

# VIETNAMESE STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR AND EXPERIENCES OF FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES' STUDY PROGRAMMES AND SCHOOLS

Case: Vietnamese Students

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## Abstract

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| Abstract<br><p>The purpose of this thesis is to study Vietnamese students' expectations for and experiences of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (FUAS)' educational services especially in the area of study programmes and schools. And, hopefully FUASs can utilize the study' results in further developing their education offerings.</p> <p>In the research, different concepts such as customer's expectations, service quality, customer's satisfaction and dissatisfaction, customer's expectation management, customer's experiences and customer experience management (CEM) are studied to build a foundation for the study. At the same time, author discusses the importance of considering those matters in educational service business. The empirical part of the thesis is carried out by the means of a survey. The results were used in studying what Vietnamese students expect from FUASs' study programmes and the schools as well as their experiences there.</p> <p>The thesis utilized deductive approach with both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study is supported by primary and secondary data sources. The primary data were gathered from an online survey with Vietnamese-student participants who are studying or studied at FUASs. The secondary sources were collected from recent research, reliable books, literature, articles which were relevant to the topic.</p> <p>The study results show that Vietnamese students' expectations for FUASs are mostly fuzzy and implicit. On the other hand, there is lack of correct understanding between what FUASs offer and what Vietnamese students expect. Therefore, the author has suggestions to link expectations and offerings between Vietnamese students and FUASs more effectively.</p> |  |                          |
| Keywords<br>Customer's expectations, customer's experiences, customer's satisfaction, Vietnamese students, Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (FUASs)  |  |                          |

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

According to Global Competitiveness Report, released by World Economic Forum on November 2016, Finland is frequently on top of rankings for global education systems (Williams-Grut 2016). That is one of the main reasons why Finland attracts thousands of international students to come and study at Finnish higher education institutions every year. If the number of foreign students enrolled to study at Finnish higher education institutions was 6,877 students in 2001, the figure increased to around 21,061 foreign degree students in 2016. And, in the same year, there were 9,867 foreign students studying at FUASs which accounted for 46.85% of the number of all students. (CIMO 2017, 2.)

Among different groups of students studying at Finnish higher education institutions (FUASs), Vietnamese students are frequently one of the biggest groups. In 2016, there were 1,895 Vietnamese students enrolled to study at FUASs. This accounted for 19.2% of all foreign students at FUASs. Vietnamese students were the second largest international group of foreign students at FUASs, just behind Russian group of students (20.38%). (CIMO 2017, 2.)

However, there was a large change in foreign student enrolments when new regulations applied tuition fees from 1 August 2017 for non-European Union/European Economic Area (non-EU/EEA). This included Vietnamese students who plan to study or are studying at Finnish higher education institutions (Nguyen 2018, 2). In the early stages of implementing the practice, Finnish National Agency for Education/Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) reported that the number of foreign applications for the study year 2017/18 went down by 32% in comparison with the previous year. Faced with these figures, Finnish educators and recruiters are now starting to strengthen their international recruiting. For example, Edunation, which is a new private-sector initiative, has recently presented their plan in Finland to attract applicants for enrolment from non-EU market. So far, five universities including Lappeenranta University of Technology and four other schools have joined Edunation's programme which aims to bring 150,000 new foreign students to Finland by the year 2020. The project continues to expand to other domestic institutions in Finland. (Yle News 2017.)

Since the change in tuition fee policy, students from non-European Union/European Economic Area, including Vietnamese students need to consider the tuition fees which range from €4,000 to €13,000 per semester with the national average settling in around €8,000 per semester. One semester normally lasts from four to five months. (ICEF 2017.) The

facts show that with the implementation of tuition fee, the total of number of Vietnamese applicants for Finnish higher institutions in autumn of 2017 fell to 687 students and just 107 students were selected. Thus, the numbers of applicants from Vietnam fell the most (-69%) amongst applicants to FUASs. (CIMO 2017, 6.)

However, statistics show that more and more Vietnamese parents are still considering sending their children abroad every year. In 2018, there were around 130,000 Vietnamese students studying abroad at all levels. (Vnexpress 2018.) And, Finland is still one of the chosen destinations by a lot of Vietnamese students.

