

Article

The Impact of Strategic Marketing Performance on Educational Service Quality and Student Satisfaction: A Case Study of Imam Al-Kadhim College

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Abstract: Strategic marketing performance holds paramount importance in revealing the structural capital of all institutions, particularly educational institutions, amidst the heightened competition witnessed across various sectors. This competition ranges from market saturation of universities and colleges, whether governmental, private, local, or international, to Arab, regional, and global universities. This research aims to elucidate the impact of strategic marketing performance in its dimensions (marketing message, marketing environment, marketing objectives, marketing and strategic planning strategies, human and material resources) on the quality of educational service represented by the following factors (employees, recruitment, faculty members, institutional image (reputation), college infrastructure, educational material, student activities, admissions and registration, library), and student satisfaction represented by dimensions (satisfaction with teaching, administrative, and technical staff, satisfaction with educational material, satisfaction with institutional image (reputation), satisfaction with college infrastructure) for the study sample (Imam Al-Kadhim College) by preparing a questionnaire encompassing three above-mentioned variables and their key inquiries. The results were extracted, confirming the study hypothesis of the significant effect of marketing strategies on the quality of banking service and student satisfaction at Imam Al-Kadhim College.

Citation: Abdullah, A, A. Impact of Strategic Marketing Performance on Educational Service Quality and Student Satisfaction: A Case Study of Imam Al-Kadhim College. American Journal of Economics and Business Management 2024, 7(9), 574-587.

Received: 10th July 2024

Revised: 11th August 2024

Accepted: 24th August 2024

Published: 27th Sept 2024



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Keywords: Strategic Marketing Performance, Quality, Educational Service Quality, Student Satisfaction, Imam Al-Kadhim College

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, the topic of service quality and customer satisfaction is crucial in today's business environment, given the ongoing competition resulting from rapid environmental changes posing a threat to the survival and continuity of organizations (Saleem, 2024). Therefore, Imam Al-Kadhim College (AS) was selected as both the sample and the field of practical application for this study due to its status as a government educational institution not administratively affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The college enjoys popularity and public appeal, especially in light of the significant population growth, which inevitably leads to increased interest in such institutions and a noticeable rise in their numbers, particularly

in the past few years (Bouranta, 2024). This has necessitated intense competition parallel to the competition for studying abroad, requiring educational institutions to possess quality service delivery as the driving factor for competition among these organizations. This quality significantly contributes to discovering opportunities and knowledge to achieve desired objectives optimally and sustain the continuity of their activities. Additionally, possessing strategic marketing performance enables the organization to enhance its competitive position beyond its counterparts operating in the same field (Xiaolin, 2024).

Furthermore, the researcher found it necessary to clarify the concepts presented beforehand, which serve as effective tools for guiding organizations toward achieving their long-term objectives by fostering a competitive spirit and achieving student satisfaction. The latter has become a fundamental cornerstone entrusted with the compass of competition since it serves as both an attraction factor and a means of retaining customers during the study period (Lara, 2024). Moreover, students themselves become one of the elements of promotion for these institutions through conveying a positive image to their peers or through positive comments on various social media channels and among their social circles, among other factors. Thus, students are one of the most effective promotion elements in the educational institution environment. This necessitates gaining the trust of students according to important conditions that comply with the prevailing laws and regulations within the framework of service quality and strategic marketing performance. The research is structured around four pillars: the first embodies the research methodology, the second focuses on reviewing the theoretical frameworks of the research variables, and the third concentrates on the practical (applied) aspect of the research (Ande, 2024). The fourth is dedicated to the results and the recommendations derived from the research.

2. Materials and Methods

First Section: Research Problem

Institutions worldwide, particularly in Iraq, are experiencing competition that necessitates the adoption of effective strategies across all fields and activities to enable them to confront this competition and achieve their strategic and operational objectives (LI, 2024).

The research problem is highlighted through several questions, including:

1. What is the level of achievement of each variable among the variables and its availability in the organization or competing organizations?
2. Is there a correlation between the quality of educational service and student satisfaction?
3. Is there a correlation between marketing strategy and student satisfaction?
4. What is the extent of the impact of each variable on the other variables?

