

What Kind of Tourism Education Must the School Offer?

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Abstract

The quality of services offered in the tourism sector is experiencing intense competition can be achieved and improved through high-quality employees. The educational service quality in the schools offered tourism education plays a decisive role being qualified of the students who will be employed in the tourism sector in the future. In this context, it is of paramount importance to determine the expectations, perceptions and satisfactions in terms of the quality of educational services provided in schools. In this theoretical study, student expectations, perceptions and satisfaction have been assessed under the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory.

Keywords: Expectation; Perception; Satisfaction; Tourism education

Expectation, Perception and Satisfaction

According to the annual report of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 2014, in terms of export revenue, tourism sector (1.409 trillion dollars) is ranked fourth after the oil (3.325 trillion dollars), chemistry (2.001 trillion dollars), and food (1.457 trillion dollars) sectors and before the automotive sector [1]. In addition, the number of tourists who travelled and stayed overnight in an accommodation place in 2014 was 1 billion 135 million and nearly 1 trillion 245 billion dollars were spent. When we look at the place of tourism sector in the world economy, the fact that it accounts for the 30% of the service sector, provides the 6% of the world exports, employs every 1 person in 11 people, and produces the 10% of the world income [2] reveal the importance of tourism sector in the national and world economies clearly.

Tourism education fulfils an important task in terms of supporting the improvement of tourism and providing quality human resources continuously. If an educational institution does not determine the expectation level of its students, it is also impossible for it to identify exactly why their perceptions and expectations do not match [3]. In addition, there are also suggestions that expectations have an impact on the perceptions of the education service quality and so affect the behaviors after receiving the service. Thus, it becomes crucial for the educational institution to manage the expectations of the students effectively for a long term success [4].

Determinants like the image of the educational institution, the perceived quality of the school in business world, the popularity of the city, socio-economic factors etc. may play an essential role in the formation of the expectations of the students. As known, students are the driving force in increasing the quality of service in educational institutions. Students' expectations constitute one of the major factors of the works for the improvement and development of the service quality of tourism education at tertiary level. It is important to focus on the expectations of the students in order to fulfill their expectations and provide a service beyond these expectations [5]. Expectations that develop prior to experience can be reshaped in the decrease or increase direction as a result of the perceptions emerging after the experience.

Student expectations are effective in creating both conscious learning in personal development and the services an educational institution should provide. The higher degree expectations are met, the higher degree positive perceptions of educational services can be. It is possible that student expectations fulfilled at a high level affect the level of satisfaction from the services of an educational institution as well. In addition, perception of the services offered by an educational institution is of great importance in terms of performing an evaluation regarding the educational services provided.

Understanding what students expect from the educational process is essential in ensuring and evaluating their satisfaction with the process. The satisfaction level that students have is one of the most important factors that cause their motivation to decrease or increase. Educational services achieve student satisfaction by responding the students' requests, needs and expectations, and offering an educational service beyond the expectations.

Although it is a subjective concept, perception is a reality for students. Perception occurs when people sense the effects that reach to them as a result of the events and objects around them through their sensory organs and then the effects reach their consciousness. The importance of perception becomes apparent by its shaping human behaviour. Students' perceptions of the service offered are influenced to a large extent both from their previous and following experiences. According to Parasuraman et al. [6], it is a generally accepted opinion that the valid element today for the evaluation of educational service is the evaluation. Educational service evaluations occur as a result of the judgements of customers due to the abstract nature of services. Therefore, perception is the only valid element in the evaluation of service and service quality.

Students' perceptions are dynamic like expectations in nature and it is argued that they are affected by experiences of the service, external service promises, internal service promises, personal requests, and advices, and according to these resources they can change afterwards. Determining the relation between the pre-formed expectations of the students who come to school to receive tourism education, their perceptions occurring through experience, and satisfaction emerging after perception is of great importance in terms of schools aiming to offer sustainable quality tourism education.

Values emerging as a result of the interaction between the expectations indicating the expected value for the students and the perceptions indicating the actual value for them have an important role in forming the satisfaction level of the students. Satisfaction is defined as the opinion that a service has been provided in a satisfactory way [7]. According to another definition, satisfaction is considered as the fact that the things achieved meet the expectations and/or go beyond them [8]. Although service quality and satisfaction may seem conceptually different, they are in a very close relationship due to their basic structure. If the service performance falls below the expectations, the customer will be dissatisfied with the service [9].