A Facebook page called “WTF - Cong dong du hoc sinh Viet Nam tai Phan Lan”, whereby WTF stands for Welcome To Finland, was established in 2016 by a group of Vietnamese students. On this site students share, help and answer all detailed and important questions about study life in Finland. From 2016 to 2019 the site has attracted around 20,694 persons who are interested in studying and staying in Finland. (WTF - Cong dong du hoc sinh Viet Nam tai Phan Lan 2019.)

The current education exchange of Vietnamese students in Finland became the foundation and motivation for the author to do this research. The aim of the study is to supply more useful information about Vietnamese students for FUASs and help FUASs improve their study programmes or teaching methods with Vietnamese students.

## 1.2 Thesis Objective, Research Questions and Limitations

The main objective of the research is to create a better understanding for FUASs about Vietnamese students who are studying at FUASs through Vietnamese students' answers about their expectations, experiences and feedback for FUASs study programmes and schools. The purpose of the thesis is to improve study programmes and teaching methods at FUASs to get better teaching results for Vietnamese students.

On the other hand, the research can benefit Vietnamese students at the same time by helping them recognize and understand their own types of expectations and experiences. This will then help them consider their expectations and what FUASs can supply them.

According to the thesis objectives, the main research question for this thesis is:

- *What are Vietnamese student's expectations for and experiences of Finnish universities of applied sciences' study programmes and schools?*

The research question tends to be difficult to answer all at once. Therefore, the researcher utilizes sub-questions to help answer the question in a step-by-step way. (Swaen 2016.)

In this research, the sub-questions are:

- *What is the definition of customer's expectations and experiences?*
- *Why it is important for FUASs to understand Vietnamese student's expectations and experiences?*
- *Are FUASs meeting Vietnamese students' expectations?*
- *What can FUASs do to fulfill the Vietnamese students' expectations and improve Vietnamese students' experience for FUASs' study programmes and schools?*

The research has three major limitations. First, the research mainly focuses on Vietnamese students at FUASs as research target group, even though there are many different foreign student groups in Finland currently. Second, the author focuses on students' expectations and experiences. Third, the author limits Vietnamese students' expectations and experiences for only Finnish universities of applied sciences' study programmes and schools instead of expectations and experiences for Finnish society as in the survey.

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theory part of thesis is introduced via theoretical framework. The research focus is on customer expectation management and customer experience management, which are introduced in the second and the third chapter, respectively. Theoretical framework of both second chapter and third chapter include three steps in order to understand the topic clearly. These three steps include the importance, definition and management of customer expectation and customer experience, see the figure below.

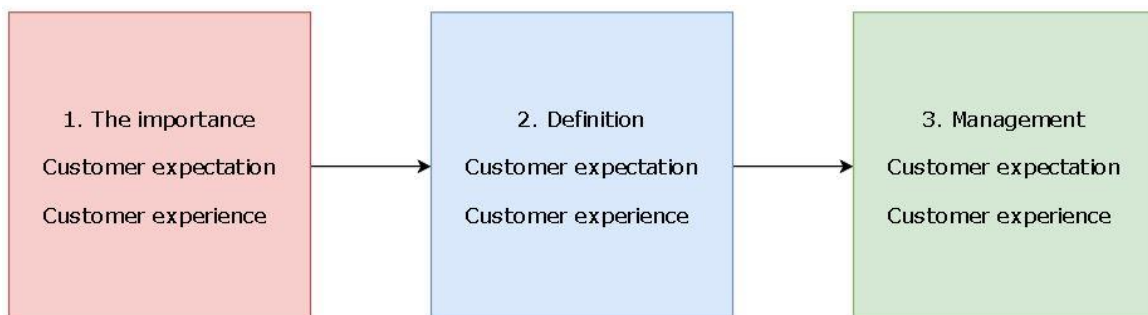


Figure 1 The steps of theoretical framework

The first step of theoretical framework shows the reason why customer expectation and customer experience are vital in service businesses. The second step helps to understand

the topic more clearly through definition of Oliver & Winer (1987) about customer expectation and definition of Smith (2006) about customer experience. The final step presents the method to manage expectation and experience of customers.