Second Section: Research Objectives

The research aims to clarify a set of objectives, including:

1. Introducing the extent of the application of quality standards for educational services and marketing strategies in higher education institutions.
2. Introducing the awareness level of higher education institutions of student satisfaction.
3. Identifying the relationships between strategic marketing performance and customer satisfaction, educational service quality, and student satisfaction.
4. Determining the construct validity of the measures adopted in the research.

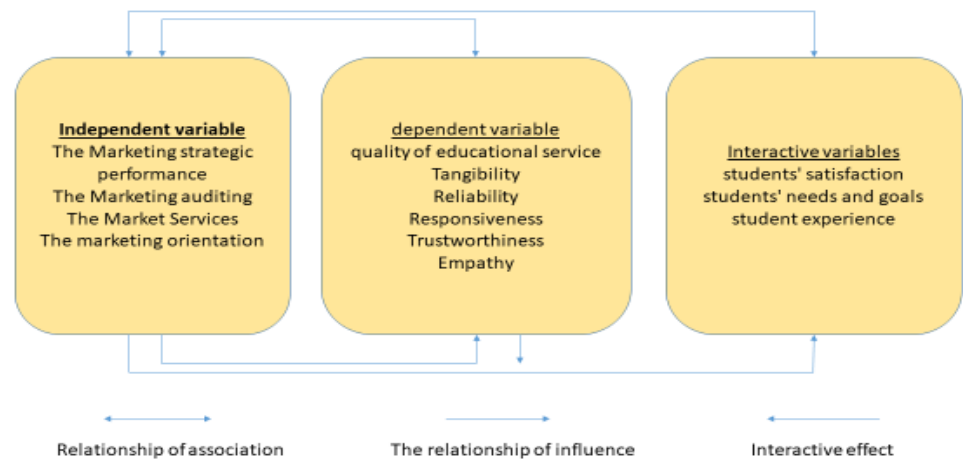
5. Determining the extent of the impact of both strategic marketing performance and educational service quality and their dimensions on student satisfaction.
6. Determining the level of interactive influence of strategic marketing performance and educational service quality on student satisfaction.

Third Section: Significance of the Research

The research holds paramount importance as outlined below:

1. Addressing important variables in the success and sustainability of educational organizations amidst fierce competition, in addition to their continuity in conducting activities and achieving desired objectives.
2. The application of research within an educational institution is crucial due to its prevalence in both private and public business environments in the Iraqi job market, where there is high competitiveness.
3. The societal need for the outputs of educational institutions is characterized by scientific rigour, a good reputation, and the ability to attract students, faculty administrative staff, and technicians (Gikandi, 2024).

Fourth Section: Research Model



Fifth Section: Research Hypotheses

1. The First Primary Hypothesis: There is a significant meaningful relationship between the quality of educational service and overall student satisfaction, at both the general and dimensional levels.
2. The Second Primary Hypothesis: There is a significant meaningful relationship between strategic marketing performance and overall student satisfaction, at both the general and dimensional levels.
3. The Third Primary Hypothesis: There is a significant meaningful impact of the dimensions of educational service quality on student satisfaction (Zhou, 2024).
4. The Fourth Primary Hypothesis: There is a significant meaningful impact of the dimensions of strategic marketing performance on student satisfaction (Jiang, 2024).

Sixth Section: Research Instruments

The researcher developed a customized questionnaire to test the research hypotheses and measure their variables, using a seven-point Likert scale. The questionnaire comprised three parts, each addressing one of the three research variables: strategic marketing performance, educational service quality, and student satisfaction.

Seventh Section: Research Sample

The research sample was selected from the faculty of Al-Imam Al-Kadhim (AS) College of Islamic Sciences at the University of Baghdad, due to its significance in supplying the job market with both scientific and practical competencies in various disciplines offered by the college's departments and branches (Buckley, 2024). The college employs over 600 staff members who undertake administrative, technical, and teaching tasks to serve a large number of students across various scientific disciplines. A total of 290 questionnaires were distributed, of which 239 fully completed questionnaires meeting all criteria were retrieved, representing an 82% retrieval rate, which is relatively high and acceptable for statistical analysis.

