AN ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSITY SERVICE QUALITY AND ITS EFFECTS ON STUDENT SATISFACTION: A CASE OF UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

BY

SUZANNE M. MUTHAMIA

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or university other than the United States International University – Africa, for academic credit.

Signed: ____________________________ Date: ________________

Suzanne Mbiro Muthamia (ID: 640905)

This project has been presented for examination with my approval as the appointed supervisor.

Signed: ____________________________ Date: ________________

Dr. Peter Kiriri

Signed: ____________________________ Date: ________________

Dean, Chandaria School of Business
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between university service quality and student satisfaction in Kenya using the United States International University case study. The study questions included to what extent are there important dimensions that determine service quality in USIU, to what extent does USIU meet the students’ expectations about the quality of tertiary education services, and to what extent does university service quality at USIU affects students’ lives.

The study employed an explanatory research design with the target of graduate students at USIU. From a target sample of 60, 43 responded creating an effective response rate of 71.67%. The study collected primary data through questionnaires and the information analyzed with secondary data collected from books and journals. The study administered an initial pre-test to identify any ambiguity and clarify the questionnaires. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentiles was used to analyze the general profile (age and level of education) of the participants. The coefficient of variation was used where data was skewed. Correlation and regression was used in the study to show the relationship between the dependent variable and the whole group of independent variables. The use of tables and figures was applied in the study for better understanding of the information gathered from the research whereas, data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

The major findings of the study on dimensions of quality showed that various dimensions of service quality were present at USIU. The study revealed that buildings at USIU were conducive for learning. It revealed that the university had modern technical equipment and that USIU’s learning materials were easily accessible by students. USIU had well-functioning recreational services together with minimal student class sizes per class. The study established that USIU’s services were performed within reasonable period and that the systems in the university were easy to use with no difficulty. On student expectation, the findings revealed that university employees showed sincere concern in solving the student’s problems and offered caring and individualized attention. From the findings, the university performed a service exactly as promised and the employees had professional appearance/image.
On effects of service, the study found that quality of tertiary education services offered at USIU generally was above average, the students at USIU were taught the skills they need to get good results both academically and for future employment. It also established that USIU gave students the access they need to learning, support services and quality teaching. From the findings, studying at USIU saved the students the cost of studying abroad for the same quality of education. The study also revealed that quality of education at USIU gave the students value for their money and that USIU recruited sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians who possessed the skills necessary to help fulfill career responsibilities. It also established that the programs offered at USIU included various fields of knowledge content containing strategies for achieving the goals in students’ academic plans within the specified period. Finally, it was also found that the university had a good communication and signage system so that students knew where and how to get assistance.

It was concluded that quality of services offered by learning institutions was determined by the learning environment which included the nature of the buildings, modern technical equipment and the ease of access to learning materials. The quality of service was determined by well-functioning recreational services, employees’ sincere concern to solving the students’ problems and availability of effective communication channels. On the other hand, students expected the quality of services to be above average and this was achieved by giving the students access to the needed learning support and quality teaching, recruiting sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians with the necessary skills to help the students achieve their expectations. On the effect of quality of service on students, it was concluded that when services are offered as and above the expectations; it enhanced interaction, loyalty to the institution as students came back to further their studies and increased admissions by attracting new students.

The study recommended that the university reward those satisfied customers who engaged in attracting new customers through word of mouth. The study also recommended that the university reward students who came back for their further studies after completing one stage since it helped in ensuring that students remained loyal and thus customer retention. The study also recommended that the university continuously employ well-qualified teaching staff to maintain and enhance the good quality of tertiary education that they offered. The study also recommended that the school find out student
expectation during their first year enrollment to adopt strategies that enabled them meet student expectations.

In order to make an affirmative conclusion in this topic, the study recommended that a similar study be done across many universities in the country to assess university service quality and its effects on student satisfaction since this study was only limited to one university as a case study. The study also recommended that a study should be done to assess the effect of service quality on performance of a university to establish the importance of service quality on the performance of the university.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To God is the glory for providing the resources and energy to make this research project become a reality. Special acknowledgement goes to my supervisor Dr. Kiriri, who gave me enormous support in coaching and supervising me through this study. I am grateful for his consistency, patience; high standards and attention to detail. I acknowledge the support I received from my family and special friends as I undertook this study.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to God, without who I would not have life or the ability to make any significant impact in society. I also offer special recognition to my sister Magdalene who encouraged and supported me in my studies. Thank you for believing in me!
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

For service organizations, customer satisfaction is an important facet and is highly related to service quality. More and more organizations emphasize on service quality due to its strategic role in enhancing competitiveness especially in the context of attracting new customers and enhancing relationship with existing customers (Ugboma, Ogochukwu, and Ogwude, 2007). Service quality is one of the most important research topics for the past few decades (Gallifa and Batalle, 2010). Consumers are not only concerned with the nature of service but also with the quality of output received by them. Positive perception on quality of services delivered occurs when it exceeds customers’ expectations. In the context of ensuring sustainability of higher learning, institutions require them to strive towards meeting and exceeding students’ expectations (Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann, 1994).

In the service literature, service quality refers to the quality that comes from a customer’s judgment about a service. The authors of SERVQUAL extensively used in assessing service quality of different service providers including universities suggested that quality evaluations do not exist solely on the outcome of a service; they also involve evaluations of the process of service delivery (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Within the SERVQUAL model, service quality is the gap between customer perceptions of what happened during the service transaction and his expectations of how the service transaction should have been performed.

The educational sector plays a significant role in the development of human capital and ultimately in the economic development of the country. The sector has become an industry in many countries of the world such as Malaysia, UK, and the UAE and has greatly influenced other countries with tuition-based systems (DeShields, Kara, and Kaynak, 2005). Like the manufacturing and service sectors, the concept of quality has also evolved among the educational institutions and has helped develop a competitive environment that ultimately raises the importance of measuring the quality of services among universities (Gbadamosi and De Jager, 2008).
As Hall opines, student satisfaction has become a major challenge for the universities. It is evident that student satisfaction is the major source of competitive advantage and that the satisfaction leads towards student retention (Arambewela and Hall, 2009).

In today’s competitive environment, rendering quality service is a key for success, and many experts concur that the most powerful competitive tool currently reshaping marketing and business strategy is service quality. Over the years, people links service quality with increased profitability since service quality provides an important competitive advantage by generating repeat sales, positive word of mouth feedback, customer loyalty and competitive product and service differentiation.

Service quality spreads from business to education. Many higher education institutions have been stimulated and influenced by service quality both for teaching and administrative support functions. Focusing on the customer is an essential principle of service quality, and the customers for the service of a higher education fall into five groups: the students, the employees, the government and the public sector, and the industry and wider community (Martensen, Gronholdt, Elkildsen, and Kristensen, 2000).

Service quality is a pervasive strategic force and a key strategic issue in any organization. It is no surprise that practitioners and academics alike are keen on accurately measuring and understanding issues affecting service quality delivery. It has become a critical factor in enabling firms to achieve a differential advantage over their competitors and thus, it makes a significant contribution to profitability and productivity (Sanchez, Gazques Abad, and Fernandez, 2007). Tertiary institutions need to be concerned not only with what the society values in the skills and abilities of their graduates, but also with how their students feel about their educational experience.

Owlia and Aspinwall conducted a survey examining the views of different professionals and practitioners on the quality in higher education. They concluded that customer orientation in higher education is a generally accepted principle (Owlia and Aspinwall, 1997). They construed that from the different customers of higher education, students received the highest rank. As a result, students’ experience in a university should be a key issue of which performance indicators need to address. It therefore becomes important to identify determinant or critical factors affecting students’ perception of the quality of service that they receive since they are the primary customers.
Besides service quality, customer satisfaction has also been under the scope in the last three decades (Devasagayam, Stark, and Valestin, 2013). Customers are important stakeholders in organizations and their satisfaction is a priority to management. Customer satisfaction has been a subject of great concern to organizations and researchers alike in the recent past where the quality of service has become an aspect of customer satisfaction (Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler, 2005). Customer focus is emerging as the key to sustained competitive advantage in both the production and service industry (Porter and Kramer, 2011).

A common phenomenon with customers is that once they are not satisfied with the quality of a service, some walk away and often without complaint, hint, or warning. Such customers stop doing business with the offending company affecting financial performance of the respective companies.

The higher education service sector is one of the fastest growing industries in Kenya. The rapid growth in this sector is characterized by increased student enrolment, reduced Government funding of public universities, and heightened expectation of service quality by the overly savvy customers, emergence of competitive private universities and acquisition of middle level colleges by public universities to cater for excess demand. Service quality in education is therefore gaining prominence with the main stay remaining, high service quality for enhanced customer satisfaction and retention. Unfortunately, in the face of this metamorphosis, (Ngware, Onsomu, and Manda, 2005) observe that existing and projected supply of public education in Kenya continuously falls short of demand for quality education leading to low customer satisfaction.

The construct of service quality has spurred scholarly debate with extant literature revealing absence of consensus on the measurement of service quality, owing to service intangibility, heterogeneity and multidimensionality (Navarro, Iglesias, and Torres, 2005). Empirical review by (Kang and James, 2004) points at convergence in thought that the Service Quality (SERVQUAL) model pioneered by (Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml, 1985) is widely acceptable in the measurement of service quality.

In recent times, service quality measurement has raised lots of interest not only in scholarship but also among higher education providers (DeShields, Kara, and Kaynak, 2005). Whereas certain universities have been acknowledged to attract customers particularly students due to factors such as religious faith, programs offered, unique
student experience, and retention of skilled human capital, inter alia, with increased competition other aspects such as the quality of service may play a bigger role in dictating allegiance and satisfaction.

While it is factual that Kenya has experienced high demand for higher education services, and despite the unprecedented expansion and growth in higher education provision, there is still a gap in research on service quality and customer satisfaction. In an attempt to address the aforementioned, this study empirically evaluates the relationship between service quality and satisfaction among students (undergraduates and postgraduates) in Kenyan Universities. Broadly, the study attempts to identify critical dimensions of university service quality, assess the dimensions of quality that contribute to customer satisfaction, and determine the association between service quality and customer satisfaction.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Every educational institution needs to understand its internal strength and weakness, and external opportunities and threats. In USIU, graduate students come from different countries with different cultural backgrounds. As a result, their expectation and perception of satisfaction may differ. Universities in Kenya are not only competing with the local universities but also many other universities in Africa and the world. Considering the whole world as a single market and every university as a competitor, one can say there is an intense competition. Student satisfaction plays a crucial role for the success of a university. The student perception about satisfaction can act as an essential tool to enhance the universities service quality.

Recent years have seen a proliferation of work on the topic of service quality. Many researchers have extensively investigated the nature of service quality and customer satisfaction (Sanchez, Gazques Abad, and Fernandez, 2007). In addition researchers have explored in detail the antecedents of customer satisfaction, effects of service quality dimensions on behavioral intentions (Sanchez, Gazques Abad, and Fernandez, 2007), service quality and competitiveness, culture and perceived quality and ethnicity and customer satisfaction (DeShields, Kara, and Kaynak, 2005). Research in the area of students’ perception on overall service quality in universities within Kenya is, however, scanty.
There are numerous researches related this topic done outside Africa. For instance, the work of (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Glemler, 2009) suggests that one of the prime issues of poor performance in service organizations is ignorance on customer expectations. Institutions of higher learning are bound to fail if they do not have an accurate understanding of what customers expect of them. In addition, the growing level of competition that can be observed in many Kenyan universities require an evaluation of factors that can fully explain which aspects of service quality largely determine students’ perception of the quality of service that they receive.