#### 1.4 Research Methods and Data Collection

There are two popular options to select for research approach: deductive approach and inductive approach. While deductive approach is goal and theory testing, inductive approach is involved with the creation of new theory from database (Gabriel 2013). For this thesis the author used the deductive approach.

Similarly, there are two common research methodologies: qualitative method and quantitative method. The qualitative method helps researcher to have a deeper understanding or awareness about a matter or specific issue such as behavior, culture, attitudes, intentions or simply aims to answer two questions of what and why people feel and think about things happening in life (Crossman 2018). On the other hand, quantitative method focuses on logical or statistical observations to have conclusions for a research object (Surbhi 2016). In the thesis, the author combined both qualitative method and quantitative method. Qualitative method is presented through the study's survey with open-ended questions. Quantitative method is used in the thesis with the online survey. From that, numerical data is collected, after which is followed by statistical analysis. Combining both methods leads to distribute considerable advantages and allows to compare or contrast conclusions to understand the researched topic. (Osbaldeston 2018.) The figure below shows the summary of the research approach, research method, and sources of data used for the thesis.

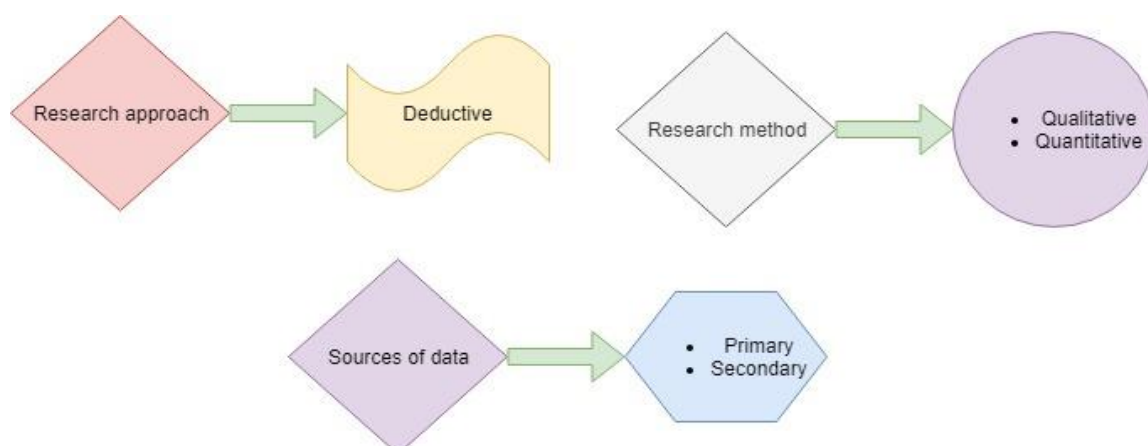


Figure 2 Data collection methods of the thesis

To gather primary data for the research, the author utilized an online survey aimed to Vietnamese students at FUASs. A questionnaire survey included seventeen questions and



was done via Google Docs and which was then sent to Vietnamese students by their school email and by the biggest social media channel of Vietnamese students currently - Facebook group “WTF - Cong dong du hoc sinh Viet Nam tai Phan Lan”. The time limitation of the survey was officially one month from 4th September to 4th October 2018. Data was collected and then converted from qualitative information to quantitative information for analysis purposes. All survey participants’ personal names and private information were not publicized but were referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, etc. in the thesis. The secondary sources were gathered from reliable books, literature and peer-reviewed articles. The figure below describes the timeline of the data collecting process of the thesis.

