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SERVICE QUALITY ANALYSIS OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES LIBRARIES IN MALAYSIA IN THE ERA OF TRANSFORMATIVE MARKETING

***Abstract:** This study aims to investigate and measure the satisfaction of students with the libraries' services of Malaysian Universities. To achieve this, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed among the students of private Universities. The survey instrument was adapted from Parasuraman's traditional SERVQUAL model. In this research total of 287 responses were collected from the users of libraries. After analysis of data with SPSS and Smart PLS 3, it has been concluded that the Service Quality dimension "Tangibles" is the most important factor in the satisfaction of the users. SERVQUAL components' reliability also has a significant positive impact on student's satisfaction. Compared to previous studies which say empathy has a positive relationship with the students' satisfaction we have found that the responsiveness plays a mediating role between empathy and customer satisfaction. If employees are empathic, their responsiveness increases and ultimately students become satisfied with the library services. This study is beneficial for the librarians and decision makers of the Universities. Library building, seating arrangement, printing and scanning facilities, and e-library content should be top priorities of all the management to increase library usage and keep the students satisfied. Library management should also focus on responding to student queries on a priority basis to improve the responsiveness which has a direct relationship with the students' satisfaction.*

***Keywords:** SERVQUAL, Libraries, Student Satisfaction, Tangibles, e-Library, E-learning*

1. Introduction

Evolution of digitalization has empowered the customers; this evolution in digitalization demands from companies to change themselves as per the needs of their customers. In the next 20 years, businesses all over the world will transform themselves to meet the customers' preferences. The next 20 years will be about the transformation in the

businesses because this is the era of transformative marketing (Kumar, 2018; Meyer, 2018; Varadarajan, 2018). Kumar (2018) is of the opinion that this new concept, transformative marketing, provides an opportunity to the research community to re-evaluate all the old notions and empirically investigate old theories. In this study, keeping in view the requirements of the era of transformative marketing, authors have

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focused on the most valuable customers in a University which are students and their satisfaction with the library services. Similar studies have been conducted in different contexts and different cultures (Trapitsin, Krokinskaya, & Timchenko, 2015; Vallejo, Stefos, & Narváez, 2018), but this is the first study conducted in Malaysian context, particularly in the era of transformative marketing to analyze factors which impact on satisfaction of students. The library is one of the core components of any university (Griadhi et al., 2018). Libraries play a crucial role in the success of students (Zabed Ahmed & Hossain Shoeb, 2009). Below quote summarizes our motivation to study the service quality of libraries:

“The library card is a passport to wonders, and miracles, glimpses into other lives, religions, experiences, the hopes and dreams and strivings of ALL human beings, and it is this passport that opens our eyes and hearts to the world beyond our front doors, that is one of our best hopes against tyranny, xenophobia, hopelessness, despair, anarchy, and ignorance.”

–**Libba Bray**

For knowledge, there are multiple resources available to the knowledge-seeking professionals, students, and well-known scholars, but for centuries libraries have been the top priority for learning new skills and understanding complex phenomenon. Today, the importance of libraries has increased due to the availability of multiple resources. Libraries are the most credible source of information. Librarians’ role has increased in helping the students and scholars to find the information from credible journals, books, and other online resources. In literature, most of the focus was on the content of the libraries. There are very few studies covering the quality of the libraries, but in all the studies the SERVQUAL model has been used to measure the satisfaction of the users with the library.

To measure the customer satisfaction SERVQUAL model has been used widely

across the globe (Baki, Sahin Basfirinci, Murat ar, & Cilingir, 2009; Butt & de Run, 2010; Chakraborty & Majumdar, 2011; M. Kumar, Kee, & Charles, 2010; Ngwenya, 2017; Rahman, Khan, & Mahmudul Haque, 2012; Ramseook-munhurrun, Lukea-bhiwajee, & Naidoo, 2010; Sajna & Mohamed Haneefa, 2018; Zabed Ahmed & Hossain Shoeb, 2009), particularly in Malaysia (Butt & de Run, 2010; M. Kumar et al., 2010; Sajna & Mohamed Haneefa, 2018; Shekarchizadeh, Rasli, & Hon-Tat, 2011) and in library services (Fithri, Adnan, & Syahmer, 2018; Hossain & Islam, 2012; Sajna & Mohamed Haneefa, 2018; Zabed Ahmed & Hossain Shoeb, 2009). Despite so many studies, there has been very less focus on student satisfaction. Most of the studies were focused on the comparison of expected versus perceived quality, which resulted in less focus on the quality of library services. One more limitation in previously conducted studies is that they only measured customer satisfaction in one university (Hossain & Islam, 2012; Zabed Ahmed & Hossain Shoeb, 2009)