Student satisfaction is considered as the level where expectations are met in educational institutions. The highly positive relation between the perceptions of tourism education provided at the school and students' satisfaction from academic education [10]. It is understood that perception emerging at the end of the experience is more effective on student satisfaction compared with student expectation. For the perception of tourism education that is offered to be high, firstly there should be efforts to make the conscious students who have a high level of expectation from tourism education and information about tourism sector for various reasons (like having a career in tourism sector) to prefer the school. In this context, school administrators must make a conscious and systematic effort to fulfil and even exceed the expectations of the students who come to school with a high level of expectation and have a high level of motivation to receive tourism education.

In this context, by adapting the students' needs for education that they want to receive to Herzberg's dual factor theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we can show the relationship between expectation, perception, and satisfaction as in the following (Figure 1).

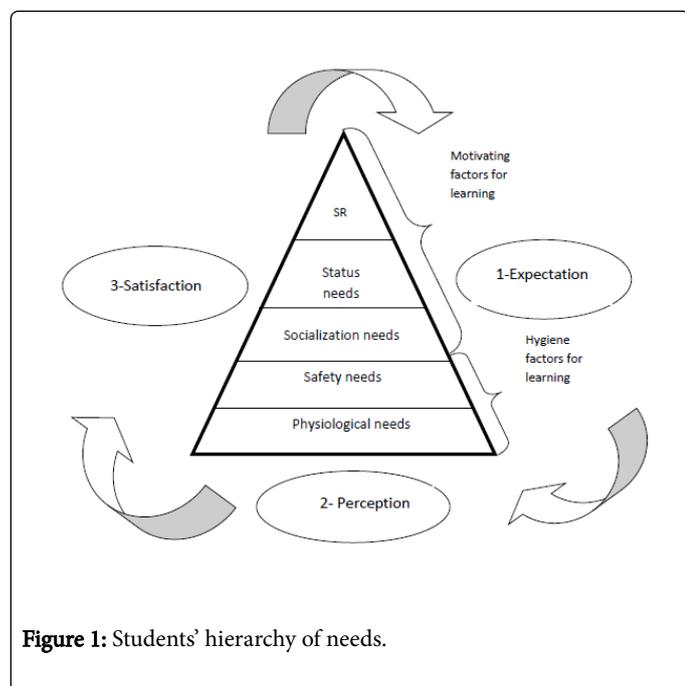


Figure 1: Students' hierarchy of needs.

In the figure above seems the realization phase of the expectations of the respective students in a school offering academic education services. This figure was created by adapting the human needs hierarchy classified into five categories in Maslow's "Motivation Theory: The Hierarchy of Needs" and motivating and hygiene factors

specified in the Herzberg's "Motivation-Hygiene Theory". Factors motivating learning in terms of academic education services draw more attention in the process of the fulfillment of students' expectations compared with the hygiene factors, which are more mundane needs. Dissatisfaction occurs in the absence of physiological and safety needs which are the basic needs in the first and second stage of the hierarchy regarding students' motivation in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and also when these needs which are considered within the scope of Herzberg's hygiene factors are met, satisfaction is achieved and motivation arises in order to meet other needs motivating learning. In addition, even without ensuring the hygiene factors, some individuals can be motivated to satisfy another need.

There is a competition to have students at desired quantity and quality among the institutions providing tourism education to train high-quality human resources to the tourism sector where there is an intense competition. Today, the fact that the roles of the potential and current students at universities should be perceived as a customer more has been expressed by authors. In this context, the importance of determining and fulfilling students' expectations, and the importance of perception emerging as a result of these in ensuring student satisfaction are emphasized.

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Conclusion

The schools offering tourism education must make the students with high level of expectations prefer them by asking the questions "What kind of school must we be?" and "What kind of tourism education must we offer?", and ensure that students have a high level of perception and as a result, satisfaction from the education provided by fulfilling and exceeding their expectations. In this context, schools offering tourism education should be engaged in conscious, systematic, and continuous action, promotion and informative activities aimed at improving the image of the schools for the public, and especially for the potential and current students. Schools offering tourism education can ensure satisfaction from academic education at the desired level as a result of primarily fulfilling the objectives set in order to have students with high expectations, meeting and exceeding the expectations of the students that come with a high level of expectation.

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