Eighth Section: Temporal and Spatial Conditions

The research writing commenced at Al-Imam Al-Kadhim (AS) College in Baghdad, starting from the selected research sample location, which served as the main starting point for the research problem. This occurred during the academic year 2021-2022.

Second Section: Theoretical Aspect

Firstly: Strategic Marketing Performance

1. What is Marketing Performance?

Marketing performance is defined by Awatif Younis as the intermediary between change and environmental adaptation, a mechanism through which an organization can adapt to external environmental variables to achieve its objectives (Al-Zayani, 2004). It is also defined as "the company's achievement level of its set objectives in the marketing plan" (Ambler, Kokkinaki, & Puntoni, 2004). Marketing performance is further defined as "a continuous comprehensive activity that reflects the organization's ability to utilize its potential according to specific principles and standards in light of its future goals. It is influenced by several variables affecting the organization's ability to adapt to the environment and achieve its objectives efficiently and effectively, thereby ensuring its continuity and sustainability in various activities" (Mahgoub, 1999). It is also defined as "reflecting the degree of success or failure of the organization through its efforts and ability to achieve goals related to survival and adaptation to environmental variables" (Salem, 2014). Based on these definitions, marketing performance can be considered a measurement unit for the success or failure of marketing plans adopted by the organization, considering available resources and desired objectives.

2. The Importance of Marketing

Marketing is defined by the American Marketing Association in 1985 as "the process involving planning, implementation of concepts related to pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to achieve exchange processes towards satisfying individuals and meeting organizational goals." Additionally, it is defined as "a social process through which individuals or groups obtain what they need or desire through exchange processes for products and determining their value" (Al-Bakri, 2002). It is also defined as "an art and science resulting from precise planning and execution using the latest tools and techniques. Skilled marketers constantly update classical practices and innovate new ones to find creative and practical ways to adapt to new marketing realities. Marketing management is the art and science of selecting target markets, acquiring and retaining customers, and developing them by creating and delivering superior value to customers" (Kotler, Keller, & Chernev, 2022).

Through these definitions, the objectives of marketing for both service and production organizations, as well as the common strategic objectives with the rest of the organization's activities (profit, growth, survival) are highlighted, including:

- a. Providing employment opportunities.
- b. Influencing the gross output in the economy.
- c. Contributing to meeting the needs and desires of customers.

3. Types of Marketing

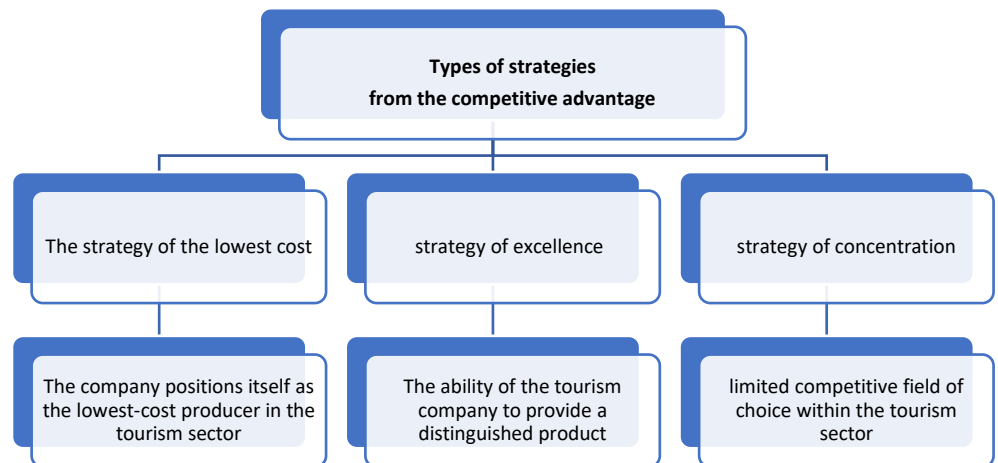
Each product has its audience and targets a specific demographic to meet their desires. Understanding the nature of customers is essential for optimal targeting in directing marketing campaigns. The following are the most important types of marketing in our present day:

- a. Service Marketing
- b. Digital Marketing

4. Marketing Strategies:

Marketing strategy represents "a plan or approach adopted by a company to produce and market its products in the market, protect against competition, and achieve desired objectives" (Al-Bakri, 2008). It is also defined as "developing company insights into the markets it cares about, setting and developing objectives, and preparing marketing programs that establish the company's position and respond to customer value requirements in the target market" (Berkowitz, Kerin, & Rudelius, 2000).