Libraries quality assurance improves and provides a healthy environment for students to continue their studies in a good environment (Sajna & Mohamed Haneefa, 2018). Sajna, (2018) is of the opinion that the service quality gap exists between the expectation and perceptions of the library users. The researcher also argued that the physical facility dimension has the highest perception. The physical facilities include the cleanliness, library aura, comfortable chairs, enough learning materials (books), printing/scanning facilities, and reading space. Library environment and services have a positive effect on user satisfaction (Brown, 2017). Students have a different perspective on library services and environments, such as an extensive collection of e-resources and physical books, journals, audio materials, staff behavior. The improvement of services and technology will enlighten library usage with a positive impact on users. Staff behavior has a significant impact on library service quality. Library users (students)

invariably expect to have knowledgeable and professional employees, willing to assist them whenever required. The author is of the opinion that state-of-the-art library facilities are lacking in many areas of the libraries, which has a direct impact in the form of underprivileged funding, and weak leadership. Hence leading towards a negative impact on the students and overall library users (Hossain & Islam, 2012).

Library users all over the world are practitioners, faculty, and students, but primary users of library services are the students. In this study, our primary objective was to identify the quality of libraries in the view of the core users (students) and their satisfaction with the quality of services being provided in the libraries. Specifically, the researchers are focusing on the four components of service quality: Reliability, Empathy, Tangibles, and Responsiveness of the library. Reliability of the services means: Library delivers committed services on time; Library shows sincere interest in solving the student problems; library's all transactions are error free and adequate security is provided to the students. Empathy of the services means: Instils confidence, recommendations for the books, sends target and personalized emails and providers personalized e-library free account. Responsiveness means that: Librarians are never busy to respond to student's requests; library resolves student complaints on priority, proactively informs students in case of any delay, staff provides prompt answers to the questions; Staff is knowledgeable and it provides prompt response to the questions. Tangibles mean: Building is eye-catching; the library has a satisfactory seating arrangement; computer lab can be easily accessed; in the library, there are full functional printing and scanning facilities and the staff is well dressed. Based on the above arguments this study will answer the following questions:

- What is the role of tangibles in satisfaction of library users (students)?

- What is the role reliability in satisfaction of library users?
- What is the role of responsiveness in satisfaction of library users?
- What is the role of empathy in satisfaction of library users?

2. The significance of the Study

Today in the 21st century every organization must have two things: one, brand which distinguishes it from others; second, the customers which continuously buy its products and services, which help companies to stay in the business landscape and earn its ultimate objective i.e. Profit (Farooq, Raju, Kalimuthu, & Qadir, 2019). Universities are also operating like corporate organizations (Sajna & Mohamed Haneefa, 2018). In Malaysia, there is a total of 120 Universities and colleges. Out of 120 universities, 20 are public, and the rest are either private or Semi-Government. There are 57 private Universities, which are 48% of all academic institutes in Malaysia. These Universities play an essential role in the economy of Malaysia. These Universities invite students from many countries outside Malaysia, i.e., Pakistan, India, and Iran. Because of these Universities, Malaysia is known as an education place for many Asian and Gulf countries (Afterschool.my, 2018). This study is expressing the opinion of all local & global students studying in private Universities of Malaysia. Universities outside Malaysia can also benefit from this study.

Being an education centre for the Central, South East Asian and Gulf countries put a huge responsibility on the management of these Universities to continuously improve their services. Service quality of libraries is the topmost priority of the Universities (Hossain & Islam, 2012; Sajna & Mohamed Haneefa, 2018). This is the first study conducted in Malaysia only focusing on the satisfaction of core users of libraries. Customers (students) today are more empowered than ever before in history, providing them quality services to attract new

customers (students) is extremely important for the firms (Universities) (Buzdar, Janjua, & Khurshid, 2016). Satisfied students will always promote the University among their followers (Ali et al., 2014). Due to digitalization, which is impacting all walks of life (Muhammad, 2018), students satisfaction can create any university as a brand. Therefore, this study is very significant for all Universities.