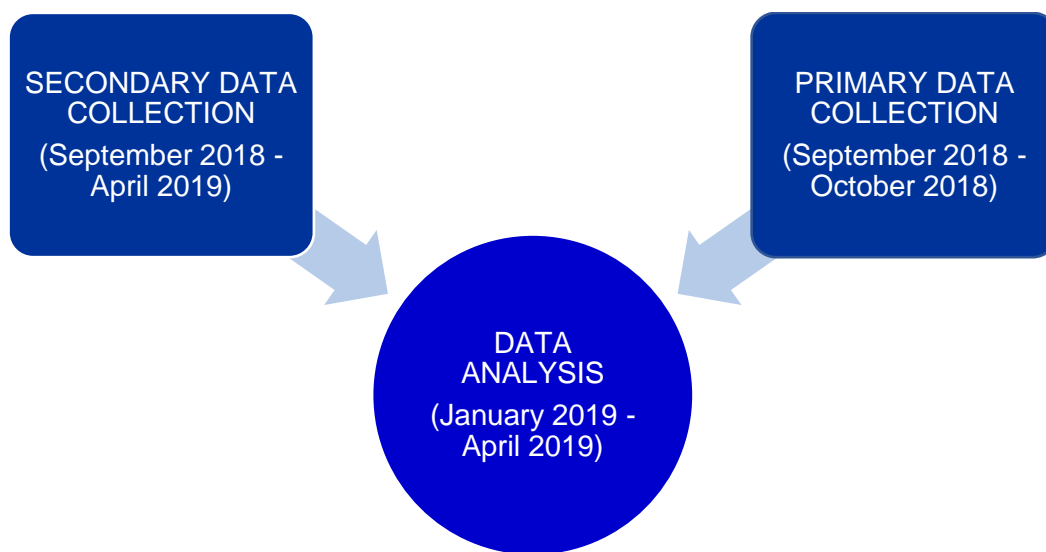


Figure 3 Data collecting process timeline

## 1.5 Thesis Structure

The thesis has eight chapters.

Chapter 1: The research mentioned the research’s background and its theoretical aspects such as thesis objective, research questions, limitations, theoretical framework, research methodology and data collection.

Chapter 2 & 3: Author focuses on main concepts such as customer’s expectations and customer’s experience, the importance of these concepts in business, customer’s expectation management and customer’s experience management. Those definitions are the main theoretical foundation for the whole research.

Chapter 4: This chapter introduces the case study. Why the author chooses to do this research about Vietnamese students' expectations and experiences for Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences' study programmes and schools.

Chapter 5: The empirical research and data analysis about Vietnamese student's expectations and experiences are written in this chapter. Those analyses were done based on the survey's results of students studying at FUASs and by using statistical methods of quantitative research. In addition, a database was analysed from two researches about managing customer expectations and customer experience management, which are also used for the thesis.

Chapter 6: Author gives recommendations for FUASs to consider and improve their education business management.

Chapter 7: The conclusion chapter includes three parts: answers to the research questions, the validity and reliability of the research and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 8: The final chapter is the summary of the whole research.

References and appendices are attached at the end of the research. In the thesis, the author utilizes some figures from other sources such as books, other theses and reports. All of them are cited and mentioned in text and in list of references.

## 2 CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

### 2.1 Why Customer's Expectation is Important

Customer satisfaction is one of significant factors which decides the success of a business (Kierczak 2019). Customer expectation is directly relevant to customer's satisfaction since customer satisfaction is measured through the comparison and evaluation between customer's perceived service quality and customer's expectation. By understanding, connecting and supplying service quality to meet or exceed customer expectations, companies are increasing levels of customer satisfaction which lead to building customer loyal relationship (Osman 2017.)

On the other hand, education is one field of service business in which customer satisfaction is important for the business as well. Therefore, understanding customers in general and customer's expectations in particular in education service businesses is crucial.

### 2.2 Definition of Expectation

Customer expectations can be beliefs which are not experienced by customers for a product or service (Oliver & Winer 1987). For example, personal thoughts of Vietnamese students towards the new school, the study programmes or new study environment before they are students at FUASs are considered as customer expectations.

In addition, customer expectations can be the outcome through a learning or absorbing process which sometimes can be created quickly by first impressions. Once customers have their own expectations it can influence a customer in their decision-making process. (Mbaskool 2019.)

Thus, it can be understood that basic assumptions of customer about a brand, service or product are customer expectations (John 2017).

### 2.3 Types of Expectations

To understand further about customer expectations, author researches different types of customer expectations. There are dissimilar expectation's classifications, but for this thesis, author focuses on three main types: fuzziness, implicitness and unrealism (Ojasalo 2001).

**Fuzzy expectation** is the type in which customers usually do not have much previous experience and have less knowledgeable foundation to compare with current products or

services. In some cases, customers have some expectation for the product or services, but their expectations are not clear or they cannot explain what it is. (Andersson & Liedman, 2013, 8.)

