
Understanding Customer Expectation is Critical in Professional Education -A Descriptive Study in Indian Scenario

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Abstract

Professional education has gained importance in India after globalization. The knowledge, attitude and skill have spread to every sphere of education. Even in rural areas, the need for professional education has been realized. In spite of several efforts, our educational institutes are not in the top 200 list in the world. So it is the need of the hour to find out the reasons behind this. Probably customer expectation is to be addressed in a systematical manner. Both adequate and desired expectations have different roles in professional education. The whole study has taken "student" as the customer in professional institution. It is an exploratory study with data mostly from secondary sources. Also the factors for customer expectation have been judged as per the recent market. Internal Marketing as a tool finds a suitable berth in meeting the customer expectation. The role of Govt. and other advisory bodies guided me to provide some recommendations for the future players. The study has not covered other stakeholders' expectations in detail except "student's". The observations and suggestions will enlighten both entrepreneurs and other academicians in professional education.

Introduction

"Knowledge is wisdom". Education transforms the knowledge and dispels ignorance. It is the power which drives overall development of individual. In Indian Context, the role of professional education cannot be ignored. As a developing nation, skills and knowledge must go hand in hand. Premier institute like IITs, IIMs, IIITs and others have paved a building pillar to the country. Where poverty is an effect, probably lack of education is the reason. The customer mainly the student's preference, importance and expectation from education have changed drastically after globalization era. Quality has become a buzz word for all of us. Minimum expectation from the professional institute has a range of variation intending to think in depth the real cause. Understanding the customers has now become a key task before delivery of the quality.

Objectives of the study

- To study the education industry and various stakeholders
- To understand customer expectation in professional education
- To find out various factors that influence the student expectation
- To give a new dimension for the coming players in the professional education.

Keywords

*Customer expectation,
Internal Marketing,*

Research methodology

Exploratory research is used here. Data was collected from secondary sources such as books, journals to understand professional industry and its various components. Apart from this, I have visited different important management and regulatory websites and professional magazines. Some more data were collected through personal and telephonic interviews and discussion with leading corporate people and their feelings for professional education especially for

Engg and management one. In addition to this few publishers have directly helped to provide useful data on professional education.

1.0: Professional Education

Professional education is basically the knowledge given to boost the skills apart from the basic areas. Any programme that helps to increase knowledge, attitude and skills (KAS) are basically termed as professional education. In India due to diversity in geography and language, we come across much professional education. The role of professional education is prominent in four areas; they are engineering, medical, management and agricultural & allied sciences. Not only in regular mode, but also in the distance and correspondence mode, many professional institutes have started functioning. Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is the largest university having highest no of students imparting education in India and abroad.

2.0: Education as a service Industry

Education in India is spectacular as compared to other country in the world. The great Nalanda University has attracted many students out of India. People from Western world have appreciated our education system. It is the fundamental rights as per Indian constitution. Education is a service industry with lot of factors responsible for its development and growth. It is run by both private and public sector. The emergence of many professional sectors such as vocational schools, finishing schools etc is definitely a proud for Indian education. It is the second largest industry after USA in the world. Employment avenues, age factor, income, knowledge and women participation has given a new dimension to professional education. This results a total literacy rate of 74.04% as per census 2011 where male is 82.14% and female is 65.46%. Figure-1 shows the details Academician. This industry is having lot of customers, may be internal and external.



Fig-1: Major stakeholders in education industry (Secondary sources)

The primary customers are the students. Parents, academicians, investor, entrepreneurs are also important in education industry.

3.0: Customer expectation

3.1: Customer Expectations: Customer expectation is the beliefs about the particular service (Zeithaml & Bitner) that makes as a standard or reference points where he/she measure the performance. This comparison gives the satisfaction and dissatisfaction in his/her mind. Any deviation up to a certain limit is the tolerance zone for the customer. Different customers have different tolerance level, known as popularly "Zone of tolerance". As zone of tolerance varies, level of expectation of individual also differs. The minimum level they expect from service provider is known as "Adequate service". On the other hand the highest can be termed as "desired service level".

3.2: Desired Expectations: In education, especially in professional one, when students get admitted to particular organization, they hope to get a good job after their course completion. This is the desired level of expectation. Some of the desired expectation is given below

3.2.1: Infrastructure: Students expect a good infrastructure in all professional education. Class room and Laboratories are to be updated and expects quality in maintenance. Canteen, auditorium, Hostel, Gymnasium, Medical etc are to be provided with minimum facilities. All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) also prioritizes that when going for certification. In all engg and management colleges Ac class rooms are prevalent. So a good environment and hygiene is the top priority for the students.