3. Literature Review

SERVQUAL model was first time introduced in 1988 by Parasuraman in his article published in the Journal of Marketing (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Since then, SERVQUAL model has been used in multiple countries (Ahmed, Nawaz, Usman, Shaukat, & Ahmed, 2010; Darji, 2018), and numerous industries (Ali & Raza, 2017; Chakraborty & Majumdar, 2011). Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1989) in their book "Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perception and Expectations" developed a methodology for measuring service quality of an organization which they called SERVQUAL model. They used a five-dimensional model to examine customer perception of service quality of organizations. Five dimensions were Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness. We used reliability, tangibles, and empathy and responsiveness dimensions to measure user satisfaction of library users in private sector Universities of Malaysia.

It is imperative for any University to improve its library users' footfall that can be increased by providing the best library services to students. Many types of researches have been conducted, using the SERVQUAL model, to identify the impact of services on students' satisfaction to increase library users' footfall. Sajna and Haneefa (2018) also used SERVQUAL model to examine if there is an impact of library services on user satisfaction. In their study, they used a sample of 180 students and found that most of the Universities in India have a poor service

quality, which is the main reason behind low user satisfaction and footfall in libraries. Bjorneborn and Lennart in their study of 2008 examined the effect of user behavior and physical library interface on student satisfaction. They investigated physical dimensions that can affect user satisfaction by interviewing 113 Danish public library users and by conducting think-aloud sessions with 11 users. They found the results satisfactory and constructed a conceptual framework explaining that libraries work as an integrated interface to invite users from different interests to interact with each other and physical and digital library resources.

Thompson, Cook, and Thompson (2002) used LibQUAL+™ to identify the impact of service quality and service reliability of library users on their perception and satisfaction. For conducting this research, the authors used 20,416 responses from 43 Universities' using websites. The results were satisfying.

The SERVQUAL, the Model, introduced by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) through several industries. Since the occurrence of the SERVQUAL model, the Association of Research Library ARL (2011) considered it an essential tool for assessing the quality of library performances. In 1989, Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry in their book "Delivering Quality Service Balancing Customer Perception and Expectations" developed a methodology for measuring service quality of an organization which they called SERVQUAL model. In the beginning, the SERVQUAL Model had ten dimensions that customers used for judging service quality. These ten dimensions - tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication and understanding of customers were identified by Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry (1990). Further, they merged those ten dimensions into five comprehensive hypotheses namely, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

This study aims to examine the four dimensions (Responsiveness, Tangibility, Empathy, and Reliability) we used reliability, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness dimensions to measure the user's satisfaction of library users in private sector Universities of Malaysia. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988) and Zammuto, Keaveney, and O'Connor (1996), perceived quality can be defined as the user's judgment about overall experiences. While promoting the effectiveness of library services Tangibility covers the existence of physical and functional facilities and equipment experiences. Reliability provides the assured services that can satisfy the expectations of library users. While Responsiveness measures the "willingness of the staff to help consumers and provide them with better services."

It shows the punctuality of the staff, which Ranganathan 1988 cited in Manjunatha & Shivalingaiah (2004) envisioned in his fourth laws of librarianship that librarians should save the time of the reader while providing the service. The fourth dimension, Empathy measures, proficiencies and courtesy of employees to give confidence, a promise to convey trust, self-assurance in customers to the services.

Empathy measures the feelings and experiences of the customer's attention and care, which an institution provides its users. It is crucial for any University to improve its

library users' footfall, which can be increased by providing the best library services to students. Based on the literature in this study, we will examine the following hypothesis.

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between tangibles and satisfaction of library users (students)?

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between empathy and satisfaction of library users (students)?

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between empathy and satisfaction of library users through responsiveness (students)?

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between Responsiveness and satisfaction of library users (students)?

H5: There is a significant positive relationship between Reliability and satisfaction of library users (students)

4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study is the SERVQUAL model (Figure 1). SERVQUAL model directly says service quality five components have a direct impact on the service quality and customer satisfaction. In this study, we will observe all, four, factors direct relationship and mediating role of reliability in the relationship between empathy and overall satisfaction.