For example, when doing the survey about what are Vietnamese expectations for FUASs, one of the most common answers for the study programme is "practical and creative teaching methods". But, what is considered as practical and creative teaching method? How Vietnamese students estimate or define a practical and creative teaching method is still an unclear matter that needs to be clarified.

**Implicit expectation** is the type which relates to situations in which some factors, services or parts included are self-evident for customers or suppliers (Ojasalo 2001, 202). For example, in business, it sometimes happens that the situation in which customers suppose there will be some apparent services or products must be included in the main services or products they paid, but the truth is it is unclear or unmentioned from the supplier's side. That is an example about implicit expectation. And, in this case, implicit expectation can lead to suppliers not meeting customer's expectations.

"The existence of implicit expectations becomes obvious when they are not met" (Ojasalo 2001, 202). In other words, implicit means not directly expressed. Implicit expectation can be understood as the expectations which are not directly expressed but people believe to be received or self-evident included in the services they were offered. (Oxford living dictionaries 2019.) Normally, implicit expectations can be created by previous experiences with other suppliers and using those experiences as standard to compare with current services (Andersson & Liedman 2013, 8).

**Explicit expectation** is that what customers have experienced or know exactly what their demands are and can express them to the service suppliers. Once customers become clearer about what they want and have more insight and clarity about the products or services, then those expectations can be defined to be realistic or unrealistic (Ojasalo 2001).

## 2.4 Customer Expectation Management

Customers often have their own expectations, and these can be oftentimes various. However, it is possible to manage customer expectations, deliver what suppliers can offer and still make customers happy (McGovern 2017).

In this thesis, the author introduces two steps to recognize and manage customer expectations.

## Step 1

Find out what type of customer expectations suppliers are facing and have different solutions for each type. It is important to understand different expectations to manage them to achieve higher level of customer satisfaction (Andersson & Liedman, 2013, 8).

**For fuzzy expectation**, the most important point that needs to be noticed and applied is information. Customers have fuzzy expectations when they have less information or lack of needed information. Or, in some cases, less information leads customers to understand incorrectly. So, supplier should focus on supplying information effectively and correctly to customer and avoid unclear information which can cause misunderstanding. It is still crucial and even better if suppliers clarify customer expectations and suppliers' services at the beginning of the business relationship, even if the customers might be dissatisfied to know that suppliers offer cannot fulfill their fuzzy expectations. These steps help suppliers approach customers easier, avoid misunderstanding and reduce dissatisfaction from customers. (Ojasalo 2001.)

**To deal with implicit expectation**, the main key is communication. There is nothing better than to clarify relevant factors about the services which a supplier can provide, and which a customer expects. There can be some points that both customers and suppliers suppose "no need to mention" but what happens if what a customer supposes to be received does not match what a supplier offers? Therefore, communication plays an important role in dealing with implicit expectation. The more detailed and clear the communication is, the less misunderstanding and dissatisfaction can happen. (Andersson & Liedman, 2013, 8.)

**Regarding explicit expectations**, there are two types of explicit expectations which are realistic expectation and unrealistic expectation. In case suppliers and customers discuss and agree on all the objects in their business, customer's expectations at this time are realistic expectations and service providers can analyze and work based on those realistic expectations to meet customer's needs. For unrealistic expectations, service suppliers need to discuss and explain to customers about the ability to meet their unrealistic expectations. In some common cases, service suppliers can tell the truth if they are not able to fulfill customer's unrealistic expectations. This support does not weaken supplier's performance. It is important to tell the customer the truth about supplier's ability and customer's unrealistic expectations that suppliers cannot meet. Moreover, this step can help customers define what do they want and make correct decision for themselves. And in the end customers decide whether they will use the offered services or not. But this

step certainly helps customers absorb information clearly and partly helps customers increase satisfactions through clarifying and suiting their expectations. (Andersson & Liedman, 2013, 8-9.)

## **Step 2**

Customers often have unreasonable expectations or difficult requests when they do not know exactly what to expect from suppliers. For example, customers do not know about supplier's rules, policy or what suppliers are able to offer. (McGovern 2017.)

