



## THE QUALITY OF MARKETING EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN: SERVQUAL MODEL

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### ABSTRACT

We used the SERVQUAL method to analyze the quality of service in undergraduate marketing programs in Uzbek state higher education institutions. Weighted gaps of average were calculated based on the difference in the expected and perceived quality of education among senior-year students consistent with a framework based on the SERVQUAL method. According to our study, marketing programs are less individualized and lack critical resources to convey practical skills to students. This may widen the gap between labor market requirements and the organization of skill delivery in marketing programs.

### KEYWORDS

SERVQUAL method, marketing education.

### INTRODUCTION

The quality of economic education is important, particularly in countries that are transforming into market economies. Many methods are attempted to check for inconsistencies in the quality of economic education to align the curricula with global standards and improve the delivery of necessary knowledge. In the recent years there has been a growing interest in

the ability of SERVQUAL model to reflect holistic picture of higher education programs.

#### Literature review

SERVQUAL is an external measurement of service quality, that correlates with customer satisfaction. The model calculates the difference gap between customer perceptions and expectations according to



different indicators. Originally, the key indicators included wide range of components, including reliability, responsiveness, access, courtesy, security, credibility, communication and et cetera. Yet, it has been modified into a construct consisting of five critical components of service quality:

- Reliability – accuracy of service provision
- Assurance: customer trust in employees concerning the service
- Tangibles: material-technical base of the organization concerning the service provided.
- Empathy: the extent of an individualized approach to each customer.
- Responsiveness: the extent of prompt service

Each component may include several questions [1, 420-429].

The SERVQUAL model has been used to assess the quality of service in different sectors, such as, healthcare [2, 420-429], banking, finance and telecommunications industry [3], delivery services[4], tourism [5, 259-275] and others. There are ample studies that incorporated SERVQUAL in education research [6, 1570-1577], [7, 2299-2304], [8, 5285-5289], [9, 132-140].

**Why SERVQUAL is relevant in higher education research**

Uzbekistan is one of the post-socialist countries striving to embrace market economy. Since 2016 the government allowed private higher education institutions to operate. Private and public participation in higher education is known to ensue stiff competition between these two sectors [10, 18]. This is where the dimensions of tuition fees, quality of education, and student satisfaction come to determine the survival of higher education institutions in the open market. Thus, the SERVQUAL model may be an adequate method to assess the performance of educational programs in the era of market-driven higher education. The importance of SERVQUAL may be more relevant in the context of marketing and economic education, which are relatively new fields of study for post-socialist countries than other programs.

**METHODS**

We use a survey based on the framework of the SERVQUAL model among undergraduate marketing students. The survey includes 16 questions covering students’ expected and perceived education quality according to the four indicators of SERVQUAL model (Table 1).

**Table 1. Survey Structure**

SERVQUAL Indicators	Variables	Scale		Weighted Gap of Averages
		Expected (Scale)	Perceived (Scale)	
Tangibles	Facilities	1 to 7	1 to 7	
	Learning resources	1 to 7	1 to 7	
Reliability	Timely service	1 to 7	1 to 7	
	Assessment and grading	1 to 7	1 to 7	

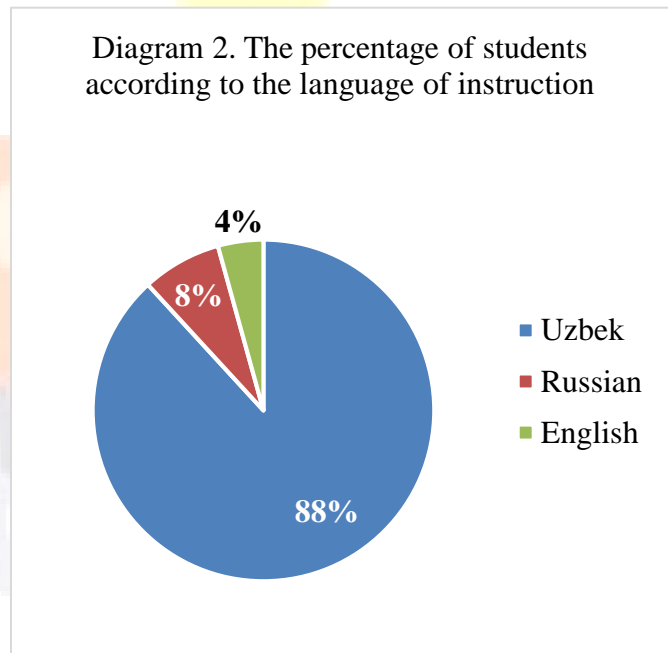
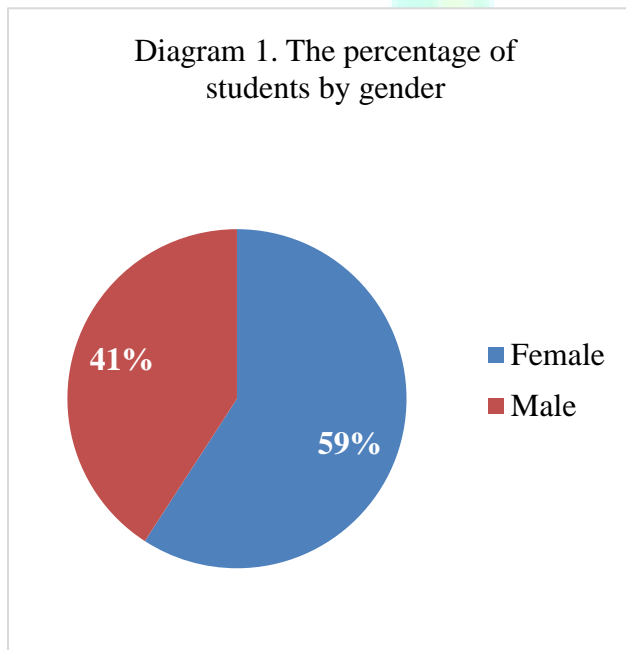


Empathy	Individualized attention	1 to 7	1 to 7	
	Student-oriented syllabi	1 to 7	1 to 7	
Assurance	Knowledge of teachers	1 to 7	1 to 7	
	Pedagogical skills of teachers	1 to 7	1 to 7	

Weighted Gaps between the averages of expected and perceived quality are calculated to identify the weaker points of marketing programs: Expected (averages) – Perceived (averages) = Weighted Gap of Averages.