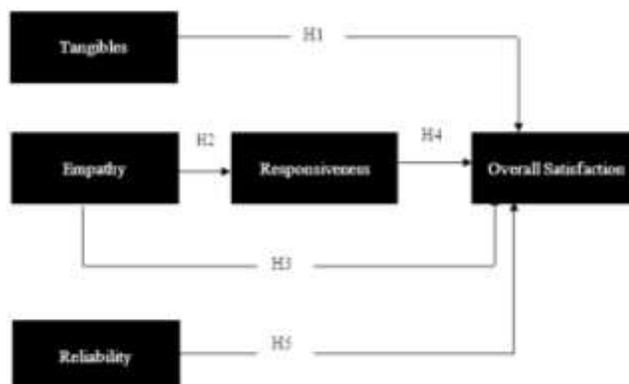


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

5. Research Methodology

This is a cross-sectional study which is often used in social sciences (Abdurrahaman & Osman, 2016; Ahmed, Farooq, & Iqbal, 2014; Aslam, Arif, & Farhat, 2018; Bakare, Owusu, & Abdurrahaman, 2017; Farooq, 2018; Irshad, Madeeha; Farooq, 2015; Younas et al., 2019). Nature of the study is quantitative, and it's ascribed to measure the students' satisfaction with the libraries. All private Universities of Malaysia were part of our population frame.

5.1 Sampling

The population of the study was all library users of Malaysian Private Universities. There 57 private Universities in Malaysia. The sample has been calculated using G-power software. With 0.15 impact factor score, total sample required from the population was 123, but we have gathered 287 responses (2.5 times greater than needed) to increase the accuracy of our model as done by earlier researchers (Abdurrahaman, Owusu, Soladoye, & Kalimuthu, 2018; Abdurrahaman & Osman, 2017) (Figure 2).

