Empathy by Service Type Group

The data presented in Table 5 offered a plain view of customer satisfaction across different types of services availed, such as Consultation (M=4.75, SD=0.38) and Others (M=4.62, SD=0.57), both interpreted as Very Satisfied and Enrolment (M=4.41, SD=0.64) and Evaluation (M=4.45, SD=0.60) both interpreted as Satisfied. The mean scores indicate a generally very high level of satisfaction, with the highest scores observed in the Reliability under Consultation (M=4.79, SD=0.40) category and the lowest scores observed in both Reliability under Enrolment (M=4.39, SD=0.79) and Responsiveness under Evaluation (M=4.39, SD=0.67) category.

The above results suggested that customers feel the most positive about their reliable experiences during the consultation process. They feel positive about their reliable experiences during enrolment and the evaluator's responsive experience during evaluation. These could be due to individual differences in expectations or the subjective nature of consultations compared to more procedural interactions like enrolment and evaluation. Although stated negatively, students who experienced a deficiency in autonomy felt that the faculty's empowerment was lacking, which affected their contentment with enrolment, evaluation, and consultation services (Arif & Ilyas, 2011) supported this study.

Table 5. Level of customer satisfaction in terms of tangible, reliability, responsiveness and empathy when grouped as to service type

Types of Services Availed		Customer Satisfaction	Tangible	Reliability	Responsiveness	Empathy
Enrolment	Mean	4.41	4.40	4.39	4.41	4.45
	N	136	136	136	136	136
	SD	0.64	0.69	0.79	0.66	0.64
Consultation	Mean	4.75	4.72	4.79	4.74	4.76
	N	101	101	101	101	101
	SD	0.38	0.44	0.40	0.43	0.43
Evaluation	Mean	4.45	4.46	4.45	4.39	4.49
	N	103	103	103	103	103
	SD	0.60	0.58	0.60	0.67	0.62
Others	Mean	4.62	4.60	4.68	4.60	4.59
	N	44	44	44	44	44
	SD	0.57	0.55	0.58	0.66	0.70
Total	Mean	4.54	4.52	4.54	4.52	4.56

3.2 Difference in the Level of Customer Satisfaction

When Grouped as to Age

Table 6 examined customer satisfaction according to age. The result revealed no significant difference (Mann-Whitney U=-1.734; p=.083) in how different age groups perceive customer satisfaction. The result indicated that regardless of age, participants appear to have the same level of satisfaction.

Table 6. Analysis of the difference in the level of customer satisfaction when grouped as to age

	Customer Satisfaction
Mann-Whitney U	15,732
Wilcoxon W	43,462
Z	-1.734
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.083

The implications of these findings were quite important for service providers. While the results do not show a clear-cut significant difference in satisfaction levels across age groups, the trend suggests that age may still affect how customers perceive their experiences. This could mean that younger and older customers have different expectations or preferences regarding service quality. Higher education institutions might consider tailoring their customer service strategies to cater better to the specific needs of different age demographics and enhance overall satisfaction. This is negated by the study of Hayat et al. (2020), which found that the customer's age positively influenced his/her satisfaction.

When Grouped as to Sex

Table 7 examined the difference in customer satisfaction according to sex. The result revealed no significant difference (Mann-Whitney U=-0.656; p=.512) in how different sex groups perceive customer satisfaction. The result indicated that regardless of sex, participants appear to have the same level of satisfaction, which could be due to random variation rather than a systematic difference between the sexes.

Table 7. Analysis of the difference in the level of customer satisfaction when grouped as to sex

	Customer Satisfaction
Mann-Whitney U	12,030
Wilcoxon W	57,180
Z	-0.656
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.512

The implications of these findings were quite important for service providers. It can be suggested that customer satisfaction strategies do not need to be differentiated based on sex, as both male and female customers have similar satisfaction levels. Instead, resources can be better utilized by focusing on factors that impact all customers regardless of sex, which is broadly beneficial. This is negated by a study by Hayat et al. (2020) that customer gender positively influenced his/her satisfaction.