The emerging service quality issues facing universities in developing countries calls for a closer examination of service quality dimensions. On the premise of gaps and variations manifested in the measurement of service quality and its corresponding impact on student satisfaction, this study sought to determine the dimensions of service quality and explain the perceived service quality impact on student satisfaction.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess university service quality and its effects on student satisfaction using the United States International University case study.

1.4 Research Questions

The study addressed the following questions:

1.4.1 What are the important dimensions that determine service quality in Kenyan universities?
1.4.2 What are the students’ expectations of the quality of tertiary education services at USIU?
1.4.3 What are the effects of university service quality on students?

1.5 Significance of the Study

As there is a tough competition going on all over the world especially in the field of education, quality of service and student satisfaction plays a crucial role for success. This research took place to determine the service quality delivery and student satisfaction among graduate students studying at USIU.
1.5.1 Management

The findings of this study relate to students’ satisfaction with regards to the quality of services offered by the learning institutions. This provides the management with an effective guideline to develop the quality of service to be offered. This study is helpful to the university’s management as it helps to understand the level of student satisfaction by identifying which aspects are the most important. This research is also helpful when the university is undergoing new changes.

1.5.2 Employees

The study is important to university employees as it makes them knowledgeable on what it takes to implement quality services in their day-to-day activities.

1.5.3 Academics and Researchers

The study is useful to academics and researchers within institutions as a basis of reference and contributes valuable information on service quality measurement in tertiary colleges, in particular, the dimensions of tertiary colleges’ service quality.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the perception of student satisfaction towards the service quality delivered by their university. The survey took place in the United States International University. The target group of this research included graduate students studying at USIU during the periods of fall 2015 and spring 2016.

The major challenge that limited this study was time. The respondents were too busy and had limited time to respond to the questionnaires. This limitation was mitigated by providing an incentive to motivate the respondents to fill in the questionnaires by providing pens and well packed questionnaires that motivated the respondents to fill them. The study faced the limitation of poor cooperation from the respondents as some of the respondents approached refused to fill in the questionnaires. This challenge was countered by emailing the questionnaires in form of Google forms to the respondents to ease the data collection process and constantly reminded them via email on the urgency and importance of the research.
1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Student Satisfaction

According to Peterson (1999), satisfaction refers to the state felt by a person who has experienced performance or an outcome that fulfills his or her expectation. Satisfaction is a function of relative level of expectations and it perceives performance. It can also be the intentional performance that results in one’s contentment.

1.7.2 Service Quality

A definition of quality revolves around the idea that quality bases on the assessment of the user or consumer of the service. The construct of quality as conceptualized in the services literature bases on the perceived quality. Perceived quality refers to the consumer’s judgment about an entity’s overall experience or superiority (Weitz & Wesley, 2002). Perceived quality refers also to a form of attitude, related to, but not the same as satisfaction, and resulting from a comparison of expectations with perceptions of performance.

1.7.3 Expectation

It refers to the belief that something is going to happen or the belief that something should happen in a certain way. Expectation of a customer is an important factor in analyzing the customer satisfaction and perception (Robertson, 2004).

1.7.4 Dimensions of Service Quality

Dimensions of service quality are the elements that describe quality. They are the variables that help to explain quality and they include tangibles which are the physical features of service, reliability which checks whether it provides services as was promised, responsiveness which checks on timeliness of service provision, assurance which is the knowledge and courtesy of the employees and finally empathy which looks at caring and individualized attention offered (Parasuraman, 1985).

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the background of the study giving the problem statement and the purpose of the study. The significance of the study exists in this chapter. Framing of research questions exist in this chapter to assist the carrying out of the study. The chapter also has the definition of terms together with the scope of the study.
Chapter two reviewed the literature on the relevance of service quality and its particular impact to customer satisfaction in a service industry which in this study was the higher education sector. Chapter three addressed the research methodology used. Chapter four presented the findings of the study while the last chapter, Chapter five, outlined a summary, discussion, conclusion and recommendations of the study.
CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter elaborated the literature review that was used to assess the relationship between university service quality and student satisfaction in Kenya using the United States International University case study. The research review proceeded to assess the important dimensions that determine service quality, the students’ expectations of the quality of tertiary education services at United State International University and the effects of university service quality on students.

2.2 Dimensions of Service Quality

Parasuraman et al. (1985), identified 97 attributes that had an impact on service quality. These 97 attributes were the criteria that were important in assessing customer’s expectations and perceptions on delivered service. He categorized these attributes into ten dimensions. Later, he subjected the proposed 97 item instruments for assessing service quality through two stages in order to purify the instruments and select those with significant influences (Parasuraman et al. 1988). The first purification stage came up with ten dimensions for assessing service quality namely; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding, knowing, customers, and access. The second purification stage concentrated on condensing scale, dimensionality and reliability. They further reduced the ten dimensions to five which were; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

2.2.1 Tangibility

The dimension with the highest expectations level but lowest gap between expectations and perceptions existed in the tangible dimension. Tangibles consist of those things that a customer can see or touch. The tangibles includes the appearance of physical facilities, the furniture, the equipment uses to perform services, cleanliness, point of purchase display as well as the appearance of employees (Kurtz and Clow, 1998). In most cases, new customers use these tangibles to evaluate the service quality so it is of great importance that firms enhance their image to reflect quality as well as provide continuity in their “service quality image.” (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996, 119-123)
In this case, the facilitating goods for service delivery include the lectures and tutorials, presentation slides, supplementary handout documents/materials and the recommended module text. It also includes the physical facilities such as the lecture theatres, tutorial rooms and their level of furnishing, decoration, lighting, and layout as well as auxiliary services such as catering and recreational amenities. For that reason, it is indispensable for universities to renew themselves visually, which would mean amendments in physical facilities, since students opt for the universities that have up to date standards in term of appearance.

Price et al (2003) reported on the impact of facilities on undergraduate student choice of university. They surveyed a number of universities over two years in order to determine students’ reasons for selecting a particular university. The average results for the two years were fairly similar, the top eight reasons being; it had the right courses, availability of computers, quality of library facilities, good teaching reputation, availability of “quiet” areas, availability of areas for self-study, quality of public transport in the town/city and a friendly attitude towards students. Coles (2002) found that student satisfaction decreased when class sizes were larger in earlier cohorts, and when students took compulsory core modules rather than optional modules. Large class sizes are likely to cause dissatisfaction. Students’ perceptions of a university’s facilities are therefore, one of the main influences on their decision to enroll. Magnusson and Sundin (2014) carried out a study to investigate the relationship that existed between service tangibility and customer satisfaction. Findings of the study revealed a significant relationship between the tangibility of a service and customer loyalty.

It is important for setting up a clear transmission of knowledge in the learning and teaching process with the presence of equipment and facilities like well-equipped laboratories, adequate stocked library with textbooks and reference books, updated computer facilities, comprehensive information system, and support facilities like sports and recreation centers

2.2.2 Reliability

Reliability is the consistency of performance and the dependability of an organization’s performance. It is the ability to perform the promised service accurately and consistently without fail. The reliability dimension had the highest gap score. Customers’ expectation levels vary in the dimension according to which service attribute was being evaluated
It is the level of the knowledge and information learnt in accuracy (Yong, 2000; Garvin, 1987). The reliability dimension of service quality refers to extent in which the correct, accurate, and up-to-date knowledge and information fulfill and perform the services promised to students.

This is the ability of the service provider to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. Customers rate this dimension as the most important (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Customers value providers who consistently offer reliable service, whether occasioned through impromptu visits, scheduled periodic visits, or on-site response within Service Level Agreements (SLAs). It has been found that it is three times more important to be reliable than to have immaculately new equipment or flashy uniforms. Therefore, service providers particularly need to channel their best efforts at making their services reliable by keeping their word during the service delivery process so that their customers have a positive perception.

Brady and Cronin (2001) found that consumers react not only to products, but also to how the product performs its duties. They asserted that consumers not only make their purchase decision and respond to the reliable product or service offered but also respond to the total product. One of the most significant features of the total product is the place where it originates. Atmospherics relates to the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability. In some cases, the place, more specifically the atmosphere of the place, is more influential than the product itself in the purchase decision. In some cases, the atmosphere is the primary product (Jiang and Wang, 2006).

Mburu (2013) asserts that the reliability construct in the SERVQUAL model represents the service provider’s ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. This is achieved by keeping promises made, providing the right service, consistency of performance and dependability, service is performed right at the first time, the company maintains accuracy in billing and keeping records correctly as promised, availing merchandise and error-free sales, transactions and records. Reliability also consists of accurate order fulfillment; accurate record; accurate quote; accurate in billing; accurate calculation of commissions; keep services promise. Ndubisi (2006) observes that The higher customers appreciate on reliability, the higher the overall evaluation of retail service quality is.
2.2.3 Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the willingness to assist customers and provide the service promptly. The differences in the ‘shopping experience’ between retail outlets (e.g. store ambience, disposition of associates, store service) are often as important to customers as the differences in physical characteristics of the goods offered (Gomez, McLaughlin, and Wittink, 2004). The reason why employees’ responsiveness lack is because organizations often focus on hard skills training which involve training in the areas of product knowledge, technical skills and administrations, while deemphasizing the importance of positive attitude in the way employees deal with customers.

Johnston (1997) describes responsiveness as the speed and timeliness of service delivery. This includes the speed of throughput and the ability of the service to respond promptly to customer service requests, with minimal waiting and queuing time. Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2001) argue that when the customer is kept waiting for no apparent reason creates unnecessary negative perceptions of quality. Conversely, the ability for the bank to recover quickly when service fails and exhibit professionalism also creates very positive perceptions of quality. Responsiveness also reflects employee preparedness to provide the service to customers. It involves the willingness to provide prompt or favorable services by the faculty and staff to students (Yong, 2000).

Mohammed and Shirley (2009) found that bank services such as prompt communication to the customer are vital. Customers are concerned whether their bank provides the right information to the right customers promptly. This creates public confidence, and thus helps customers to make the right decisions at the right time. Responsiveness is likely to have an important and positive effect on customer satisfaction (Glaveli et al., 2006). The higher customers appreciate problem solving, the higher overall evaluation of retail service quality becomes. Mengi (2009) also found that responsiveness relates positively to service quality and customer satisfaction. It is also involves understanding needs and wants of the customers, convenient operating hours, individual attention given by the staff, attention to problems, and customers’ safety in their transaction. Mburu (2013) carried out a study to investigate the determinants of customer satisfaction and its connection with service quality in the banking industry. She found out that factors such as
pricing, quality of service, value, and relationship with the service provider’s staff
determined customers’ satisfaction.

2.2.4 Assurance

Assurance refers to knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust
and confidence (Tanomsakyut, 2011). Clients expect service providers to be the experts in
their service delivery. SERVQUAL research showed that it is important to communicate
that expertise to customers (Arlen, 2008). Assurance is the ability of employees to
instigate trust and confidence into a customer and motivate purchase. Assurance is one of
the most important factors of service quality. This is because customers want to deal with
people they can trust. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988) assurance is the level of the
service delivered to customers that is believable and can be trusted.

Customers face much greater risk in terms of fraud and identity theft in banking. This
may explain the fact that banks do all they can to assure their customers that transactions
with their organizations are safe and secure. On whether employees always instill
confidence in their customers, it is important to acknowledge the fact that customers want
to trust and have confidence in the competence of the service provider's employees to
deliver the service. The customer is never satisfied if he/she does not feel assured about
the competence of the service provider. Kumar et al. (2010) found that confidence is one
of the important factors for assurance. As confidence in one’s impressions about the firm
increases, trust develops between the parties and the cost of switching firms rises (Shapiro
and Varian, 1999). Customers weigh prior cumulative satisfaction heavily when they are
deciding whether to maintain or terminate their relationship with entity (Bolton, 1998).