Figure No. (2) Types of tourism marketing strategies in terms of competitive advantage



Form (2) types of marketing strategies in the tourism sector from the competitive advantage perspective

5- Strategic Marketing Performance

Strategic marketing performance represents the extent to which an organization achieves its strategic objectives outlined in its strategic plan. Organizations strive for survival, continuity, and growth by crafting innovative strategies, engaging in various activities, and capturing significant market share. This is accomplished through the adoption, belief in, and execution of strategies derived from sound marketing environmental analysis and established goals.

Second: Service Quality in Education

Interest in the concept of quality and service quality within organizations, particularly in manufacturing industries, initially emerged as a fundamental pillar for building a competitive advantage that is difficult to replicate. This focus has grown over the past two decades to emphasize the importance of quality in the service sector as well as in the manufacturing and production sectors. Defining service quality is more complex than defining product quality due to the variability among individuals, time, and situations. This complexity is attributed to the inherent characteristics of services, such as perishability, intangibility, inseparability, and heterogeneity. Services cannot be stored, they do not result in ownership, they are consumed simultaneously as they are produced, and their quality depends on who provides them and when and where they are provided. These factors make measuring service quality particularly challenging, especially since the customer is an integral part of the production, delivery, and evaluation process. In education, students are long-term customers who actively participate in the design and production of the educational service.

Quality in education means making learning enjoyable and engaging, and ensuring that instructors remain vigilant in capturing students' attention for discussions (Tribus, 1988). The concept of quality in higher education encompasses several dimensions, including:

- The added value in education.
- Avoiding deviations in the educational process.
- Aligning educational outcomes with planned objectives, specifications, and requirements.
- Excellence in education.
- Fitness for purpose.
- Matching educational outcomes and acquired experiences with their intended use.
- Meeting or exceeding student (customer) expectations in education.

From the perspective of Total Quality Management (TQM), educational quality is based on the belief in establishing an educational organization founded on a systems approach, incorporating management systems, technical systems, and social systems. This ensures the quality of inputs, such as students, faculty, supporting staff, and infrastructure, as well as the quality of processes, which include teaching and learning activities. Ultimately, this leads to quality outputs in the form of well-educated graduates. (Sahney, Banwet, & Karunes S., 2003).

Third: Customer Satisfaction

1. Who is the Customer?

A customer is defined as the end user of an organization's products, and their decisions are influenced by internal factors such as personality, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and memory, as well as external factors like resources, family influence, preference groups, and friends. Customers can be individuals or organizations from rural or urban areas, and various segments of society. A customer is someone who purchases goods and services to satisfy personal needs. In this context, Al-Amiri and Al-Ghalibi point out that customers may be individuals or organizations that pay for goods and services produced by other organizations. A customer can be seen as someone who buys the outputs of an organization, whether goods or services. An operational definition of an internal customer refers to all individuals working within the university who provide services and contribute to its future vision by participating in decision-making processes. Internal customers include professors, students, administrative staff, and other users.

2. What is Customer Satisfaction?

Customer satisfaction is a crucial topic that has gained significant attention in recent times. Although it is not a new concept in business organizations, the consumer protection movement has highlighted its importance. Consumer protection associations and government agencies have also encouraged more efforts in this area. Organizations have realized an important fact: their existence and continuity in the business field are linked to the extent to which customers accept them through the goods and services they offer. Customers have perceptions of the value of a product or service, and they compare these expectations with the actual value. If the performance exceeds the customer's expectations, it results in satisfaction, which can be defined as the feeling of joy or disappointment that results from comparing the performance of a service with the customer's expectations. If the performance falls short of the customer's expectations, it leads to dissatisfaction. However, if the performance matches the expectations, the customer experiences satisfaction, and if the performance exceeds the expectations, the customer experiences high satisfaction.