93 students participated in the survey 41 percent male, 59 percent female (Diagram 1). For the majority of students, the language of instruction was Uzbek (Diagram 2).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**



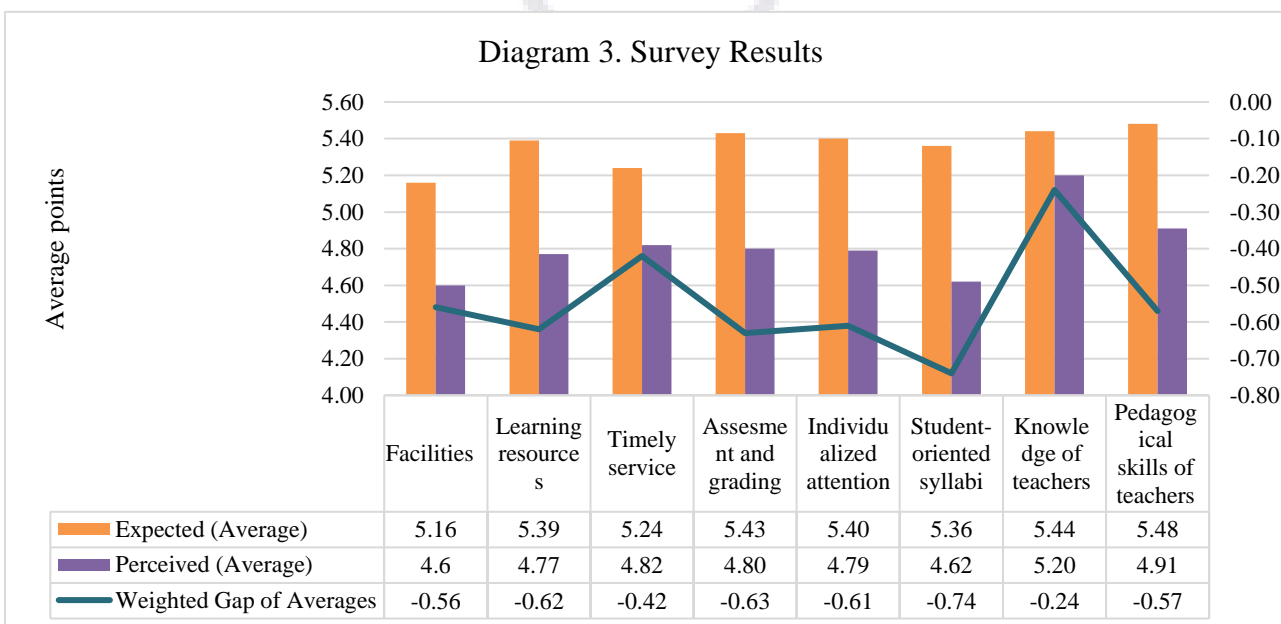
The weighted gap of averages between the averages of the expected and perceived quality ranged from -0,24 to -0,74. None of the indicators showed a positive trend in the weighted gaps between the expected and perceived quality (Table 2, Diagram 3). The largest gap was identified in the empathy section of SERVQUAL

indicators, such as, -0,74 for student-oriented syllabi and -0,61 for individualized attention to each student variables. The lowest gap was identified in the assurance section of the SERVQUAL model, such as, -0,24 for the knowledge of teachers and -0,57 for the pedagogical skills of teachers variables (Table 2, Diagram 3).



**Table 2. Survey Results**

SERVQUAL Indicators	Variables	Averages		Weighted Gap of Averages
		Expected (Average)	Perceived (Average)	
Tangibles	Facilities	5,16	4,6	-0,56
	Learning resources	5,39	4,77	-0,62
Reliability	Timely service	5,24	4,82	-0,42
	Assessment and grading	5,43	4,80	-0,63
Empathy	Individualized attention	5,40	4,79	-0,61
	Student-oriented syllabi	5,36	4,62	-0,74
Assurance	Knowledge of teachers	5,44	5,20	-0,24
	Pedagogical skills of teachers	5,48	4,91	-0,57



Higher education institutions mostly lack elective courses in their curricula in Uzbekistan. This may partially explain why the largest gap lies in the variable of student-oriented syllabi and individualized attention. Our previous research found that marketing

programs are not tailored to convey to students practical skills necessary in the labor market [11, 86-94]. The lack of elective courses and less attention to practical skills may be explained by the outdated nature of some rigid and unresponsive syllabi to students' interests and to the latest trends in the labor



market. Uzbekistan is to integrate its qualification frameworks into the global labor market demands [11, 1001-4055] [12, 86-94]. In the wake of such transformation, reforming current modules to make them responsive to student interests and labor market trends is crucial.

The weighted gaps between the expected and perceived quality of tangibles (facilities and learning resources) didn't yield satisfactory results either (-0,56 and -0,62 respectively). But, participants of the survey are mostly from state higher education institutions. Therefore, this outcome was not unexpected.

## CONCLUSION

Marketing programs are less individualized and lack critical resources to convey essential practical skills to students in state higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. It may result in less student satisfaction and difficulties in finding employment. Higher education institutions are recommended to increase the number of elective courses.

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