The assurance construct consists of competence included in the possession of the required
skills and information to perform the service in consideration for the customer's
possessions, spruce in appearance of public contact personnel, security of the employees,
and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. According to Sadek et al. (2010), in
British banks assurance means the polite and friendly staff, provision of financial advice,
interior comfort, easiness of access to account information and knowledgeable and
experienced management team. Assurance involves employees having knowledge to
answer questions, inspiring confidence, providing prompt service, willing to respond to
customer’s requests, giving customers individual attention, showing consistent courtesy with customers and even treat customers properly on the phone.

Several studies suggest that the exchange of information is essential in both traditional selling and relationship marketing that may yield a shared understanding. According to Ndubisi (2006) the higher customers appreciate personal interaction, the higher the overall evaluation of retail service quality.

### 2.2.5 Empathy

Empathy is the care and individualized attention offered by a firm to its customers. Service encounter is the point at which the customer experiences the service. Service encounters are very important as they affect a customer’s experience, thus having a negative experience may result to customers having negative perceptions about the service quality offered by a business (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). The empathy dimension of service quality refers to showing care and provides individualized attention to students. A good academic environment in a higher learning institution is not only to establish a good teaching and learning culture for sharing of knowledge but also to be able to involve in the student’s personal development as well as academic matters by giving care and advice.

Employees can perform a service fully to a facility’s specifications, yet customers may not feel that the provider's employees care about them during the actual delivery. It, in turn, hurts customers’ assessments of the providers’ service quality Yavaset al. (1997). For example, a cleaner can efficiently clean up a spill in a lobby, however, during the cleanup process, the employee does not smile, make eye contact, or inquire of the customer if there is anything else they could do for them. In this hypothetical scenario, the provider’s service fully took place, but the customer did not feel that the provider employee cared about them. Providers’ service delivery can be as important as how it was done. Therefore, organizations should train their employees on how to interact with customers to help them understand their impact on customers’ assessment of service quality.

Robledo (2001) suggested that empathy is the approachability, ease of access and effort taken to understand customers’ needs. Empathy is the individual attention given to customers including showing care and empathy in handling claims and accidents. Dehghani (2006) concludes that it is not possible for a firm to perform at a superior level in
all the six dimensions. Dehghani (2006) further finds that the six dimensions are not of equal importance and that in terms of importance to customer satisfaction these dimensions vary in importance starting from pricing to empathy that is the least important.

Assurance and empathy involve some of the dimensions that are currently less important like communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding/knowing customers and access. This is because these variables did not remain distinct after the two stages of scale purification, (Parasuraman et al., 1988). These original five dimensions are subject to 22 statements derived from Parasuraman et al, (1985).

2.3 Students’ Expectations of the Quality of Tertiary Education Services

The education sector is spinning from a subsidized entity into a revenue generating source with all business concepts and theories applicable in this sector. The implication of the fast and changing demand in education has resulted to competition among higher education institutions becoming fiercer. The expectation of customers toward higher education institutions heightens with the increase in the tuition fee and the classification of education as a marketable service (Kwek, Lau & Tan, 2010). Therefore, customers are the most important stakeholders of all the stakeholders in service industries. In education services, the students are customers. They should be of the top concern in the operation of any academic institution (Rajendran, & Raju, 2005). Service quality is a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations.

The expectations and wants of consumers play an important role in assessing the services of an enterprise. According to Berry and Parasuraman (1996), this implies that clients assess service quality by comparing what they want or expect with their perception of what they get. It indicates that service quality is assessable by either measuring customer’s expectations or by measuring the extent of importance that attributes to it. Expectations are inferable from importance ratings on the grounds that if a consumer believes a service attribute to be important, he/she would expect the quality of that attribute to be good (Hill & McCrory, 1997).

Carman (1990) points out that for most service providers, the importance of a particular service attribute to consumers seems more relevant than its expected level. Undergraduate students’ often lack of knowledge and experience of making better evaluations. Oldfield
and Baron (2000) are of the opinion that it is unlikely for students who had been at an institution for a longer period to retrospectively rate their expectations in a way not influenced by their experiences. Weitz and Wessley (2002) argued that service quality results from customers’ expectations of what the service provider should offer and how the provider actually performs to meet those expectations. Thus delivering quality service means ensuring consistency in service delivery performances on daily basis. According to Kotler (2007), service quality is very important to attract and retain customers. This is because customers derive the perceptions of service quality on the levels of satisfaction they experience with the particular business.

Peterson et al. (1999) confirms concerns of the students with issues of assurance. The students in this study are not confident that they are getting value for money, or that the skills they are learning what can get them good results both academically and for future employment. They are also concerned about lecturers’ knowledge in their subject area. All these issues should always concern the management. Hellsten’s (2002) observes that fulfilling one’s by the host community and institution is prevalent among students.

The biggest expectation gap found for the students was on the question pertaining to the ability of university staff to understand the needs of the students. As well as believing that a tertiary qualification would get them a good job, most university students expect to have access to learning support services and quality teaching (Billing, 1998). Students value those mechanisms that clarify the expectations of lecturers and tutors such as clear course objectives, good staff – student communication and preferred enthusiastic teachers who had good presentation skills (Mullins, Quintrell& Hancock, 1995).

East (2001) found similar expectations from international students including quality teaching and improvement in their English language skills. Students, especially mature age students, whether local or international, expect a high standard of service delivery (Mavondo & Zaman, 2000). Quality is a major preoccupation in the higher education sector (Wright & O’Neill, 2002). East (2001), in a study of international students’ expectations at La Trobe University, concluded that, there is, therefore, a need to analyze international students’ perspectives in the light of customer expectations of quality service.

The quality of college and university services reflects a number of criteria and characteristics that should be present in the service elements of every college. These
criteria and characteristics relates to the inputs, outputs, and processes that meet society’s needs and requirements as well as students’ needs and desires (Alfrejat, 2009). Various studies argue that the service quality of colleges exist elements such as the quality of the teaching and administrative staffs, the quality of knowledge acquisition and skills, community service activities, and the quality of learning resources and infrastructure (Accreditation Commission of Higher Education, 2012).

Students expect administrative and personnel quality in the institutions. Quality standards stipulate the recruitment of sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians who possess the skills necessary to fulfill their career responsibilities. These quality standards necessitate learning about student needs, communication with students, problems solving and responding to students’ demands. Students expect the best quality education. The quality standards require that programs offered by educational institutions include various fields of knowledge, clear definitions of objectives, the subject content covered, adequate learning materials and strategies for achieving the goals contained in students’ academic plans within the specified period.

Infrastructure quality seems to be an important factor to many students. Because of the infrastructure concept framework, which supports quality education, appropriate teaching tools should be available such as halls, yards that suit their functions, required tools and equipment, and adequate sporting facilities (Abdullah, 2006). The teaching staff quality depends on how the teaching staff is selected and the staff’s development because teachers are responsible for implementing high-quality educational programs, acting as academic counselors, and providing advice to their students. Students expect to have the best quality of the teaching staff that provides the best quality of education.

To achieve their objectives, colleges and universities must consider new ideas and develop quality and excellence. Quality of university services and the performance evaluation process for these services are some of the basic elements of a quality higher education system (Bhatia, 2009).

2.3.1 Past Experience

The customer’s previous exposure to service that is relevant to the focal service, is another force in shaping predictions and desires. The service relevant for prediction can be previous exposure to the focal firm’s service (Zeithaml et al. 1990). For example, you
probably compare each stay in a particular hotel with all previous stays in that hotel. One’s experience with the focal hotel is likely to be a very limited view of past experience. There’s also the need to compare each stay with other experiences in other hotels and hotel chains. Customers also compare across industries: hospital patients, for example, compare hospital stays against the standards of hotel visits especially if both belong to the same owners (e.g. Agha Khan Hospital and Agha Khan University in Kenya). According to Hill (1995), past experience may incorporate previous experience with the focal brand, typical performance of a favorite brand, experience with the brand last purchased, the top selling brand, and the average performance a customer believes represents a group of similar brands.

Several authors name past experience as one of the antecedents of service expectations (Davidow and Uttal 1989; Zeithaml et al. 1990). Shank (1995) and Rowley (1997) all agree that students’ expectations are influenced by prior experience, suggesting that past experience is relevant in the context of higher education. Past experience that influences consumer expectations includes not only experience of a particular service provider but also experience of competitive service providers and other types of services (Zeithaml et al. 1990). Therefore, the past experiences that students have of educational services do affect their quality expectations even if the previous service is different from the prospective services.

Hill (1995) suggests that this is of particular relevance in higher education. He states that experiences of some undergraduate students at school sometimes influence their expectations. This may lead to a mismatch between expectations and perceptions. He further suggests that the postgraduate students may be more knowledgeable by their experiences at other higher education organizations. Shank et al. (1995) concurs that as students’ progress in their studies, their expectations should become more realistic because of experience. The focus is on international students applying to master’s degree programs who have already acquired experience of higher education in their bachelor level of studies. It is assumable that such experience often has the largest influence on their past experience because in international education, the students often do not have the chance to visit their study destination beforehand.

Hill (1995) advocates for greater use of existing students on occasions where prospective students visit the university since such opportunities shape students expectations and
making them as realistic as possible. It should also apply to international students’ visits when plausible.

2.3.2 Explicit and Implicit Service Promises

Explicit service promises are personal and non-personal statements about the service made by the organization to customers. The statements are personal when communicated by sales people or repair personnel since they are non-personal when they come from advertising, brochures, and other written publications. Explicit service promises are one of the few influences on expectations that are completely in the control of the service provider. Promising exactly what the organization delivers seems like a logical and appropriate way of managing customer expectations and ensuring that reality fits the promises.

Companies and the personnel who represent them often deliberately over-promise to obtain business or inadvertently over-promise by stating their best estimates about delivery of a service in the future. In addition to over-promising, company representatives simply do not always know the appropriate promises to make because services are often customized and therefore not easily defined and repeated. The representative may not know when or in what final form the service is delivered. All types of explicit service promises have a direct effect on desired service expectation. Explicit service promises influence the levels of both desired service and predicted service. They shape what customers desire in general as well as what they predict to happen in the next service encounter from a particular service provider or in a certain service encounter.

Implicit service promises are service-related cues other than explicit promises that lead to inferences about what the service should be like. Price and other tangibles associated with the service often dominate these quality cues. In general, the higher the price and the more impressive the tangibles, the more a customer expects from the service. Consider a customer who shops for insurance, finding two firms charging radically different prices. He or she may infer that the firm with the higher price should provide higher-quality service and better coverage. Similarly, a customer who stays at a five-star hotel is likely to desire and predict a higher standard of service than from a hotel with less impressive facilities.

2.3.2 Word of Mouth
Word-of-mouth communication is personal or non-personal statements made by parties other than the service provider and they enlighten potential customers on what to expect (Zeithaml et al. 1993). Various researchers have found word-of-mouth communication to be important in shaping customers’ expectations (George and Berry 1981, 53; Webster 1991, 10; Zeithaml et al. 1993, 9). Clow et al. (1997, 232) claim that word-of-mouth communications are viewed as more reliable and trustworthy due to the experiential nature of services. Zeithaml et al. (1993, 9) suggest that word-of-mouth about service performance is an important source of information because it is perceived as unbiased. Webster (1991, 10), conducted a research to examine the relative impact of several factors affecting customers’ expectations of services and according to her findings, word-of-mouth communications had the greatest effect on quality expectations. According to Zenithal et al (1993, 9), word-of-mouth is especially important in services due to the difficulty of evaluating services prior to purchasing and directly experiencing them. Word-of-mouth communication is prevalent in services because they reduce the risk related to purchasing services (George and Berry 1981, 54).