Understanding these matters helps suppliers have appropriate methods to manage customer expectations. According to Michele McGovern, who is a journalist and has more than fifteen years experience in customer service and sales fields, composed and recommended five essential and effective ways for suppliers to manage customer expectations.

**Giving solutions** is the key to managing and exceeding customer expectations. Suppliers in general and their staff need to prepare a variety of solutions for common and potential issues. So, suppliers can offer customers alternative options when the current option does not suit customers. (McGovern 2017.) That way, suppliers empower their customers to understand the whole situation and engage customers with the solutions to make sure customers do not have unrealistic expectations (McGovern 2017).

*By listing off possible resolutions, empower their clients to understand the complexity of a particular problem, engage directly with its solution and ensure they don't have unrealistic expectations of the resolution (McGovern 2017).*

**Being transparent** is important in interaction between suppliers and customers. Reasonable expectations come from true information and the trust from customers for information that the suppliers give. The transparency in information that suppliers announce is necessary and is foundation for customer expectations. The more detailed and correct the information is on the website, supplier announcement and social media channel, the more effective it is to manage customer expectations. (McGovern 2017.)

**Giving clear timelines** needs to be considered when working with customers. Most customers do not mind to know and wait for solutions if problem happens as long as customers know it and suppliers are honest enough to tell them (McGovern 2017).

**Being optimistic and realistic are two important principles** in managing customer expectations. All people want good things. Therefore, make customers happy with such things as good news, a quick reply or feedback to a customer's request, an update that the customer's issue has been solved will make customers feel more satisfied. However,

one more important principle is supply customers true and correct information which help customers have logical and appropriate expectations. (McGovern 2017.)

**Following up** is the last but not less crucial factor in managing customer expectations. Following up customers helps the suppliers understand what the customers want or expect in different periods until the final interaction between suppliers and customers. The more information suppliers know about their customers, the easier it is for them to manage customer expectations.

## 2.5 Service Quality

Service quality and customer's expectations are two important factors that create customer's satisfaction. What is service quality nowadays? To increase competitiveness in comparison with other competitors, businesses nowadays focus more and more on additional value for customers besides only providing products or even the combination between products and services (Vargo & Lusch 2008). Services are created by different processes or from many factors between service providers and customers. When services are carried out, production and consumption happen at the same time; so, the concept of service quality is not simple to manage in organizations. (Anderson & Liedman 2013, 4-10.)

Service is understood as an application of something additional or special. For example, service can be knowledge and skills, actions, process bringing additional value or benefit for business and customer (Vargo & Lusch 2004, 2). To determine service quality, besides thinking about advantages of service, people need consideration on hidden values besides the end result (Grönroos 2001).

To evaluate service quality, there are two elements that need to be understood or noticed: technical quality and functional quality. Figure 4 shows two important factors of service quality.