Based on the above, internal customer satisfaction refers to the feeling of joy or disappointment resulting from comparing achieved performance with expected benefits, which include:

- **Opportunity for Interaction and Communication:** Providing positive interactions and relationships between internal customers across different departments, which satisfy their needs and desires.
- **Distribution of Entitlements:** Advantages related to fair distribution of benefits among students and boosting morale. The greater these benefits, the higher the internal customer satisfaction.
- **Justice Among Students:** Ensuring fairness among students within the college in various areas.
- **Opportunities for Participation:** Allowing participation in various activities according to their hobbies and aspirations.
- **Academic Stability:** Providing internal customers with clear and explicit guarantees during the performance of their duties, which increases their satisfaction.
- **Relationships Based on Understanding:** Establishing relationships between professors and internal customers (students) based on mutual understanding and harmony, helps professors gain student loyalty and create a suitable academic environment that ensures their happiness.
- **Provision of Necessary Resources:** Providing necessary facilities for students to perform their tasks effectively, such as well-equipped classrooms, computer facilities, internet access, laboratories, workshops, green spaces, and recreational services.
- **Student Autonomy:** Allowing students some degree of independence and freedom in certain aspects.
- **Respect and Appreciation:** Internal customers (students) spend most of their time at college seeking respect and appreciation from faculty, administration, and peers. Feeling valued and respected makes them happy and positively affects their satisfaction.

3. Results

First - Data Testing

A. Normality Test

Table (1)

Normality Test of Data Distribution

Variables / Dimensions	Kolmogorow - Smirnow Test
Quality of Educational Services	0.089
Strategic Marketing Performance	0.085
Student Satisfaction	0.805

Based on the above table (Table 1), it is evident that all dimensions meet the required criteria, confirming that laboratory tests should be adopted.

B. Sample Adequacy Test

Table (2)

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sample Adequacy for Factor Analysis

KMO and Bartlett Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of Sampling Adequacy		0.968
Test (Bartlett)	(Chi-Square) value	14344.144
	Level of significance (Sig)	0.000

Source: SPSS v.23

From the above table, it is evident that the data is adequate for conducting factor analysis, and there are significant correlations between the dimensions. Thus, factor analysis is an appropriate method for analysing the data.

C. Cronbach's Alpha Test for Scale Reliability

Table (3)

Level of Internal Consistency of Research Dimensions (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability assessment
Strategic Marketing Performance	0.855	good
Quality of Educational Services	0.889	good
Student Satisfaction	0.872	good
Internal Consistency of the Overall Scale	0.896	good

Source: SPSS v.23

We conclude from the results in the above table that there is a high level of reliability.

D. Multicollinearity Test

Table (4)

Level of Internal Consistency of Research Dimensions (Cronbach's Alpha)

VIF	variables
3.155	independent variable Strategic Marketing Performance

2.548	Interactive Variable	Educational Service Quality
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Source: SPSS v.23

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test was used to detect multicollinearity among the independent dimensions to ensure that there is no multicollinearity among the independent dimensions before testing the hypotheses. The data from the above table confirms the absence of multicollinearity between the independent variable and the interactive variable, as it is considered an independent variable due to its influence by the dependent variable.

1. Statistical Description of the Sample**Table (5)****Level of Importance According to the Research Scale Categories**

Extremely High	Very High	High	Average	Low	Somewhat Low	Very Low	Level of Importance Category
6.16-7	-6.15 5.28	-5.27 4.47	-4.46 3.55	-3.54 2.73	1.84-2.72	1-1.83	

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

Table (6)

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Importance for the Research Variables and Dimensions