2.3.3 Personal Needs

Personal needs are those states or conditions essential to the physical or psychological well-being of the customer and are pivotal factors that shape what customers desire in a service. They fall into many categories, including physical, social, psychological, and functional. Zeithaml’s (1988) Means – End model suggests that customers must analyze information associated with the service using four different levels: attributes, quality, value, and personal values before they make a purchase decision. Since personal values are at the highest end of the evaluation hierarchy, they provide deeper insight about the reasons that lead a consumer to select a certain service provider (Durvasula 2011). The needs and values of customers that determine their purchase choice also have an impact on the quality expectations (Grönroos 2000).

Ledden et al. (2007) examined personal needs in education to determine if they differed from perceived value of education. Their findings showed that personal needs are of great importance to students and the authors urge marketers not to overlook the importance of personal values. The role of student expectations on service quality in higher learning was researched by Voss et al. (2007). According to their results, students particularly wanted
to satisfy the following needs: well-being, security, satisfaction, universalism, self-esteem, and hedonism (Voss et al. 2007, 955).

2.3.4 The Zone of Tolerance

The zone of tolerance is the degree to which customers recognize and are willing to accept service performance varies. Customers often assess service performance based on two boundaries including what they desire and what they consider. If service drops below adequate service level, customers get frustrated and this may cause dissatisfaction with the service provided by the company. If service is above the zone of tolerance, where service performed by the business exceeds the desired level, customers often have favorable responses to the business. The service gets customers’ attention in either positive or negative way.

Different customers have different levels of service tolerance. Some customers have narrow zones of tolerance and expect a narrow range of service from providers. On the other hand, some customers have higher levels of service expectations that if not met cause dissatisfaction. Customer’s zone of tolerance often increases or decreases with the influence of a number of factors including price. For example, when prices are high customer expect quality service and therefore are less tolerant to poor or unreliable service.

Customers’ service tolerance also varies for different service features or dimensions. The more important the service factor the less tolerant customers become towards bad or unreliable service. This concludes the point that the higher the expectations of customers, the higher adequate service levels are, therefore the broader the zone of tolerance is likely to be (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2009).

2.3.4 Perceptions of Service Quality

Consumers consider perceptions in relation to expectations. Perceptions come about through customers’ assessment of the quality of service provided by a company by looking at whether they are satisfied with the overall service. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) argue that since perceptions may shift over time, it is necessary for companies to assess customer perceptions frequently.
2.3.5 Service Quality Model

The gap model is a very useful measure for evaluating customers’ expectations and perceptions of whether a particular company delivers excellent service. This model identifies contributing factors to the customer and provider gap and recommends strategies a company may use to maintain a focus on customers (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003). In the model, consumers’ perception of service quality results from a comparison between expectations and perceptions of the different components of service.

There are seven major gaps in the service quality concept, which as shown in Figure 2.1. The model is an extension of (Parasuraman et al. 1985). According to the following explanation, the three important gaps more associated with the external customers are; Gap1, Gap5, and Gap6 since they have a direct relationship with customers.

Gap1: Customer expectations versus management perception: this gap occurs because of the lack of a marketing research orientation, inadequate upward communication and too many layers of management.

Gap2: Management perceptions versus service specifications: this gap occurs because of inadequate commitment to service quality, a perception of unfeasibility, inadequate task standardization and an absence of goal setting.

Gap3: Service specifications versus service delivery: this gap is caused by role ambiguity and conflict, poor employee-job fit and poor technology-job fit, inappropriate supervisory control systems, lack of perceived control and lack of teamwork.

Gap4: Service delivery versus external communication: this gap is caused by inadequate horizontal communications and propensity to over-promise.

Gap5: The discrepancy between customer expectations and their perception of the service delivered: this gap occurs because of the influences exerted from the customer side and the shortfalls (gaps) on the part of the service provider. In this case, personal needs, word of mouth recommendations, and past experiences influences customers’ expectations.

Gap6: The discrepancy between customer expectations and employee perception: this gap occurs because of the differences in the understanding of customer expectations by front-line service providers.
Gap7: The discrepancy between employee perception and management perception: this gap occurs because of the differences in the understanding of customer expectations between managers and service providers.

The difference between expectations and perceptions refers to the gap that is the determinant of customers’ perception of service quality as shown on Figure 2.1 below.

![Figure 2.1: Measuring service quality using SERVQUAL model (Kumar and Manshhor, 2009).](image)

The overall quality is presented by Gap 5. The gap is the difference between expectations and perceptions. The Gap model emphasizes the importance of closing the gap between expectations and perceptions by first understanding what customers’ expect. It leads to identification of other gaps that the business must close in order to deliver high quality service that satisfy customers.

Assessing customers’ expectations and perceptions of service quality requires an understanding of customers’ relationship with the service provider. A sound measure of service quality is necessary for identifying the aspects of service needing performance improvement, assessing how much improvement is necessary on each aspect, and
evaluating the impact of improvement efforts. Due to the intangible nature of a service, SERVQUAL model exists to measure customers’ evaluations of service quality.

The SERVQUAL scale is designed in a form of a survey containing 22 service attributes, grouped into the five service quality dimensions. Customers’ rate statements on service attribute in terms of their expectations and the perceptions (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2009). The level of service quality is determined by subtracting the average score obtained from the expectations section to that obtained from the perceptions section (Weitz and Wessley, 2002). The calculated difference between the expectations and perception ratings constitutes a quantified measure of service quality. Many organizations use the SERVQUAL Scale with of course adaptations to suit their research context.

The quality of tertiary education services offered at USIU generally is above average. This is according to data gathered from various employees, old students and current students at the institution. The expectations of students seem to vary amongst different students. This is because different students have different backgrounds and what one might perceive to be above average might not be the same for another student and vice versa. For instance, a case whereby a student coming from an educational background where the facilities that were available could hardly sustain them a chance to join university, but somehow the student under review studied hard and finally found him/herself at the institution. This kind of a student would consider the quality of services offered at USIU as above average if not exemplary.

There would also be a case where a student coming from an expensive international school where the kind of facilities and services offered was simply exemplary. This kind of a student would probably have issues adapting to the system at USIU. However, there could be different notions and ideas as to the quality of service delivery at USIU apart from an individual’s educational background. As earlier mentioned, the definition of quality service also varies among different people. This is because people’s expectations vary according to costs incurred and other factors.

The quality of service is the overall judgment by a consumer over a certain entity’s excellence or superiority. Service quality is that service that conforms to the expectation and specification of a customer. Other scholars have had their definitions or notions of quality service including who describes service quality as the degree to which service
expected and service offered match that assumes that a higher degree implies higher service quality.

**2.4 Effects of University Service Quality on Students**

Service quality as earlier mentioned in the study is a balance of services institution gives compared against the customer’s expectations. In most modern universities, students have varied needs most of which the university staff ought to meet. Students’ needs compared against the services offered that determine student satisfaction. Due to the rising rate of competition amongst universities, they should maintain a market oriented strategy in order to have a competitive advantage. For universities to achieve this, they need to understand student needs and come up with strategies of meeting them. This strategy is important in meeting rivalry in the current market trends.

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1986), customers are the backbone of any thriving organization. Student satisfaction in this case plays a major role in identifying the authenticity of the institution under review. This is because the needs of the students who are the customers in this case start even before they join the various institutions (Kumar, 2013). Hatch (2003) thought contrary about this. He assumed that student satisfaction only begins once they have joined the respective institutions. They assumed that satisfaction is a matter of experience and perception while at the organization as opposed to notions that have been overheard.

Service delivery is important in any institution and in this case university education. It builds the institutions reputation to prospective students and employees since they all want the best out of the available institutions. As demand for universities is rising, so is the competition amongst universities to attract more students. They are doing so by coming up with modern facilities for instance libraries, research laboratories and many other facilities that would make these places of learning more conducive for study. Education is backbone of any progressing economy since it provides knowledge and technique for economic drivers for instance production and trade.

Considering that education is a service just like other products offered in the market, there is undeniable competition on who offers the best and who produces the best students to the job market. Education is in the service delivery industry that has much competition lately. This has made most universities open up campuses in other countries worldwide while others adopt different modes of learning for instance internet based studies where
students are able to access class sessions either at home or while at work over the internet. All this is in attempt to beat the rising levels of competition and at the same time avail education to people who are not able to access direct classrooms because of other issues holding them back.

It is easy to distinguish one university from the other by its urge to achieve customer satisfaction. This is measurable by a university’s long-term existence determined by the quality of services offered and the effort it incurs to remain competitive. This makes quality services and customer satisfaction a trend to maintain amongst universities globally. This is ensuring that modern institutions remain competitive which in turn implies that the quality of skill released to the job market is also quality which in turn implies economic growth.

In Kenya, there are many standards that have been brought about to ensure that students get the best out of their universities. This is because the job market is highly competitive which requires competitive skill for one to get a vacancy. For instance, the ministry of higher education is working with various institutions that are sponsoring the innovative activities of students. The ministry is also promoting various institutions into institutions of higher learning by investing in better laboratories for instance the Technical University of Kenya that was formally the Kenya Polytechnic College. By so doing, more students get chances to join these institutions of higher learning a condition that poses competition to existing universities that offer the same courses.

2.4.1 Satisfaction

Student satisfaction is of compelling interest to colleges and universities as they seek to improve the learning environment for students, meet the expectations of their constituent groups and legislative bodies, and demonstrate their institutional effectiveness. Unlike service industries that hold satisfaction as a goal in and of itself, colleges and universities typically perceive satisfaction as a means to an end. Higher education tends to care about student satisfaction because of its potential impact on student motivation, retention, recruitment efforts, and fundraising.

Satisfaction is a feeling of happiness and joy that individuals obtain when they have fulfilled their needs and desires. Educational institutions use certain methodologies to determine the level of their students’ satisfaction regarding the services and programs they offer to better fulfill student needs and satisfy student aspirations (Qureshi, 2011).
Identifying the factors of student satisfaction entails answering questions related to students’ satisfaction relating to educational services such as how much students trust provided educational services among other things. Student satisfaction measurement is a strategic issue for educational institutions because satisfaction is similar to profit-and-loss accounting in business organizations. If satisfaction is high, then the university is making sizeable profits because of having provided students with knowledge, skills, and targeted abilities. In the end, students are pleased with their academic achievement and their university life. They speak positively about the college because satisfaction is the ultimate goal, and the ultimate goal is a reflection of high levels of service quality (Majeed, 2008).

According to Devinder and Data (2003), for an institution to deliver quality programs and services to students it must be concerned with every aspect of the students experience on campus. Education quality is not only limited to the lectures and notes received in class or advice and guidance given by lecturers during the consultation hours, but it also includes students experience while interacting with the various non-academic personnel and components in the university, the physical infrastructure provided by the university. Jones and Suh (2000) established that transaction specific satisfaction influences overall satisfaction, and both overall satisfaction and transaction specific satisfaction significantly influences repurchase intention. In fact, students often choose universities and programs to enroll based on factors like delivery method, time availability, on/off campus requirements and place to access learning materials (Cohen, Dove & Bachelder, 2001). Students place great importance for degree acceptance and the university’s reputation in the selection of university (Chun, 2005).

Oliver (1997) defined satisfaction as the consumer’s fulfillment response. It is a decree that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under-or over-fulfillment. Howard and Sheth (1969) defined customer satisfaction as a psychological state to evaluate the reasonableness between what a customer actually pays and gets. Rust and Oliver (1994) interpreted satisfaction as the emotional assessment about how far customers believe that the service consumption can generate positive feelings. Churchil and Surprenant (1982) proposed that customer satisfaction derived from the comparison between the expected reward and the actual cost of buying. Kotler and Clarke (1987) defined satisfaction as a state of expectation fulfillment when a customer experiences a performance or outcome.
Quality leads to satisfaction, McDougall & Levesque, (2000); Negi, (2009) and others support that quality leads to satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Some researchers propose that quality and satisfaction comes with the same attributes. Parasurman et al., (1988) tried to relate customer satisfaction to service quality. Customer satisfaction bases on the level of service quality delivered by the service providers (Saravanan & Rao, 2007). Parasuraman et al., (1985) contends that when perceived service quality is high, then it leads to increase in customer satisfaction. They argue that service quality leads to customer satisfaction and this agree with Lee et al., (2000), who acknowledge that customer satisfaction bases on the level of service quality provided by the service provider. Negi, (2009) clearly points out that overall service quality is significantly associated with and contributes to the overall satisfaction of customers.