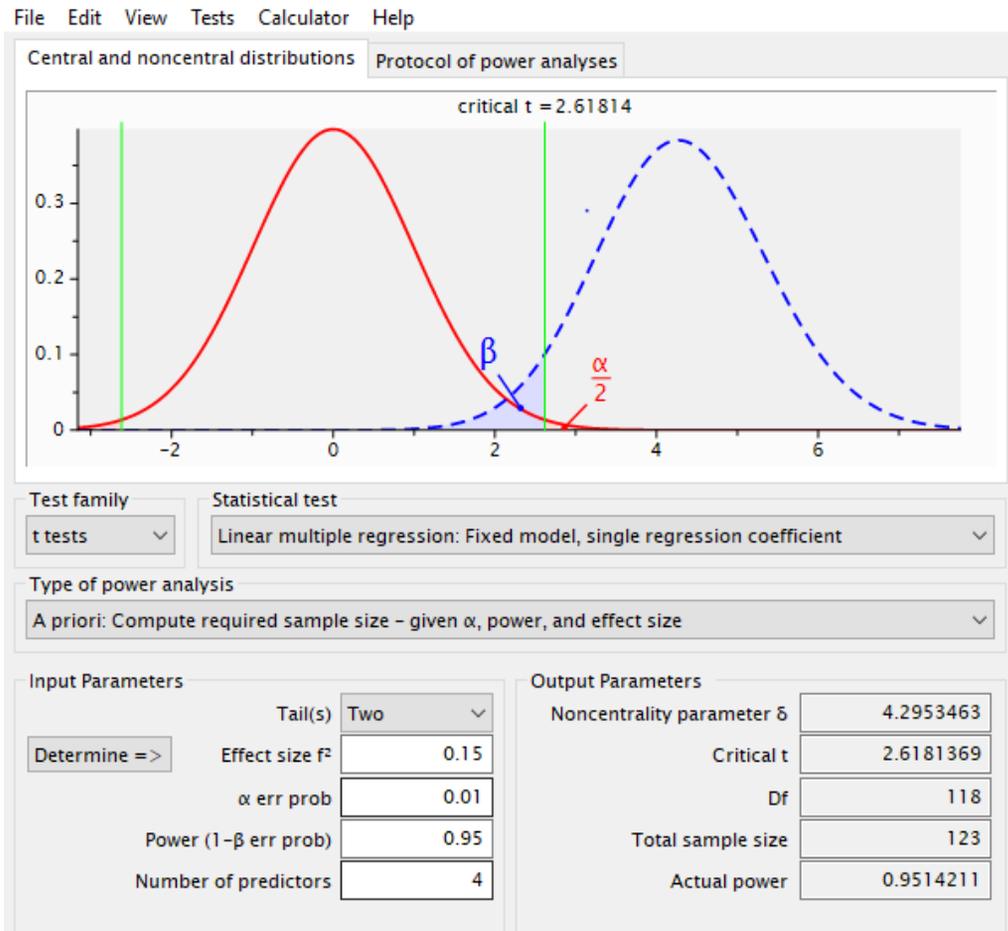


Figure 2. Required Sample

5.2 Data Collection

For data collection, a survey was designed online in google forms, and the link was shared with all students studying in private Universities. During July'18, the authors have collected 287 respondent's responses. There was a total of two sections. In the first section, we asked respondents about their Age, Gender, Education, and Frequency of library usage. Purpose of this section was to observe the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

5.3 Measurement

To measure the satisfaction of the students Parasuraman 22 items scale was used (Parasuman et al., 1988). SERVQUAL 22

items scale is most widely used questionnaire to measure the customer satisfaction (Butt & de Run, 2010; Chakraborty & Majumdar, 2011; Gounaris, 2005; Kang & James, 2004; Singh & Khanduja, 2010; Taghizadeh, K.Jayaraman, Rahman, & Malekifar, 2013; Wisniewski, 2001; Zabed Ahmed & Hossain Shoeb, 2009).

5.4 Results and Analysis

In data analysis, we used various statistical tools. Using Microsoft Excel, all initial responses were cleaned. After cleaning of data, removal of outliers, of responses, in this study we used IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for descriptive analysis. Table 1 shows the details overview of the respondents.

Table 1.Demographic Profile

Gender	Count of Respondents	%
Male	208	72%
Female	79	28%
Total	287	100%
Age	Count of Respondents	%
18 to 25	193	67%
26 to 35	68	24%
36 to 45	21	7%
46 and Above	5	2%
Total	287	100%
Library usage frequency	Count of respondents	%
Weekly	96	33%
2-3 Days in a Week	73	25%
Monthly	59	21%
Once in a Semester	38	13%
Never	10	3%
Daily	10	3%
Once in Semester	1	0%
Total	287	100%

In this study, most of the respondents are male which is representing 72% (n=208), and females are in the minority, which represents 28% (n=79). Indicated in table 1 respondents are categorized into four age groups, which range from 18 – 25, 26 – 35, 36 – 45, 46 and

above. From the table, majority of the respondents are age 18 – 25 old representing 67% (n=193), followed by 26 – 35 old representing 24% (n=68), 36 – 45 is 7% (n=21) and lastly 46 and above is 2% (n=5). Lastly the library usage frequency, weekly

33% (n=96), followed by 2-3 days in a week 25% (n=73), monthly 21% (n=59), once in a semester is 13% (n=38), never 3% (n=10), daily 3% (n=10).

For inferential examination in this study, we have used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Smart PLS 3.7 was used to perform SEM. Construct Validity and Reliability; Smart PLS is extensively used social sciences (Abdurrahman et al., 2018; Abdurrahman & Osman, 2017; Anjum et al., 2018; Farooq & Jabbar, 2014). Table 2 shows detailed SEM results. Outer loadings against each item are above the required threshold of 0.5. Values of internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha) are

also above the necessary threshold. Average Variance Extracted is also above its essential value which is 0.5 (Sarstedt, Ringle, & Hair, 2017).

Table 2 also contains Coefficient of determination (R^2) values. The R^2 value shows the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. The combined effect of the independent variables of this study (Empathy, Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangibles) is 69% on the dependent variable. This model measures 69% of student satisfaction components with a confidence of 99%.