Level of Importance	standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	Variable/Dimension	
High	1.064	4.920	Tangibility	1
High	1.067	4.823	Reliability	2
Around Average	1.347	4.079	Responsiveness	3
Around Average	1.564	4.085	Assurance	4
Around Average	1.277	4.341	Empathy	5
Around Average			Overall Quality of Educational Service Average	
	1.264	4.449		
High	1.048	4.903	Marketing Audit	1
Around Average	1.489	4.100	Market Share	2
High	0.985	4.861	Marketing Orientation	3
high			Overall Strategic Marketing Performance	
	1.174	4.621		

Around Average	1.482	4.071	Student Expectations	1
High	1.600	4.757	Student Needs	2
Around Average	1.559	4.139	Student Experience	3
Around Average	1.547	4.322	Overall Student Satisfaction Average	

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

From the previous table, variations in the means and standard deviations of the surveyed sample indicate an interest among the sample individuals in the quality of educational services. Similarly, the table shows a moderate level of interest in strategic marketing performance across its various dimensions, highlighting the inadequacy of efforts to prioritize the needs necessary for the college to transform marketing into a marketing strategy. Meanwhile, student satisfaction received an average level of interest.

2. Testing the Relationship between Variables

A. Relationship between Strategic Marketing Performance and Student Satisfaction

Table (7)

Relationship between Strategic Marketing Performance and Student Satisfaction

Overall Student Satisfaction	Student Experience	Student Needs	Student Expectations	Student Satisfaction Strategic Marketing Performance
0.292**	0.307**	0.326*	0.305**	Marketing Audit
0.311**	0.399**	0.454**	0.297*	Market Share
0.320**	0.378**	0.388**	0.355**	Marketing Orientation
0.328**	0.317**	0.346**	0.343**	Overall Strategic Marketing Performance

Source: Prepared by the Researcher Using SPSS v.23

From the data in the above table, we infer the acceptance of the first main hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between the quality of educational services and student satisfaction overall and at the level of dimensions.

B. Relationship between Quality of Educational Services and Student Satisfaction

Table (7)

Overall Student Satisfaction	Student Experience	Student Needs	Student Expectations	Student Satisfaction Quality of Educational Services
0.441**	0.425**	0.408**	0.457**	Tangibility
0.361**	0.389**	0.340**	0.390**	Reliability
0.398**	0.367**	0.297**	0.418*	Responsiveness
0.383**	0.411**	0.406**	0.301**	Assurance

0.325**	0.384**	0.330**	0.198**	Empathy
0.445**	0.312**	0.322**	0.227**	Overall Quality of Educational Services

Relationship between Quality of Educational Services and Student Satisfaction

Source: Prepared by the Researcher Using SPSS v.23

From the data in the above table, we deduce the acceptance of the second main hypothesis, which states that "there is a significant relationship between strategic marketing performance and student satisfaction overall and at the level of dimensions."

T. Testing Hypotheses of Influence through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table (9)

Standard Value	Indicator	No.
Should be non-significant; a lower value indicates a better fit.	Chi-square (X^2)	1.
Less than 5 indicates a good fit and lower values indicate a better fit.	النسبة بين (X^2) ودرجات الحرية The ratio of (X^2) to Degrees of Freedom	2.
Greater than 0.90 indicates a better fit.	Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	3.
Greater than 0.95 indicates a better fit.	The Comparative - of - Fit Index (CFI)	4.
If the value is 0.05 or less, it indicates that the model fits the sample data; if the value is between 0.05 and 0.09, it indicates that the model fits the sample data well.	The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	5.

**Source: Prepared by the Researcher. **

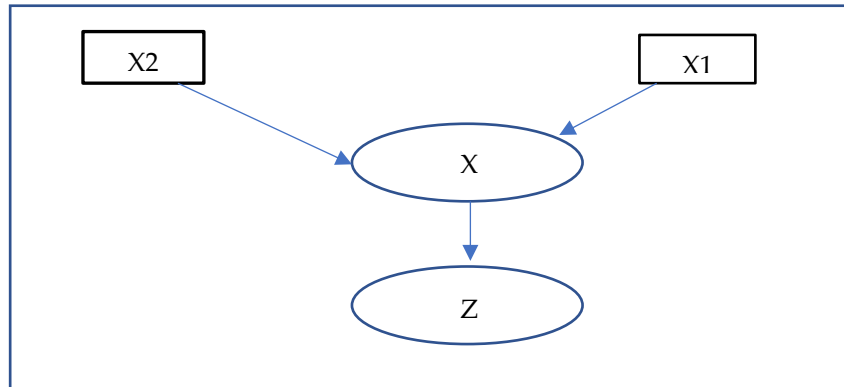
**A. Testing the Third Main Hypothesis: ** "There is a significant effect of the dimensions of educational service quality on student satisfaction."