Satisfaction is the deliberate performance that produces one’s contentment (Malik, Danish, and Usman, 2010). Sapri, Kaka, and Finch (2009) on the essence of customers to an organization, pointed out that customers are the lifeblood of any organization. According to Thorsten Hennig-Thurau and Alexander Klee (1997), customer satisfaction with a company’s products or services is the key to a company’s accomplishment and long-term competitiveness in the industry. Customer satisfaction framework has been widely used by researchers (Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker, and Grogaard, 2002). Operationally, the construct is similar to an attitude as it assessable as the sum of the satisfactions with various attributes of a product or service (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982).

Every academic institution must make every effort toward meeting and exceeding student’s expectation in order to ensure their sustainable operation and development (Anderson et al., 1994). However, there is a thing about an organizations reputation and student satisfaction. This is so because students who have been through the organizations may engage in giving positive or negative feedback about the university under review that would attract new students into the university since they would also like to experience the same. It is therefore worth noting that student satisfaction is not a one-day concern but a process built over time and maintained forever. It is also worth noting that students who have been through the same institution and enjoyed the services offered have higher chances of resuming the same institution for further studies.
Student satisfaction therefore, would be high when the services offered are beyond their expectations or are just as they expected. On the other hand, satisfaction would be low in an instance where they do not find the services offered being content which would make them talk ill of the university at stake. This would lead to popularity of the university going down tampering with its position in the market. Central values can also define the level of student satisfaction. According to Henry and Collet (2011), issues, for instance cultural values and diversification, determine the level of satisfaction due to student’s perception towards the quality of services offered.

Many researchers have conducted studies about the quality of higher education institutions based on students’ perception. Gold (2001) reported that students are the key customers of academic institutions. Illias, Hasan, Rahman, and Yasoa (2008) proposed that student satisfaction is built continuously with experiences on campus during the college years. Word-of-mouth communication from satisfied students to their friends, acquaintances, and relatives can help many academic institutions to attract new students. These satisfied students could go back to their previous academic institutions to study further or take other courses (Gruber, Fub, Voss & Glaser-Zikuda, 2010).

Sawyer and Thompson (2003), inclusion of all students of the university programs, in the context of the present study are popular alternative to generate important insights into antecedents and dimensions of service quality in a higher education context. Using a single university to study students’ attitudes generate valuable insights, which can be used as empirical hypotheses for representative follow-up studies. Navarro, Iglesias, and Torres (2005) mentioned that students evaluate the quality of organization based on tangibility, reliability and responsiveness and management of the institution and these factors have direct influence on the level of students’ satisfaction.

Mahiah, Suhaimi and Ibrahim (2006), suggest that tangibility, assurance, empathy and responsiveness can increase customer satisfaction towards services rendered by human resource department. Spooren, Mortelmans and Denekens (2007), posited that the organizational harmony, teachers’ intellectual ability, professional development, students’ transparency evaluation, feedback and training are the important features that mentally develop the students. According to Hasan, Ilias, Rahman, and Razak (2008), for quality assurance, an institution must train its staff members in a way that may create a sense of facilitation by means of coordination, cooperation, compassion, and empathy.
Dalton & Denson (2009) found that students’ level of satisfaction increases by working with those course instructors and lecturers who properly handle the assignments, projects, exams and facilitate students’ logical reasoning and aptitude development. Alves & Raposo (2010) have found that positive perceptions of service quality have a significant influence on student satisfaction and thus a satisfied student would attract more students through word-of-mouth communications. The students can be motivated or inspired from both academic performance as well as the administrative efficiency of their institution. Shekarchizadeh, Rasli, and Hon-tat (2011), feels that mostly, higher education institutions seek to provide high quality services in their educational curricula and administrative processes. The importance of service quality makes its measurement and its Subsequent management an issue of utmost importance.

Karanja (2014) in her study to determine effects of internal customer satisfaction on service quality delivery in Resolution Insurance Company concluded that effective motivation of employees occurs by rewarding them for being productive in their responsibilities, through recognition, gifts, after sale service, increasing their commission, being promoted to management level, and being taken for retreats. Omenge (2013) carried out a research to investigate the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction the study findings revealed reliability dimension of service quality was the most important factor to invest on followed by responsiveness, technical quality, and assurance. Responsiveness was highly correlated to empathy and reliability; thus, eliminated as a measure of service quality.

2.4.2 Dissatisfaction of Customers

Day (1983) defined customer dissatisfaction as an emotional response manifested in feelings conceptually distinct from cognitive responses, brand effect, and behavioral responses. Oliver and DeSarbo (1988) explain satisfaction as a feeling of “delight” and dissatisfaction a feeling of “disappointment.” Consumer surplus of goods or value of a specific good would lead to satisfaction and consumer shortage would lead to its dissatisfaction. Customers who take the time to complain are also taking the time to tell you what went wrong with your process, your product, or your communication. It takes some effort for a customer to contact you and tell you how the product, process or communications did not live up to expectations. The dissatisfaction caused leads to search for an alternative for the existing good or service.
Hausknecht and Wilkie (1995) observes that consumers rarely seek redress from the marketer or some third party agency but may content themselves with “warning” friends and acquaintances about the trouble they have experienced. Some consumers may not even go that far, but rather decide to avoid the brand. This can have negative effects if the dissatisfaction feeling has resulted from failure at the end of the product’s useful life and the focus of the research was on product use experience, consumer dissatisfaction, complaining, disposition, and warranties (Richins, 1983). Heob served that if a consumer is dissatisfied enough to take some action in response to a dissatisfaction, the less positive the perception of retailer responsiveness, the greater the likelihood the action to involve word-of-mouth but not complaint behavior. The study also showed that the nature of the dissatisfaction problem, attributions of blame for dissatisfaction and perceptions of the complaint situation relates to responses to dissatisfaction.

Anderson (1971) asserts that dissatisfaction results from contemplating what falls short of one’s wishes or expectations and is usually only temporary. Consumer dissatisfaction is a result of market offerings that fall short of consumer expectations. Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004) analyzed the consumer dissatisfaction and its related behaviors by using a specific emotion approach such as valence-based approach and specific emotion approach. According to them customer dissatisfaction is not only a function of disappointment, but also of regret. Disappointment occurs when actual service delivery violates prior held expectations, whereas regret comes following a bad choice of service provider. Regret is likely to result in a focus on goals not attained and promote goal persistence whereas disappointment may result in goal abandonment.

2.4.3 Retention

Organizations that consistently satisfy their customers enjoy higher retention levels and greater profitability due to increased customers’ loyalty (Wicks & Roethlein, 2009). It is vital to keep consumers satisfied by trying to know their expectations and perceptions of services offered by service providers. In this way, service quality could be assessed and thereby evaluate customer satisfaction. Service quality and customer satisfaction proves from past researches to relate positively (Gera, 2011). Customers’ brand loyalty base on the satisfaction achieved after the purchase of a product or service (Surprenant & Churchill, 1982). According to the customer satisfaction model developed by Oliver (1980), customers compare their perceptions of actual products/services performance with
the expectations and that is when the feeling of satisfaction arise leading to repeat purchase. Satisfaction from service quality, according to Gronroos (1984), evaluates technical quality and functional quality. This happens when customers do not have much information about the technical aspects of a service. Under such circumstances, functional quality becomes the major factor from which customers base perceptions of service quality (Donabedian, 1982).

Customer loyalty to a brand leads to customer retention. Danesh, Nasab and Ling (2012) defined customer retention as “the future propensity of a customer to stay with the service provider.” According to Danesh, Nasab and Ling (2012), customer satisfaction is not the only variable that influences the retention of customers. Molapo and Mukwada (2011) defined customer retention as the marketing goal of preventing a customer from switching to another competitor. Edward and Sahadev (2011) stated, “Customer retention indicates customer's intention to repurchase a service from the service provider.” They used customer retention as a measure of the customer's intention to stay loyal to the service provider. For them, service quality and customer satisfaction are important antecedents of customer retention. Most of the graduate students at USIU did their undergraduate degree at same institution, this shows that the services they got in their graduate program was satisfactory enough for them to come back for advanced studies.

2.3.4 Attraction of Customers

Service quality is clearly an important element of competition in a variety of markets ranging from traditional service and retail industries to the manufacturing sector. Firms compete on price in addition to non-price attributes like service quality. Under vertical (quality) differentiation theory, customers differ in their marginal willingness to pay for quality. They defect from an incumbent only if a competitor’s price/quality bundle improves their utility (Gabszewicz and Thisse 1979). According to Shaked and Sutton 1982, Sutton 1986, Tirole (1990), customers often seek among existing firms in the market according to their price and service quality preferences. Because of such customer sorting, the effects of increased competition on an incumbent’s customer retention rates may be highly heterogeneous and dependent on its relative service quality and price performance. Customers tend to get attracted to high quality services. An increase in service quality leads to high levels of customer attraction.
Customers often vary in service sensitivity and generate either homogeneous profitability for the firm or profitability uncorrelated with their preferences for quality (Dewan & Mendholson 1990, Karmarkar & Pitbladdo 1997, Mandelbaum & Shimkin 2000, Tsay & Agrawal 2000). If the most profitable customers enmesh in relationships that are more complex with the firm, switching costs may reduce their probability of defection when an attractive opportunity presents itself (Klemperer, 1995). Alternatively, highly profitable customers may have a higher willingness to pay for service quality as posited by the priority pricing literature (Afeche, 2004, Lederer and Li 1997, Mendelson 1990).

Furthermore, high profitability customers have more at stake in the relationship and more interactions with the firm than their low profitability counterparts and they may be more acutely aware of any potential deficiencies in its provision of service quality (Israel 2005). These arguments raise the possibility of customer level of heterogeneity in the effects of service quality competition on customer defection, and they point to the importance of understanding the economics of the customer relationships most influenced by increased service quality competition.

2.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter reviewed literature on the relationship between university service quality and student satisfaction in Kenya using the United States International University case. The research review proceeded to assess questions on the important dimensions that determine service quality in Kenyan universities, the students’ expectations about the quality of tertiary education services at USIU and effects of university service quality on students. Chapter three looked at the research methodologies used in assessing service quality and student satisfaction in Kenya using the United States International University case study.
CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter provided a description of the methodology used in conducting the study. It occurs in five sections and includes the research design, population and sampling design, data collection methods, research procedures and instruments, and data analysis methods.

3.2 Research Design
According to Cooper and Schindler (2011), research design is a plan that guides the time scope and gives a practical guideline of the activities that should be implemented in the research process with a view of answering the research question. Further, the research design gives a clear direction on how to select the various sources and types of information required and defines the relationship among the variables of study.

This particular study involved a descriptive research design which aims to answer who, what, where, which, when or how of the research problem. The objective of a descriptive research is to describe. Descriptive studies collect data that describe the characteristics of persons, events, or situations. Descriptive research is either quantitative or qualitative in nature. It may involve the collection of quantitative data such as satisfaction ratings, production figures, sales figures, or demographic data, but it may also include the collection of qualitative information (Uma and Roger, 2013).
3.3 Population and Sampling Design

3.3.1 Population

Ducombe and Boateng (2009), define a population as the sum of all the elements about which the researcher intends to make assumptions. In order to address all of the questions of this research, the respondents for this study were be drawn from graduate students currently registered at USIU approximately 5938 students.