Table 2. Construct Validity and Reliability

Items	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	R ²	F ²
Instils confidence	0.81	0.78	0.82		0.00
Recommendations for books	0.85				
Sends targeted/personalized e-mails	0.79				
Provides personal e-library accounts for free.	0.64				
Delivers committed services on time.	0.83	0.82	0.58		0.03
Shows sincere interest in solving student problems.	0.81				
Do error-free transactions.	0.74				
Provides adequate security to student belongings.	0.71				
Have all course-related books?	0.71	0.87	0.65		0.11
Never too busy to respond to student requests.	0.77				
Resolves student complaints on a priority basis.	0.80				
Proactively informs about the delay in services	0.82				
Knowledgeable staff	0.80	0.81	0.57		0.30
Staff provides prompt answers to questions.	0.84				
Building is eye-catching.	0.76				
Has a satisfactory seating arrangement?	0.83				
Computer lab can be used to access e-library contents easily.	0.76	0.87	0.72	0.69	
Has fully functional printing and scanning facilities	0.71				
Staff is always well dressed.	0.71				
Services are very good.	0.88				
Services are up-to-date.	0.85	0.87	0.72	0.69	
Services are recommendable to other students.	0.89				
First Choice to Learn new things	0.77				

Table 2 also shows the impact of each variable on the dependent variables of student satisfaction. Tangibles have a very large effect on student satisfaction, which is 30%.

To further analyze the data we used the

opinion of Abdurrahman *et al.*(2018), as structured equation modeling, and its results are explained in detail. To be more confident in the data we have confirmed the latest Discriminant validity results. Table 3 shows in detail the results of HTMT.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

	Empathy	Overall Satisfaction	Reliability	Responsiveness	Tangibles
Empathy					
Overall Satisfaction	0.79				
Reliability	0.79	0.81			
Responsiveness	0.88	0.85	0.88		
Tangibles	0.79	0.89	0.76	0.75	

After making sure, the model is fit through all aspects, construct reliability, validity, all parameters are as per thresholds the bootstrapping technique was applied to the model to test the hypothesis. It has been concluded that all independent variables have a significant positive direct impact on students satisfaction except empathy. The researchers have examined the role of empathy indirectly and found that indirectly through responsiveness it has a relationship with student satisfaction. Except for one hypothesis, our all hypotheses have been supported. It has been concluded that: There

is a significant positive relationship between tangibles and satisfaction of library users; There is no significant relationship between empathy and satisfaction of library users; There is a significant positive relationship between empathy and satisfaction of library users through responsiveness There is a significant positive relationship between Responsiveness and satisfaction of library users; There is a significant positive relationship between Reliability and satisfaction of library users (Table 4) (Figure 3 and Figure 4).

Table 4. Bootstrapping Summaries

	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Supported?
Empathy -> Overall satisfaction	0.06	0.69	0.49	No
Empathy -> Responsiveness	0.03	27.56	0.00	Yes
Reliability -> Overall satisfaction	0.06	2.90	0.00	Yes
Responsiveness -> Overall satisfaction	0.07	4.36	0.00	Yes
Tangibles -> Overall satisfaction	0.06	6.66	0.00	Yes