**Table (10) **

Results of the Third Main Hypothesis and Subsequent Hypotheses Compared with Standardized Fit Indices

Results of the Third Main Hypothesis	Results of the Third Sub-hypotheses	Indicator	No.
0.000	0.028	RMSEA	.1
0.953	0.918	GFI	.2
0.968	0.990	CFI	.3
35.134	22.515	Chi - square	.4

"The source: Prepared by the researcher based on the results from AMOS v.23 software."



"Figure 3
Testing of the Third Main Hypothesis
Source: AMOS v.23 Software
Table 11

Results of the Third Main Hypothesis and Its Subsidiary Hypotheses (Direct Effects)"

Result	Interpretation Coefficient R2	P	C.R. (Critical Ratio)	(Beta) β	Type of Effect	Paths of Variables	Dimensions	No.
Function	0.309	***	7.324	0.367	Direct	Student Satisfaction	← Educational Service Quality	.1
		***	2.771	0.399	Direct	Student Satisfaction	← Tangibility	.2
		***	6.103	0.428	Direct	Student Satisfaction	← Reliability	.3
		***	4.227	0.399	Direct	Student Satisfaction	← Responsiveness	.4
		***	2.584	0.411	Direct	Student Satisfaction	← Assurance	.5
		***	3.428	0.389	Direct	Student Satisfaction	← Empathy	.6

Source: The researcher, relied on AMOS v.23 and SPSS v.23 software.

The table verifying the conformity quality index related to educational service quality dimensions and student satisfaction indicates the acceptance of the third main hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests "There is a significant effect of the dimensions of educational service quality on student satisfaction."

B. Testing the Fourth Main Hypothesis, which indicates:

Table 12

Results of the Fourth Main Hypothesis and its Subsidiary Hypotheses Compared with the Standardized Conformity Quality Index.

Results of the Fourth Main Hypothesis	Results of the Fourth Sub-hypotheses	Indicator	No.
0.024	0.031	RMSEA	.1
0.917	0.890	GFI	.2
0.899	0.970	CFI	.3

43.354	42.012	Chi – square	.4
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Source: Prepared by the researcher using AMOS v.23 software

Observations reveal a significant change between the independent and dependent variables, indicating the validity of the relationship among the three variables.

4. Conclusion

1. There is a clear emphasis within the college on the quality of educational services.
2. While there is some interest (though less ambitious) in marketing strategies, it requires greater attention due to its relative importance.
3. Student satisfaction has achieved a moderate level of importance, highlighting the need for increased attention.
4. The analysis results demonstrate that educational service quality plays a crucial role in achieving student satisfaction.
5. It's evident that student satisfaction increases when the college adopts educational service quality.
6. Marketing strategies are an essential factor directly impacting student satisfaction.
7. The college's focus on research variables significantly enhances student satisfaction.

5. Recommendation

1. The college should continue adopting mechanisms for improving educational service quality and strive to achieve organizational goals by leveraging opportunities and mitigating threats.
2. It's essential to raise awareness among faculty and administrators about the importance of marketing strategies, as they represent a tool that highlights the strengths the college possesses to face environmental and competitive changes to enhance its market position.
3. Emphasize increasing attention to student satisfaction, as they represent the mainstay of the educational process, by recognizing their opinions and listening to their voices.
4. Educational organizations need to prioritize both student satisfaction and educational service quality in line with their marketing strategies.
5. Despite the college's capabilities and efforts to satisfy students, there is a serious need to work diligently on reducing or eliminating weaknesses wherever possible.
6. The college should keep pace with the job market and identify genuine opportunities to address unemployment among its graduates by integrating them and familiarizing them with it.

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