3.2.2: National and International Accreditation: Professional institution certificate is important for the customers. They must be accepted by all players particularly the industry. The course must be duly approved by authority such as AICTE, National council of vocational Training (NCVT), Medical Council of India (MCI), and UGC University Grant Commission) etc so that the students passing, may not face problem in applying to particular job in private and Government sector.

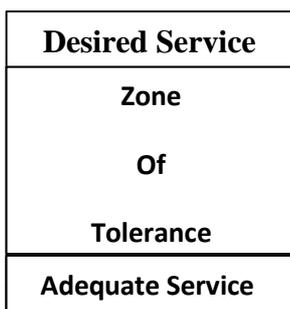


Fig-2: Service expectation of customer (Source: Zeithaml & Bitner)

3.2.3: Course Curriculum: In India after globalization, many courses have been introduced by government and private bodies. Students in all cases expect a good curriculum in their respective courses so that they earn updated market knowledge with practice required for that industry or profession. They also see that the course must be accepted by many good international organization or institution when they decide to go for higher study outside India. For example Many B-Schools have removed specialization concept and offering MBA as general mode. Some of the leading institution is providing courses in workshop mode rather than regular course structure.

3.2.4: Placement or Job Opportunities: Regardless of the situation, all students expect a job opportunities after Passing the particular courses from the institution. They do not also map their competency for the particular job. Their skill must fit the expected job. Also the remuneration from the particular job is too high. It is observed that at the entry level, student's expectation for the salary is not up to the market structure where they lack practice. They also expect choice for their proper career in the industry. Sometimes they cannot comrade on the place posting, looking for home state or home country or own locality posting at the initial stage.

3.2.5: Quality Faculty/Instructor: As a practice from old days, we Indians believe the best quality teachers in all institution. Not only study, but also in other areas they should be well equipped. They must exhibit extra as compared to other teachers or institution. Behavior also makes an impact with students. They always prefer people with sound knowledge and pay respect for them.

3.3: Adequate Expectations: As stated earlier, adequate are the minimum level for the customer in service context. Compared to the education in particular, the students are always job oriented after completion of the courses. The job may be in the private or in the public sector. In a situation where there is a market crash or slow economy, the expectation level of getting a good job lowers. In those circumstances, they try to get a job with minimum pay or sometimes no pay. This situation is known as adequate level where they compromise many things to get a job. It is observed that they can accept the job from unbranded company or for any odd location due to the scarcity or crisis in the job market.

It is essential to critically judge the expectation from the customer point of view. The following points give an idea of various customer expectations in Indian scenario. They are

3.3.1: Regular Class or Teaching: As professional education, people pay more money as compared to general stream. As a result, they try that the classes or the courses must run as per the duration and lesson plan provided by the institute. Few cases it is observed that the institute delays in finishing the courses which hindrances for applying to other courses in timely. Many good scholars are deprived of getting admission to other institution because of this reason.

3.3.2: Timely Information: As education sector is growing rapidly and lot of players has entered, many new job oriented courses are coming. The institution on the other hand should provide to the continuing students so that they can avail the opportunity. As a student, he or she may not be strong enough to collect information from the outside world. Various competitive exam and related information must be shared with the students. They also expect national and international magazines, journals and books in their library.

4.0: Factors that influence customer expectation

Various factors are responsible for sensitization of customer expectation. Both the adequate and desired level has increased manifold after this. The variation in these factors is high as result entrepreneurs and investors need to take some risk to get their return. Some of the major are

4.1: Technology: Technology has minimized the distance between industry and customers. Internet and others prompted individuals to think and find other opportunities at a very low cost and minimum time. Digitalization had imposed a major threat to Text Book. E- Learning and E- books are the medium of instruction in much professional institution. Student scan avail the talk by reputed academicians by sitting at home. Mr.Manzar Khan, Managing director, Oxford University Press in India said" Digitization is the way forward for supporting teaching and learning.

(Source: www.ugc.ac.in and www.pwc.com)

Content has to be developed, digitized and made available". So digital content preparation and implementation is now a challenge for all Indian publishers.

4.2: Role of Government & Regulatory Bodies: Government at both centre and State in India is creating awareness about various educations available at both private and Government level. In the budget 18% has increased towards education stream making it a total of 61,427 crore where higher education is about 15,458 crore. In the National budget 2012-2013, 1000 crore rupees has allocated for national skill development fund. Also in 12th Plan, 6000 schools have been proposed at each block levels to reach the excellence. The National skill development corporation (NSDC) opened 496 permanent and 2429 skill mobile centers in 220 districts across 24 states along with their partners. More than 89,500 persons have been trained and almost 80% employed. Establishment new IITs, IIMs and AIIMS at different states has given new thinking lines to study in this top notch institution. AICTE, UGC and 12 other advisory purified the Indian education system with proper rules and regulation. So it has opened the eye of customers. Figure-3 shows the market segmentation in detail.