3.3.2 Sampling Design

3.3.2.1 Sampling Frame

According to Ducombe and Boateng (2009), a sampling frame is the register of all the population elements from which the sample drawn is closely related to the population. The sampling frames used for this study were drawn from the USIU student database of approximately 5938 students.

3.3.2.2 Sampling Technique

A sampling technique refers to the method that is used to select the members of a sample. The members of the sample are selected using either probability or non-probability procedures. This study adopted a non-probability sampling for the respondents. The research adopted convenient or accidental sampling that involves selecting cases or units as they become available to the researcher (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Convenient sampling was adopted since the respondents were easily accessible to the researcher and the researcher was familiar with them. This saved time in administering questionnaires to easily approachable students and saved on money due to financial resource constraints.

3.3.2.3 Sample Size

A sample size is a smaller grouping of the entire population under consideration and which should characteristically resemble or reflect the entire population so as to aid in making generalizable conclusions (Fahum & Sandston, 2006). The choice of a sample size is affected by several factors such as the variance in the population, the desired precise of the estimate, required level of confidence, the range of error allowed, the number of subgroups of interest within a sample, and the cost of research. In this case, the researcher targeted a population of 200 respondents and drew a sample of 60 respondents. The sample was drawn from the the three levels of education in the various schools.
within the institution. The sample size was divided proportionately according to the varying sizes of the three university degree levels. Out of the 60 sampled; 10 represented the doctorate, 20 represented graduate and 30 represented the undergraduate students.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The researcher collected primary data using structured questionnaires containing closed ended questions. A structured questionnaire is used in large surveys where specific answers are anticipated, in the form of multiple choices or scale questions. Closed ended questions limits the response to predetermined categories and thus quick and easy to answer making them easy to get facts. The researcher used a scale of 1-5 for the questions and broke down the sections into; 1 to represent strongly agree, 2 represented agree, 3 represented neither agree nor disagree, 4 represented disagree and 5 represented strongly disagree.

The questionnaires were designed according to the research questions of determining the important dimensions that determine service quality, students expectations about quality and effects of university service quality on students and organized according to the outline of the literature review. Ethical standards were followed and there were provisions for unexpected situations.

3.5 Research Procedures

The research procedures included the design and development of the research instrument, pilot testing and administration of interviews and questionnaires, scheduling of subjects or participants, distribution and collection of instruments. Data collection instruments included questionnaires which were used as interview guides for the respondents who preferred that the researcher help in writing the responses. The data collection instrument was pilot tested with 10 respondents for the purpose of ensuring that the questions met the objectives. After the pilot stage, responses and feedback obtained helped the researcher to re-design the questions in terms of length, number of questions and clarity of language.

Nevertheless, the pilot test constituted part of the sample size and the responses tabulated along with the others. A pilot test is conducted to detect weaknesses in design and instrumentation. (Cooper and Schindler, 2011), asserts that careful piloting is necessary to ensure that all questions mean the same to all respondents. Changes proposed during the pretesting exercise were used to revise and finalize the questionnaire. Expert judgment of
content validly was used. The researcher sought assistance from the supervisor and other research experts from the university to assess the relevance of the content of the research tools against the objectives of the study. The data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire which contained closed ended questions.

3.6 Data Analysis Methods

The collected data was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program according to each variable of the study for analysis. This study used descriptive statistics. According to Cooper and Schindler (2002), descriptive analysis involves a process of transforming a mass of raw data into tables, charts, with frequency distribution and percentages, which are a vital part of making sense of the data. In this study, the descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency distribution used to analyze the demographic profile of the participants. The demographic data was tabulated using frequency and percentages. In order to describe the data, it included means and standard deviation of each variable. The coefficient of variation used where data was skewed. Additional statistics analysis such as correlation and regression used to show the relationship between the dependent variable and the whole group of independent variables. The results of the study was presented using tables and figures. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter consisted of the methodology that was used in describing the methods and procedures used in conducting the study. The research highlighted the research design, the target population, the sampling design, sampling frame, sample technique, sample size, data collection methods and research procedure all in that order. The next chapter addresses the results and findings of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings, analysis and interpretation of the data collected from respondents. It also presents the discussion about the assessment of university service quality and its effects on student satisfaction: a case of United States international university. The findings of the study were based on the responses from the questionnaires filled and information gathered on the research questions. From the questionnaire, the first set of research question was to determine the extent of service quality in the university. The second set provided responses on the extent of students’ expectations about the quality of tertiary education services in the university. Finally, the third set of questions in the questionnaire examined to what extent the university quality service has affected its students.

4.2 Response Rate

About 60 self-administered questionnaires were distributed among various USIU students out of which 43 were filled and returned, yielding a response rate of 71.7 %.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Response</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 General Information

4.3.1 Age

The study sought to find the Age of the respondents and the findings were as shown in the table below. As indicated in the Table 4.2, majority of the respondents 32.6% were 18 – 24 years old, 23.3% of the respondents were 25-34 years old, 20.9% of the respondents were 35- 44 years old, 16.3% of the respondents were 44-55 years old while the minority 7.0% were over 55 years old.
Table 4.2: Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-55 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2 Level of Education

The study also sought to establish the level of education of the respondents; consequently, the findings were as indicated in the table below. From the findings indicated in the Table 4.3, majority of the respondents, 48.8% were at the undergraduate level, 37.2% were graduates while the remaining 14% were doctorate students. The fact that majority of the students were undergraduate students mean that they had high expectations about the school and did not have much experience with the university.

Table 4.3: Level of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Dimensions of Service Quality

4.4.1 Tangibility

As a measure of service quality, tangibles consist of those things that a customer can see or touch. The tangibles includes the appearance of physical facilities, the furniture, the equipment uses to perform services, cleanliness, point of purchase display as well as the appearance of employees. The study sought to establish the tangible dimensions of quality of service at USIU. The findings were as displayed in Table 4.4. Asked on
whether the university buildings were conducive for learning, the respondents strongly agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.60 and a standard deviation of 0.76. On whether the university had modern technical equipment, the respondents strongly agreed to this as shown by a mean of 4.53 and a standard deviation of 0.50. On whether the university’s learning materials were easily accessible, the respondents agreed to this as indicated by a mean of 4.60 and a standard deviation of 0.54. When asked if USIU had well-functioning recreational services the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.26 and a standard deviation of 0.79.

Table 4.4: Tangible Dimensions of Service Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buildings are conducive for learning</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIU has modern technical equipment</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning materials are easily accessible</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIU has well-functioning recreational services</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.2 Responsiveness

Responsiveness is simply willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Responsiveness is also speed and timeliness of service delivery. This includes the speed of throughput and the ability of the service to respond promptly to customer service requests, with minimal waiting and queuing time. The study sought to establish the responsiveness dimension of quality of service at USIU. The findings were as displayed in Table 4.5. Asked on whether they had no difficulty with systems at USIU the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.35 and a standard deviation of 0.72. Asked if communication was clear and understandable the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.72. Asked whether the university employees told them exactly when a service was to occur, the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.66. On whether the Employees offered sufficient and convenient consultation, the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 1.08.
Table 4.5: Responsiveness Dimensions of Service Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have had no difficulty with systems at USIU</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication is clear and understandable</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees tell me exactly when a service will be performed</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees offer sufficient and convenient consultation</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.3 Reliability

Reliability is the consistency of performance and the dependability of an organization’s performance. It is the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. The study sought to establish the reliability dimension of quality of service at USIU. The findings were as displayed in Table 4.6. On whether USIU performed a service exactly as promise, the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.43 and a standard deviation of 0.69. When asked on whether the university had minimal student class sizes the respondents agreed which indicated by a mean of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.86. On whether USIU performs service as exactly as promised, the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 0.96. On whether the employees showed understanding of their specific needs, the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.63 and a standard deviation of 0.49. Asked if they felt safe in their transactions with the school, the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.65 and a standard deviation of 0.57. On the question of whether USIU considered students’ wishes and needs, the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.44 and a standard deviation of 0.59.

Table 4.6: Reliability Dimensions of Service Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal student class sizes</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIU performs a service exactly as promise</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees show understanding of my specific needs</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe in my transactions with the school</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIU considers my wishes and needs</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.4 Assurance

Assurance refers to knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. Assurance is knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. Assurance is one of the most important factors of service quality. This is because customers want to deal with people they can trust. The study sought to establish the assurance dimensions of quality of service at USIU. The findings were as displayed in Table 4.7. Asked if employees had professional appearance/image, the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 1.05. Asked on the trustworthy of employees, the respondents strongly agreed to this as indicated by a mean of 4.33 and a standard deviation of 0.75. On whether the employees quickly responded to students’ requests, the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.49 and a standard deviation of 0.55. Asked whether employees were knowledgeable to respond to students’ questions the respondents strongly agreed with a mean of 4.42 and a standard deviation of 0.66. Asked on whether the employees knew how to advise students’ on what would be the proper service for student’s specific need, the respondents strongly agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.93.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees have professional appearance / image</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees are trustworthy</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees quickly respond to my requests</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees are knowledgeable enough to respond to my questions</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees know how to advise me on what would be the proper service for my specific need</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.5 Empathy

The empathy dimension of service quality refers to employees showing care and providing individualized attention to students. A good academic environment in a higher learning institution is not only to establish a good teaching and learning culture for sharing of knowledge, but also to be involved in the student’s personal development as
well as academic matters by giving care and advice. The study sought to establish the empathy dimension of quality of service at USIU. The findings were as displayed in Table 4.8. On whether the university employees showed sincere concern in solving students’ problems, the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.51 and a standard deviation of 0.63. Asked if USIU employees offered caring and individualized attention, the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.85. When asked if USIU environment offered adequate counseling services, the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.63 and a standard deviation of 0.54.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees show sincere concern in solving my problems</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services are performed within reasonable time frame</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIU offers adequate counseling services</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees offer caring and individualized attention</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.5 Student Expectation of Quality of Tertiary Education Services**

The study sought to find out the student expectations about service of quality in tertiary education. The findings were as shown in Table 4.9. Asked on whether the quality of tertiary education services offered at USIU generally was above average, the respondents strongly agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.21 and a standard deviation of 0.56. On whether in USIU they learnt skills needed to get good results both academically and for future employment, the respondents strongly agreed as shown by a mean of 4.60 and a standard deviation of 0.49. On whether USIU gave them the access they need to learning support services and quality teaching, the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.58 and a standard deviation of 0.54.

On whether Studying at USIU saved them the cost of studying abroad for the same quality of education, the respondents strongly agreed as shown by a mean of 4.44 and a standard deviation of 0.89. Asked if the quality of education at USIU gave them value for their money the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.58 and a standard deviation of 0.54. On whether USIU recruited a sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians who possessed the skills necessary to help them fulfill their career responsibilities, the respondents strongly agreed 4.23 and a standard deviation of 0.84.
On whether the programs offered at USIU included various fields of knowledge and that the knowledge content covered and strategies for achieving the goals contained in students’ academic plans within the specified period, the respondents agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.58 and a standard deviation of 0.54. On whether USIU had modern equipment and computer labs for students to use, the respondents strongly agreed as indicated by mean of 4.70 and a standard deviation of 0.56. Asked if the staff at USIU understood the needs of both international and domestic students the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.42 and a standard deviation of 0.59. On whether USIU had a good communication and signage system so that students knew where and how to get help, the respondents strongly agreed as indicated by a mean of 4.42 and a standard deviation of 0.70.