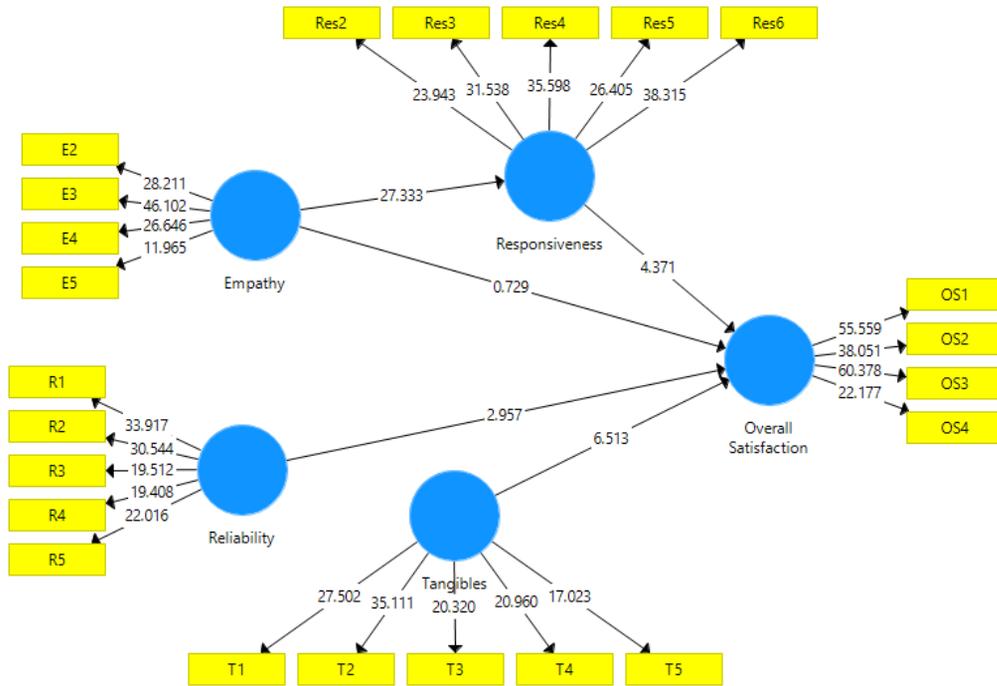


Figure 3. Bootstrapping Results

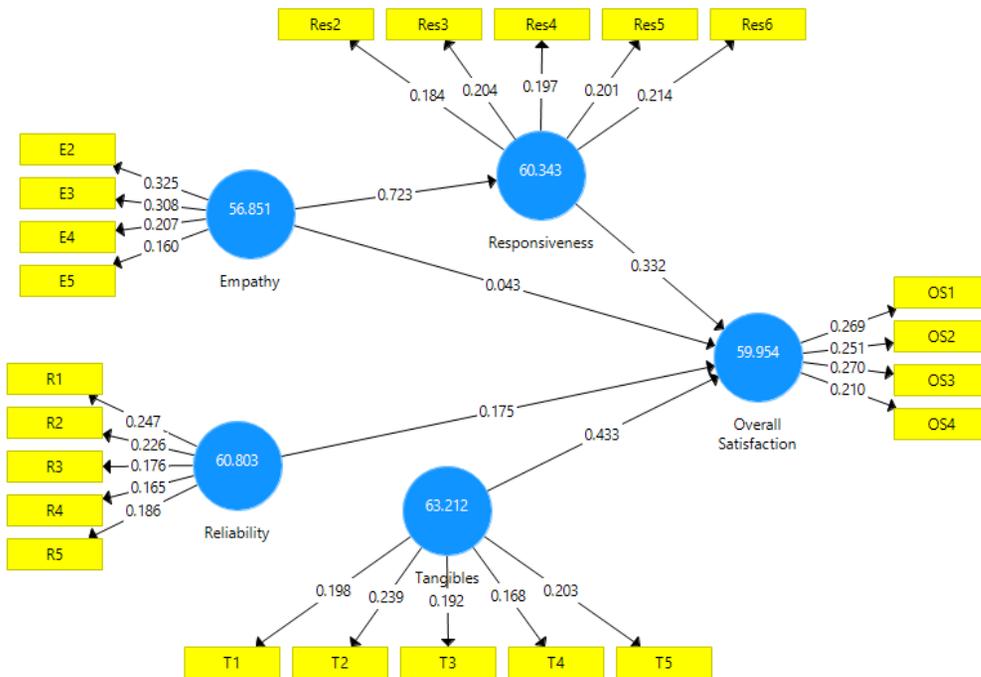


Figure 4. The Importance Factor Analysis

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This is an important study with fascinating results. In an era when information is abundant everywhere. Any person can access the Internet. Any person can float false news. False news gets more attraction than the actual news. Some people pay to spread fakenews and concepts to hide accurate science. Therefore, libraries' importance instead of decreasing with the evolution of technology has increased. Finding news is easy. Out of the clutter several sources finding the accurate news is very difficult. Libraries can only offer the right news. The authors have observed that these days people don't use libraries. Most of the libraries are empty. The authors were curious to know why people don't use libraries, which are the factors, which libraries can improve to attract students to read authentic books from credible sources.

As shown data analysis and results section, it has been concluded that the most critical factor in library user's satisfaction is the tangible assets. Building an environment of the libraries matter a lot to the readers. Therefore some of the Universities have improved their libraries recently. For example, Multimedia University (MMU) has enhanced its library visibility. Libraries must have a suitable seating arrangement; also chairs should be comfortable. There should be enough computers in the computer lab, and computer should be easily accessible.

Staff is one of the key factors in encouraging students to come to the library. Therefore, staff must be trained to talk to students politely. Staff should be in good dressing, preferably in uniform to make the identification easy for the students. In every corner of the library, there should be a library representative to guide the students. Employees must have complete knowledge of the books, where they are placed, how students can access them and for how long they can keep a book. Library staff and management should instill confidence of

students. Staff should be empathic but being empathic is not enough for student satisfaction. With advent of technology, there are changes happening to the human behavior. One change in human behavior is we want to achieve things quickly; there is the online system, companies are offering products at home with just one message, call or email. Therefore, libraries should also improve themselves.