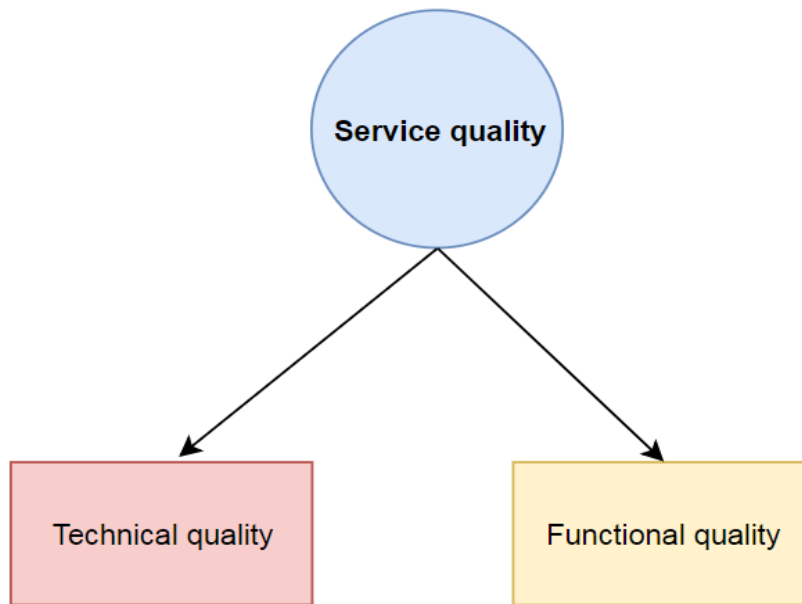


Figure 4 The elements of service quality

The first factor of service quality is technical quality. Technical quality can be technical feature, effectiveness or value of end product (Grönroos 1984). For example, technical quality of a smart phone are features such as call, text message, touchscreen, access website, etc. In education services, technical quality can be knowledge, skills which education service supplier provides to their students.

Functional quality is evaluated through the way of interaction between business and customer (Grönroos 1984). For instance, how business interacts with customer, pushes up sales, maintains current customers and creates unique value or competitive advantages. In education services, functional quality can be actions or approach methods between school and students to help increase effectiveness of the offered services.

Figure 5 presents the position of technical quality and functional quality between provider's and customer's relationship.



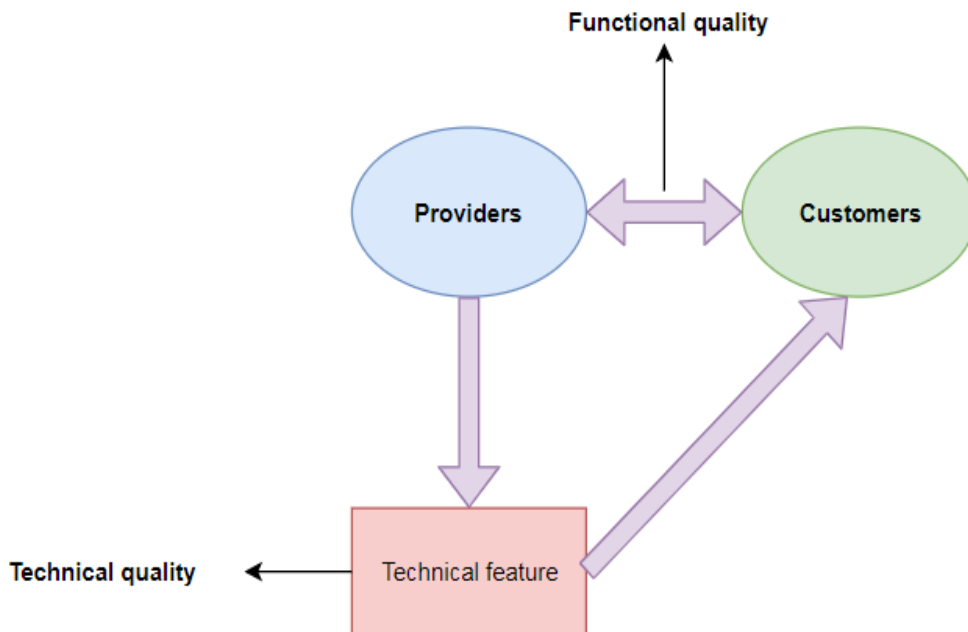


Figure 5 Technical and functional quality

Both elements of service quality have an important impact on total service quality, but in different ways. A few decades ago, technical quality was the most necessary requirement to make a customer satisfied with the service. Customers will be satisfied if technical quality meets a level of their satisfaction, although functional quality is not good enough. However, the increase of customer satisfaction about service quality is little and hard after acquiring this level. Instead businesses need to focus more on functional quality to increase level of customer satisfaction about service quality. (Swan & Combs 1976.)

When there is the same technical quality from different suppliers, businesses need to focus the importance of functional quality to gain satisfaction from customers and the functional quality can offset lack of technical quality (Grönroos 1984).

## 2.6 Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction

To clarify the definition of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, there are two cases that need to be considered. The first case is when suppliers' service quality matches or exceeds customer expectation and customer feels satisfied. The second case is when the service quality does not meet customer expectation, but customers do not confirm to suppliers about their satisfaction. In second case, there are two results which includes positive behavior or negative behavior from customers. Customer is still satisfied if they have positive behavior or customer is dissatisfied if they have negative behavior. (Walker 1995.) Figure 6 shows the cases of satisfaction and dissatisfaction by customer's behavior

when service quality does not meet customer expectations and customers do not confirm with suppliers.