Table 4.9: Student Expectation of quality of tertiary education services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The quality of tertiary education services offered at USIU generally is above average.</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At USIU I am taught the skills I need to get good results both academically and for future employment</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIU gives me the access I need to learning support services and quality teaching</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying at USIU saved me the cost of studying abroad for the same quality of education</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of education at USIU gives me value for my money</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIU recruits sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians who possess the skills necessary to help me fulfill my career responsibilities.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The programs offered at USIU include various field of knowledge, the knowledge content that will be covered and strategies for achieving the goals contained in students’ academic plans within the specified time frame.</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIU has modern equipment and computer labs for students to use</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At USIU the staff understand the needs of both international and domestic students</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USIU does have a good communication and signage system so that students know where and how to get help

4.6 Effects of University Quality of Service on Students

The study also sought to establish the effect of the university service quality on students. The findings were as shown in the table below. Asked if they were pleased with their academic achievements from USIU, the respondents agreed as shown by a mean of 4.63 and a standard deviation of 0.49. The question on whether they believed that USIU offered better than what the other universities would have offered had a mean of 4.58 and a standard deviation of 0.50. The respondents agreed that Satisfaction is poor when the services offered are below expectation, with a mean of 4.56 and a standard deviation of 0.63.

On the question of whether word of mouth from satisfied customers could help in attracting new students, the respondents agreed with a mean of 4.44 and a standard deviation of 0.70. Respondents strongly agreed that they would absolutely go back to USIU for further studies with a mean of 4.56 and a standard deviation of 0.63. Asked if they were pleased with the services offered to them by USIU, the respondents strongly agreed, as indicated by a mean of 4.56 and a standard deviation of 0.63. Asked if they considered themselves loyal to USIU, the respondents strongly agreed as shown by a mean of 4.49 and a standard deviation of 0.63.

Asked if they considered themselves attracted to USIU because of the high quality of service, the respondents strongly agreed as shown by a mean of 4.49 and a standard deviation of 0.63. Asked if they regretted being students at USIU, the respondents strongly disagreed as shown by a mean of 4.58 and a standard deviation of 0.54. Asked if they had ever heard negative publicity about USIU, the respondents strongly disagreed as shown by a mean of 4.53 and a standard deviation of 0.59. Asked if USIU did not meet all their expectations, the respondents strongly disagreed as shown by a mean of 4.53 and a standard deviation of 0.63.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StdDev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am pleased with my academic achievements from USIU</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that USIU offers me better than what the other universities would have offered me.</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Satisfaction is poor when the services offered are below expectation 4.56 0.63
Word of mouth from satisfied customers can help in attracting new students 4.44 0.70
I have/ I will come back for further studies. 4.47 0.67
I feel absolutely delighted by the services offered to me by USIU 4.56 0.63
I consider myself loyal to USIU
I was attracted to USIU because of the high quality of service 4.49 0.63
I regret being a student at USIU 4.58 0.54
I have heard negative publicity about USIU 4.53 0.59
USIU has not met all my expectations 4.53 0.63

4.7 Regression Analysis

In order to determine the relationship that exists between the dependent variable (student expectations about quality of tertiary education services) and the independent variables (dimensions of service quality, and the effects of university service quality on students), a multiple regression analysis was conducted. In this case the computer software; statistical package for social sciences (SPSS V 17.0), was used to code, enter, and calculate measurements of the multiple regressions.

4.7.1 Model summary

The summary of the model as generated is presented in table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.854 a</td>
<td>.729</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td>.15944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), X2, X1

Source (Researcher, 2015)

The findings show that $R$ which is the multiple correlation coefficient that shows quality of the prediction of the dependent variable by the independent variable is 0.854. This is a good indication since it points to a strong correlation. The $R$-Square which is the coefficient of determination shows that the two independent variables in the model
explain 72.9% of student expectations of the quality of tertiary education service. Subsequently from the Adjusted R-Squared it is evident that after adjusting the model for inefficiencies the independent variables can explain 72.9% of student expectations of the quality of tertiary education service.

4.7.2 Regression coefficients

The regression equation can be explained by the following regression coefficients.

Table 4.12: Regression Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.572</td>
<td>.852</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.017</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 X1</td>
<td>.372</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.338</td>
<td>2.260</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>.666</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Y

Source (Researcher, 2015)

To determine the relationship that exists between student expectations of the quality of tertiary education service and the two independent variables a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results generated from the SPSS in this case are shown in the table above. The estimated regression are summarized below:

Y=2.572 + 0.372X1 + 0.055X2

From the regression equation above it follows that holding dimensions of service quality, and the effects of university service quality on students’ constant, student expectations of the quality of tertiary education service increases by 2.572 units. The findings also show that holding all other independent variables constant other than dimensions of service quality, a unit increase in dimensions of service quality leads to a 0.372 increase in student expectations of the quality of tertiary education service, a unit increase in the effects of university service quality on students leads to a 0.055 increase in student expectations of the quality of tertiary education service. This shows that holding other factors constant, dimensions of service quality contributes most to student expectations of the quality of tertiary education service.
Consequently, at a 5% significance level, dimensions of service quality, and the effects of university service quality on students had 0.029, and 0.666 of significance respectively. This implies that dimensions of service quality is significant to the model since its significance coefficients are less than 0.05 (p<0.05). The effects of university service quality on students was however not significant to the model.

4.7.3 The analysis of variance (ANOVA)
To determine whether the overall regression model was a good fit for the collected data, an ANOVA was done. The output in this case is presented in the table below.

Table 4.13: ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>3.872</td>
<td>.048b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Residual</td>
<td>1.017</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.163</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Y
b. Predictors: (Constant), X2, X1

Source (Researcher, 2015)

The significance level in the model was 0.048 which is less the 5% level of significance used in the model. It therefore follows that the model is statistically significant in predicting how the independent variables affect student expectations about quality of tertiary education services. On the other hand, F critical at 5% significance level is 3.17 while the F-calculated is 3.872. It therefore follows that the overall model is significant since the F-calculated is greater than the F-critical.

4.8 Correlation Analysis

Pearson’s correlations analysis was conducted at 95% confidence interval to establish university service quality (X1) and its effects on student satisfaction (Y) case study of USIU. From the table below, it was deduced that there was a correlation coefficient of 0.348 between dimensions of service quality and student expectations of service quality. On the other hand the independent variable had a Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.118
with effects of university service quality on students. The independent variables thus had a positive significant correlation relationship with the dependent variable. This implies that there is a direct and positive relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables.

Table 4.14: Correlation Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>X1</th>
<th>X2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.348*</td>
<td>.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.348*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X1 Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td></td>
<td>.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2 Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.452</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.9 Chapter Summary

The chapter provided an introduction to the results and findings of the study. It also gave the general information on rate, age range, and educational level of the respondents. The chapter presented details on dimension of service quality, student expectation of quality of tertiary education services, and effects of university quality of service on students. A regression analysis was provided to test the influence among predictor variables. The chapter also sought to provide in detail the Pearson’s correlations analysis at 95% confidence interval to establish university service quality and its effects on students’ satisfaction.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter provides the summary of the findings from Chapter four. It also gives the conclusions and recommendations of the study based on the objectives of the study. The objectives of this study were to establish the important dimensions that determine service quality in Kenyan universities, to find out students’ expectations about the quality of tertiary education services at USIU and to assess the effects of university service quality on students. The study covered the undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctorate degree students at USIU. The research is concluded on the basis of the conclusions drawn from the research questions.

5.2 Summary

The purpose of this study was to assess university service quality and its effects on student satisfaction using the United States International University case. This was accomplished by identifying three research questions; what are the important dimensions that determine service quality in Kenyan universities, what are the students’ expectations on the quality of tertiary education services at USIU and what are the effects of university service quality on students.

Descriptive research design was used which involved collection of both qualitative and quantitative data such as satisfaction rate and demographic data. This study adopted convenient sampling to draw samples due to the ease of access to the respondents, time saving and its cost effectiveness. A sample size of 60 respondents was used in this study which represented students from three levels of education, undergraduates, graduates and doctorates. Data analysis was done by use of statistical package for social sciences which involved descriptive statistics. The data was then presented by use of frequencies and percentages. Also, additional statistical analysis such as correlation and regression were used to show relationships.

The first research question aimed at establishing the dimensions of service quality that existed at USIU and their effect on students. The study established that various dimensions of service quality were present at USIU. The respondents agreed that buildings were conducive for learning, the university had modern technical equipment,
and the university’s learning materials were easily accessible. It also established that USIU had well-functioning recreational services, the university had minimal student class sizes, university’s services were performed within reasonable period, and the systems in the university were easy to use with no difficulty.

The second question aimed at examining the students’ expectations of tertiary education and how USIU had prepared to meet the students’ expectations. From the study, it was revealed that USIU employees showed sincere concern in solving the student’s problems, the university employees offered caring and individualized attention. The study also established that the university performed services exactly as promised and the employees had professional appearance/image. The findings revealed that Communication was clear and understandable within the university. The findings also revealed that the university employees told the students exactly when a service was to take place. According to the findings, the university employees offered sufficient and convenient consultation.

The third research question aimed at examining the effects of quality service on students. The findings revealed that the quality of tertiary education services offered at USIU generally was above average, the students at USIU learned skills they needed to get good results both academically and for future employment. USIU gave students the access they needed to learning support services and quality teaching, and that Studying at USIU had saved the students the cost of studying abroad for the same quality of education. According to the findings, quality of education at USIU gave the students value for their money. In addition, USIU recruited a sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians who possessed the skills necessary to help students fulfill their career responsibilities.

The programs offered at USIU included various fields of knowledge. The strategies for achieving the goals contained in students’ academic plans within the specified time frame were well outlined for students. It was also found that the university had a good communication and signage system such that students knew exactly where and how to get help. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the students were pleased with their academic achievements from USIU. The students also, believed that USIU offered them better than what other universities would have offered them. The research also revealed that satisfaction was poor when the services offered were below expectations. The study also established that word of mouth from satisfied customers often helped universities in
attracting new students. Respondents strongly agreed that they would absolutely go back to USIU for further studies. The study also revealed that the students are happy by the services offered to them by USIU. According to the findings, the students consider themselves loyal to USIU.

5.3 Discussions

5.3.1 Dimensions of Service Quality

The study revealed that buildings are conducive for learning, the university had modern technical equipment, and the university’s learning materials were easily accessible. University’s services took place within a reasonable period and the systems in the university were easy to use with no difficulty. This findings were in line with Kurtz and Clow (1998) who asserts that tangibles includes the appearance of physical facilities, the furniture, the equipment uses to perform services, cleanliness, point of purchase display as well as the appearance of employees. For a university, the facilitating goods for service delivery include the lectures and tutorials, presentation slides, supplementary handout documents/materials, and recommended module text. It also includes the physical facilities such as the lecture theatres and tutorial rooms and their level of furnishing, decoration, lighting, and layout as well as auxiliary services such as catering and recreational amenities. For that reason, it is indispensable for universities to renew themselves visually, which would mean amendments in physical facilities, since students opt for the universities that have up to date standards in term of appearance (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996, 119-123).

The university had minimal student class sizes and well-functioning recreational services. Coles (2002) found that student satisfaction is decreased when class sizes are larger in earlier cohorts, and when students are taking compulsory core modules rather than optional modules. Large class sizes are therefore likely to cause dissatisfaction. A students’ perception of a university’s facilities is one of the main influences on their decision to enroll. Price et al (2003) also reported on the impact of an institution’s facilities on undergraduate student choice of university. They surveyed a number of universities over two years in order to determine students’ reasons for selecting a particular university. The average results for the two years were similar, the top eight reasons included the fact that it had the right courses, availability of computers, quality of library facilities, good teaching reputation, availability of “quiet” areas, availability of
areas for self-study, quality of public transport in the town/city, and a friendly attitude towards students.