4.3: Entry of Private and Corporate entity: Indian education in all spheres has invited private and corporate people to establish world class institution. Nirma University in Gujarat is one of the examples of that which has come from Nirma industries. Due to inadequate resources from Govt, the private entry has given a different taste for the students are moving towards them. The facilities, courses and skills from them are quite acceptable by industries also. Sikim Manipal and Amity University is the best example. There are a total of 145 private universities in India as per UGC report.

4.4: Easy Funding for education: Major Banks have made education loan a route for increasing revenue. Though it has gone for around 5% as bad loans, they have started financing vocational education also. In the coming 3 years, National council on skill development has estimated that around 25 lakhs people will avail the credit for skill development. Girls are also getting concession of around 0.5% as reported from UBI management sources. Hence money is not a constraint for the students to think other institution as a study point.

4.5: Investment opportunity in Education: Investment in education invited many world class institutions to India. As of now 100 % FDI is allowed through automatic route. As per data from DIPP (Department of industrial policy and promotion), FDI in education reached to US\$ 660.93 million during April 2000-September 2012. Indian School of Business (ISB) Hyderabad is one of the best examples where the students get the opportunity of best faculty around the globe. MCI (Medical Council of India) has also allowed Fortis health care, max health care and Apollo hospital to establish medical colleges in India. So investment in professional education is indeed a potential for the customers, to think best possible alternatives.

4.6: Job assistance by Institution: It is the ultimate that the students should get a job in their appropriate area. Many engineering and other professional colleges in India stood their identity with respect to the job they provide. They took a huge risk and collaborate with industry or institution for job or skill development work. In Odisha, KIIT, deemed university is one of the best examples. We cannot forget BITS as a institution of National repute for engineering students. At NIT, Warangal the hiring scenario is different. In B.Tech out of 720 students, 80% are placed as reported on 14th Dec 2012, but in M. Tech out of 500, only 150 are placed. As reported from RV College of engineering, 40% are placed in B. Tech Category. It is observed from the market that Companies ignore higher degree such as Masters and PhDs as compared to B.Tech or BE.

4.7: Entry of women and other weaker section of Society: If we see the literacy level in India, women have come forward and this has also reflected in technical, vocational and other professional institution. Separate women's college, polytechnic, university and engineering college are a model of inspiration towards higher studies. Banks have agreed to give concession in education loan for weaker section of the women.

4.8: Competition: At last one thing is common that competition especially in professional education boost the competitive mind of the Indian students. Many coaching centers and institutes have imparted training to the fresher's to get admitted into top class Engg, Management and Other professional courses. Some of the renowned institutions are SUPER 30 in Patna, ALLEN in Kota, Rajstan, Aakash Institute, Chanakya IAS, IMS, ARIFIN and TIME for MBA.

4.9: Internal Marketing: Let us understand what a service triangle speaks about the service delivery aspects. It is a process where it motivates employees to deliver the best service to the clients or Customers. Hence Internal branding of the employee is involved in the process. Once the employee is motivated, he/she will go for positive word of mouth. As students are more influenced by the teachers in that institution, the next step of choosing a programme or taking admission in that organization is influenced by them. In many situations, the admission decision taken by the students or their parents is changed by the influence of employee in that organization. So internal marketing is a reason for changing the customer expectation.

Recommendations

After a thorough study from various sources and analyzing the market trend, I recommend the following things. Of course we may not implement all in the initial phase, but five things are very much crucial. I can say these are "*Panchmantra*". As the completion is too high; we must be precise and concise in our approach to the students. They are given in a Tabular form below.

Major market trend	Recommendations
Technology evolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitalization needed in many courses • CDs, Videos may be priority for visibility.
Job Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More industry liasioning is required • Student should be aware of the job they are going to do in corporate
Globalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be exposed to international market and courses • Collaboration with foreign institute will help a lot to the students
Internal Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate knowledge to the facilitator or faculty about the course • "Keep to promise" should be the mantra
Quality education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No compromise in quality • Quality must cater to the student expectation

Suggestions

The study gives a general understanding of the customers in this industry. It needs the special expectation for each category to derive a concrete strategy. Due to time constraint, the coverage is not adequate. I suggest carrying a survey among each category to be more and precise in knowledge about the student mass. This will clearly depict the student expectation in a deeper sense.

Conclusion

Professional education is a pillar for our economy. This industry needs a detailed scan of the various viruses present in order to escape the knowledge which is the foundation for our future generation. In this context, we find, students are the main focal point for the professional education. As a customer, we need to understand their expectation from before imparting education for them. When competition is knocking at our doorstep, retaining the student is now too essential. Their minimum and maximum feelings and anticipation play a vital role both for functioning and brand building. We cannot make quality but the word quality will be automatically come when we properly understand the expectation of our customer especially the student community.

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