It has been observed that standard operating procedures SOPs of the library sometimes impact the student satisfaction and staff cannot accommodate the students. Staff must be empowered to help good students. It has been observed that some Universities have a maximum limit of borrowing one book for one month which some time cause problems for international students. They have to pay extra fees while returning books because they could not come within one month.

The library must be a reliable deriving source for the students to read books. There must be one recommendation section. It should contain the latest news. Furthermore, one section for every subject top book, which can encourage the student to know about top people in their field should be provided. To keep their customers [students] satisfied libraries should utilize available data of its most frequent students. Sending them personalized emails about their preferences in the books. For higher education student's libraries should give them login email to all good libraries proactively instead of the look for the books and logins of online libraries. Every student must be given a personal email ID of email libraries that should be connected with the all other credible libraries like EBSCO and Emerald library. Should have the option to read the history of their readings. There must be one option they mark something readable or unreadable. The student must be given the option to tag the read & download content. Just like Mendeley is shown in figure 5, Universities can make a personalized portal for its students Figure 6.



Figure 5. Library basic student requirements for managers

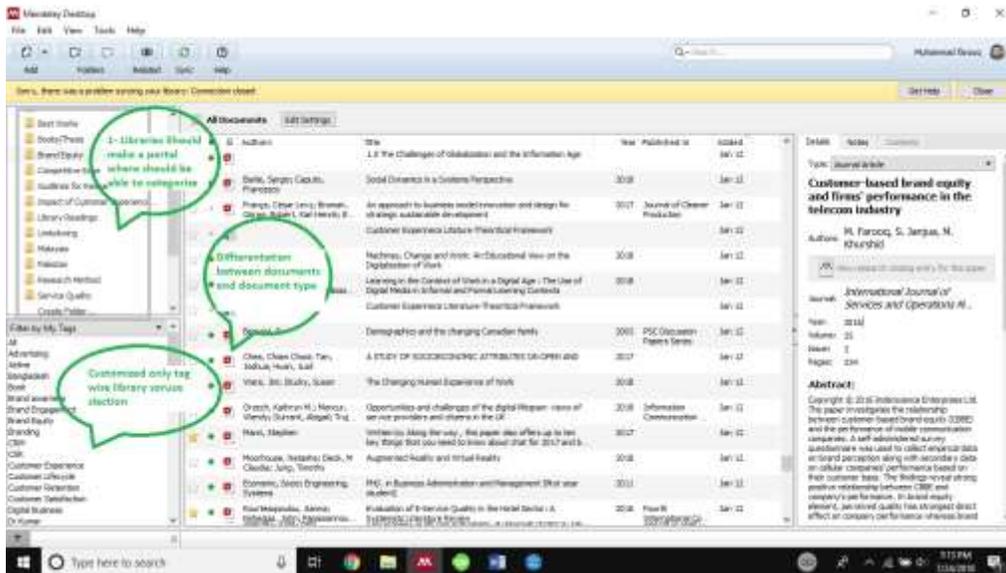


Figure 6. Mendeley as an Exemplary portal for libraries

There is one famous saying in management “Under promise and over deliver.” Most of the University libraries are open 24 hours. But there is some Universities library is closed on weekend ends or opened for a limited time. On weekdays it has a limited time duration.

6.1 Managerial and Theoretical Contribution

Useful for libraries, and the academics to take research ahead from here and survey complete Malaysia. Today we are living knowledge economy, librarians have the opportunity to help and create good researchers, which will ultimately impact the university ranking and performance. Library

resources must be readily accessible to all students. Figure-2 shows in detail the importance factor analysis. For student’s satisfaction libraries should not neglect any factor. All factors are essential for student satisfaction. Top priority should be given to tangibles followed reliability. Responsiveness plays a mediating role between empathy and overall satisfaction. To improve responsiveness, managers should introduce flexible SOP’s standard operating procedures.

6.2 Limitations and direction for future researchers

This study’s core objective was to empirically

investigate the factors that have an impact on student satisfaction. For future researchers, it is suggested to make a comparison of requirements between undergrad and graduate students. Future researchers can also compare different Universities/country libraries.

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