When Grouped as to Types of Participants

Table 8 examined the difference in customer satisfaction regarding the types of participants. The result revealed a significant difference (Kruskal Wallis=42.051; $p=.000$), indicating that the types of participants have a statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction levels.

Table 8. Analysis of the difference in the level of customer satisfaction
when grouped as to types of participants

<u>Customer Satisfaction</u>	
Chi-Square	42.051
Df	9
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

This finding had important implications for higher educational institutions in understanding service quality and improving customer satisfaction. It indicated that different participant groups, including customers from different demographics or with varying service usage patterns, experience and rate their satisfaction with services differently. Implementing a value-adding system that includes services can significantly enhance the satisfaction and loyalty of students, their guardians, and stakeholders, thereby enriching the overall educational experience and leading to satisfaction within the school community (Mumthaza et al., 2020).

When Grouped as to Types of Services Availed

Table 9 examined the difference in customer satisfaction according to the types of services availed. The result revealed a significant difference (Kruskal Wallis=20.285; $p=.000$), indicating that the types of services availed have a statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction levels.

Table 9. Analysis of the difference in the level of customer satisfaction
when grouped as to types of services availed

<u>Customer Satisfaction</u>	
Chi-Square	20.285
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

The implications of this finding indicated that customers perceive different services, whether they be enrolment, consultation, evaluation, or services other than enrolment, consultation, and evaluation, differently in terms of satisfaction. Optimizing services meant realigning quality with customer expectations and preferences and allocating resources for improvement. For example, suppose consultation services are rated higher in satisfaction than enrolment services. In that case, it may be beneficial to analyze what aspects of consultation led to higher satisfaction and apply similar strategies to enrolment services. Be it enrolment, consultation, evaluation, or other services; management has the crucial responsibility of methodically assessing students' needs and prioritizing them effectively to optimize satisfaction levels (Gwelo, 2019).

4.0 Conclusion

A customer satisfaction survey is essential because it offers direct insights into customer experiences and expectations to improve service quality. Customers were overall very satisfied with the state university's services in terms of tangible aspects, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy. Student customers were very satisfied with the BSMA, BSA, BSOA, AEP programs, and BSE and BSBA programs. Non-student customers like alumni, faculty, SK, and Barangay officials were very satisfied, while parents were satisfied. In addition, age and sex did not influence customer satisfaction, but the type of participant and services availed did.

Based on the result of the study, the following recommendation was made:

- To further enhance customer satisfaction, given that the type of participants and services availed influence customer satisfaction, the state university should consider tailoring services more closely to the specific needs of different participant groups, especially parents, that contribute to their satisfaction.
- The varying satisfaction levels across academic programs suggest a need for program-specific support strategies. For programs like BSE and BSBA, where satisfaction was lower than others, targeted interventions such as additional resources, personalized academic advising, or enhanced industry

exposure could be introduced to elevate the satisfaction levels to match those of the BSMA, BSA, BSOA, and AEP programs.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Stanley T. Sabuya and Jonah J. Perulino made significant contributions to this study. Mr. Sabuya was responsible for encoding data, conducting the survey, editing the manuscript, writing major portions of the text, and performing data analysis. Ms. Perulino assisted with conducting the survey, writing minor portions of the text, and providing supervision throughout the research process. The authors' complementary roles and collaborative efforts were crucial in successfully carrying out this customer satisfaction study at a state university in a highly urbanized city during the 2023-2024 academic year.

6.0 Funding

The university strategically employed cost-effective methods for distributing the satisfaction survey. Leveraging an online platform and university-wide announcements, the state university ensured widespread participation while minimizing expenses and optimizing available funds.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

The state university's research on customer satisfaction exemplified unwavering integrity and objectivity. Researchers diligently prioritized the well-being of participants, students, and the institution. Any potential conflicts of interest were meticulously managed, ensuring the credibility and validity of the findings.

8.0 Acknowledgment

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