The findings also established that the university employees showed sincere concern in solving the student’s problems and offered caring and individualized attention. The university performed services exactly as promised and the employees had professional appearance/image. The communication within the university was clear, timely and understandable to both employees and students. This was enhanced by use of student email accounts, the university students’ portal and the university blackboard educational technology. According to the findings, the university employees offered sufficient and convenient consultation.

These findings were in line with Zeithaml et al., (1990) who asserts that customers rate the ability of the service provider to perform the promised service dependably and accurately as most the important. According to Brady and Cronin (2001), customers value providers who consistently offer reliable service, whether occasioned through impromptu visits, scheduled periodic visits, or on-site response within Service Level Agreements (SLAs). It has been found that it is three times more important to be reliable than to have immaculately new equipment or flashy uniforms. Service providers particularly need to channel their best efforts to making their services reliable by keeping their word during the service delivery process so that their customers may have a positive perception.

5.3.2 Student Expectations of Tertiary Education

The quality of tertiary education services offered at USIU generally was above average. The students at USIU learnt the skills they need to get good results both academically and for future employment. These findings concurred with Billing (1998), who observed that, students go to school believing that tertiary qualification would get them a good job in the future. From the findings USIU gave students the access they needed to learning support services and quality teaching hence saving the students at USIU the cost of studying abroad for the same quality of education.

The programs offered at USIU included various fields of knowledge, the knowledge content was covered and strategies were placed for achieving the goals contained in students’ academic plans within the specified time frame. The study established that USIU recruited sufficient number of qualified workers and technicians who possessed the skills necessary to help the students fulfill their career responsibilities. These findings supported the Accreditation
Commission of Higher Education (2012), who claims that, students expect administrative and personnel quality in their institutions. Quality standards stipulate the recruitment of a sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians who possess the skills necessary to fulfill their career responsibilities.

Students expect administrative and personnel quality in the institutions. Quality standards stipulate the recruitment of a sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians who possess the skills necessary to fulfill their career responsibilities. These quality standards necessitate learning about student needs, communication with students, students’ problem solving and responding to students’ demands. Students expect the quality education that makes them stand out from students from other universities.

The study revealed that USIU had modern equipment and computer labs for students to use. This confirmed that infrastructure quality is an important factor to many students. It is because of the infrastructure concept framework which supports quality education, appropriate teaching tools should be available such as halls, yards that suit their functions, required tools and equipment, and adequate sporting facilities (Abdullah, 2006). The teaching staff quality depends on how the teaching staff is selected and the staff’s development because teachers are responsible for implementing high-quality educational programs, acting as academic counselors, and providing advice to their students. Students expect to have the best quality of the teaching staff that provides the best quality of knowledge.

The study established that USIU had a good communication and signage system that assisted students to know where and how to get help. This was consistent with what Alves & Raposo (2010) found out, that positive perceptions of service quality have a significant influence on student satisfaction and thus a satisfied student would attract more students through communications. Students can be motivated or inspired from both academic performance as well as the administrative efficiency of their institution. Shekarchizadeh, Rasli, and Hon-tat (2011), feel that mostly, higher education institutions seek to provide high quality services in their educational curricula and administrative processes in order to gain a competitive edge. The importance of service quality makes its measurement and its subsequent management an issue of utmost importance.

5.3.3 Effects of University Quality of Service on Students

The study revealed that students were pleased with their academic achievements from USIU. The students also, believed that USIU offered them better than what the other
universities would have offered them. The findings were in agreement with Devinder and Datta (2003), who observed that, identifying the factors of student satisfaction entails answering questions related to students’ satisfaction with educational services, how much students trust those services, and whether current students would advise prospective students to attend the institution. If satisfaction is high, then the university is making sizeable profits as a result of providing students with knowledge, skills and targeted abilities. When students are pleased with their academic achievement and their university life, they speak positively about the college because satisfaction is the ultimate goal, and the ultimate goal is a reflection of high levels of service quality (Majeed, 2008).

Word-of-mouth from satisfied customers can help in attracting new students. According to the findings, the students considered themselves loyal to USIU as a result they would definitely go back for further studies. These findings were in line with Molapo and Mukwada (2011) who insisted that customer loyalty to a brand leads to customer retention. Danesh, Nasab and Ling (2012) defined customer retention as “the future propensity of a customer to stay with the service provider. According to them, customer satisfaction is not the only variable that influences the retention of customers. Molapo and Mukwada (2011) defined customer retention as the marketing goal of preventing a customer from switching to another competitor. Edward and Sahadev (2011) stated, “Customer retention indicates customer's intention to repurchase a service from the service provider.” They used customer retention as a measure of the customer's intention to stay loyal to the service provider. For them, service quality and customer satisfaction are important antecedents of customer retention.

Satisfaction is poor when the services offered are below expectations. This finding confirmed Henry & Collet (2011) findings that students’ satisfaction could be high when the services offered are beyond their expectations or are just as they expected. On the other hand, it would be poor in an instance where they do not find the services offered being content which would make them speak ill of the university at stake. This would lead to popularity of the university going down tampering with its position in the market. Central values of an organization can also define the level of student satisfaction.

Word of mouth from satisfied customers can help in attracting new students. This confirmed that word-of-mouth communication from satisfied students to their friends, acquaintances, and relatives could help many academic institutions attract new students. These satisfied
students could go back to their previous academic institutions to study further or take other additional courses (Gruber, Fub, Voss & Glaser-Zikuda, 2010).

5.4 Conclusion

5.4.1 Dimensions of Service Quality
The study concluded that buildings at USIU are conducive for learning, the university has modern technical equipment and university’s learning materials are easily accessible, USIU has well-functioning recreational services, the institution has minimal student class sizes, university’s services are performed within reasonable time frame, and finally the systems in the university are easy to use with no difficulties. It also concluded that USIU employees show sincere concern in solving the student’s problems and that the university’s employees offer caring and individualized attention. This study concluded that the university performs a service exactly as promised and that the employees have professional appearance/image. The communication at the university is clear, timely and understandable and that services delivery is as promised since employees are always available for consultation.

5.4.2 Students Expectation of Quality of Tertiary Education Services
The study concluded that quality of tertiary education services offered at USIU generally are above average, the students at USIU are taught the skills they need to get good results both academically and for future employment. In addition, USIU give students the access they need to learning support services and quality teaching and that studying at USIU has saved the students the cost of studying abroad for the same quality of education since quality of education at USIU give the students value for their money. The study also revealed that USIU recruits sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians who possess the skills necessary to help students fulfill their career responsibilities.

5.4.3 Effects of University Quality of Service on Students
The study concluded that the students are pleased with their academic achievements from USIU and that the students believe that USIU offered them better than what other universities would have offered them. Another conclusion made from the study is that, satisfaction is poor when the services offered are below customers’ expectations and vice versa. The study showed that word-of-mouth from satisfied customers can help in
attracting new students. Finally, the study showed that USIU has a positive student retention rate as students agreed that they would absolutely go back to USIU for further studies since they were pleased with services offered to them.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Recommendations for Improvement

5.5.1.1 Dimensions of Service Quality
This study recommends that USIU should be able to maintain their buildings, ensure continuous availability of learning materials, maintain high levels of technology of learning equipment, and continuously admit manageable number of students in order to continue fulfilling their students’ expectations and satisfy their personal needs.

5.5.1.2 Student Expectations about Quality of Tertiary Education Services
This study recommends that the university continuously employ well qualified teaching staff to maintain and enhance the good quality of tertiary education that they offer. This study also recommends that the school seek to find out student expectation during their first year enrollment so as to adopt strategies that enables them meet student expectations.

5.5.1.3 Effects of University Quality of Service on Students
The study recommends that the university rewards those satisfied customers who engage in attracting new customers through word-of-mouth. The study also recommends that the university to also reward the students who comes back for their further studies after completing one stage. It helps in ensuring that students remain loyal; thus, increased customer retention.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Further Studies
The study only focused on one university (USIU); as result, the study recommends that a similar study be done across various universities to determine the quality of university education in the country. This study also recommends that a study be done to evaluate the effect of service quality on the performance of the university to establish the importance of service quality in a university.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: STUDENT INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Suzanne MbiroNuthamia
United States International University (USIU) - Nairobi
P.O. Box 14634-00800,
Nairobi, Kenya.

Dear Respondent,

I am a student pursuing a Masters Degree in Business Administration at the United States International University in Nairobi, Kenya. In partial fulfillment of the degree requirements, I am undertaking a research project on the assessment of university service quality and its effects on student satisfaction: a case of United States International University.

You have been selected to form part of this study. This is to kindly request you to assist me collect data by filling in the attached questionnaire. The information you provide will be used exclusively for academic purposes and treated with the confidence it requires. Upon request, the findings of this study will be availed to you.

Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully,

Suzanne MbiroMuthamia
APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

(Declaration: The information presented here will be treated confidential and will be used purely for education purposes)

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION.

1. Name of the respondent (Optional) …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. What is your age range?
   18 – 24 Years □ 44 – 55 Years □
   25 – 34 Years □ Above 55 years □
   35 – 44 Years □

3. Educational level
   Undergraduate level □ Doctorate level □
   Graduate level □

PART II: SPECIFIC INFORMATION.

The following section asks questions about university service quality and its effect on student satisfaction. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. There are no rights or wrong answers. Circle the numbers to indicate whether you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dimensions of Service Quality

<p>| 1. Buildings are conducive for learning |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>USIU has modern technical equipment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Learning materials are easily accessible</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>USIU has well-functioning recreational services</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Minimal student class sizes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Services are performed within reasonable time frame</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Employees show sincere concern in solving my problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>USIU offers adequate counseling services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Employees offer caring and individualized attention</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I have had no difficulty with systems at USIU</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>USIU performs a service exactly as promise</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Employees have professional appearance / image</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Communication is clear and understandable</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Employees tell me exactly when a service will be performed</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Employees offer sufficient and convenient consultation</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Employees are trustworthy</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>I feel safe in my transactions with the school</td>
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</table>
18. Employees are knowledgeable enough to respond to my questions

19. Employees quickly respond to my requests

20. Employees know how to advise me on what would be the proper service for my specific need

21. Employees show understanding of my specific needs

22. USIU considers my wishes and needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

Students’ expectations about the quality of tertiary education services

| 23. The quality of tertiary education services offered at USIU generally is above average. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. At USIU, I am taught the skills I need to get good results both academically and for future employment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. USIU gives me the access I need to learning support services and quality teaching | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
26. Studying at USIU saved me the cost of studying abroad for the same quality of education.

27. The quality of education at USIU gives me value for my money

28. USIU recruits sufficient number of professionally qualified workers and technicians who possess the skills necessary to help me fulfill my career responsibilities.

29. The programs offered at USIU include various field of knowledge, the knowledge content that will be covered and strategies for achieving the goals contained in students’ academic plans within the specified time frame.

30. USIU has modern equipment and computer labs for students to use.

31. At USIU the staff understand the needs of both international and domestic students.

32. USIU does have a good communication and signage system so that students know where and how to get help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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Effects of university service quality on students

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33. I am pleased with my academic achievements from USIU</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>I believe that USIU offers me better than what the other universities would have offered me.</td>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>Satisfaction is poor when the services offered are below expectation</td>
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<td>36.</td>
<td>I feel absolutely delighted by the services offered to me by USIU</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>Word of mouth from satisfied customers can help in attracting new students</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>I was attracted to USIU because of the high quality of service</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>I have/ I will come back for further studies.</td>
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<td>40.</td>
<td>I consider myself loyal to USIU</td>
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<td>41.</td>
<td>I regret being a student at USIU</td>
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<td>42.</td>
<td>I have heard negative publicity about USIU</td>
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<td>43.</td>
<td>USIU has not met all my expectations</td>
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