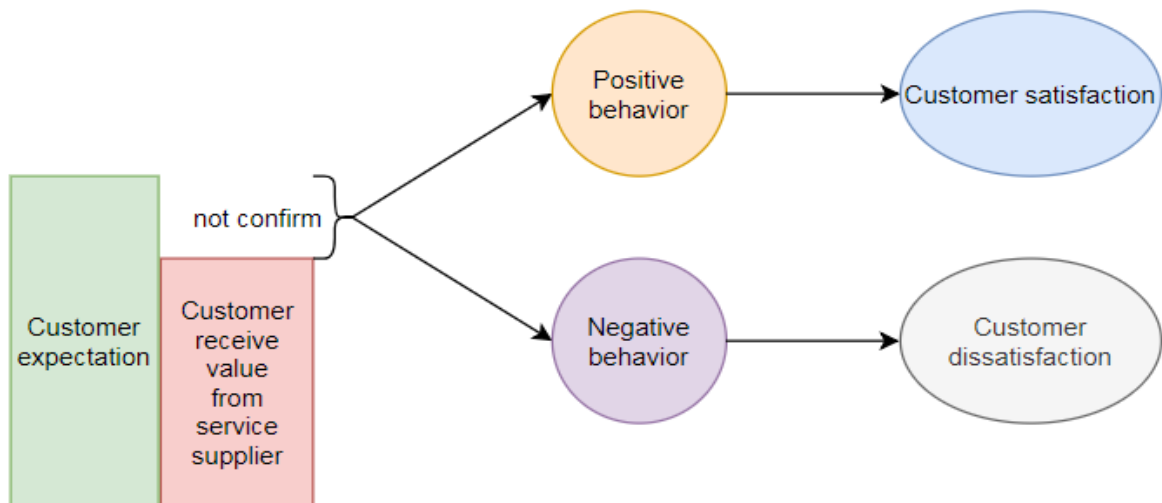


Figure 6 Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction when they do not confirm

When the customers confirm their expectations, there is a comparison between customer expectation and their perceived services quality (Grönroos 1984; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman 1993). This comparison is subjective and highly relative because customer expectations can be different when comparing to the same level of service quality (Anderson & Liedman 2013, 4-10). Figure 7 shows the dimension of satisfaction and dissatisfaction by comparison to the level of customer's expectation and perceived services quality.

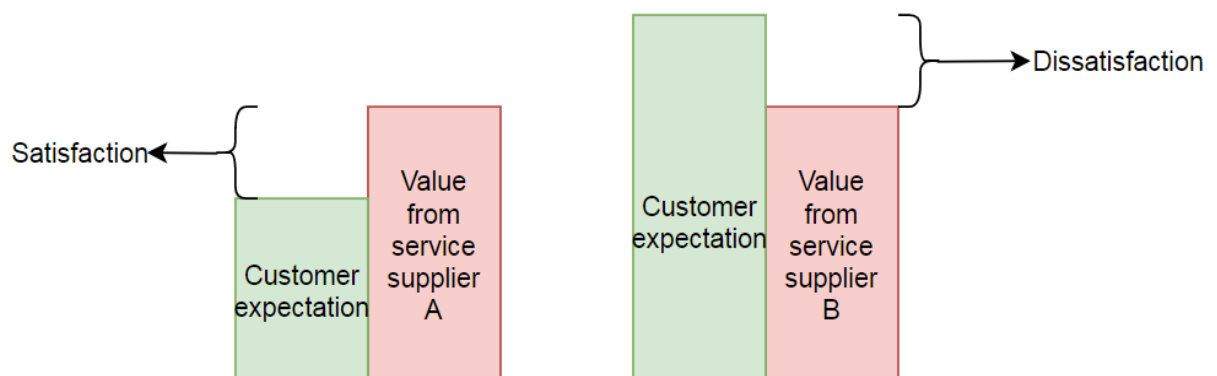


Figure 7 Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction depend on their expectations

In general, there are two crucial elements that create customer satisfaction. One is supplier service quality which supplier knows the best. One is customer expectation which if the service suppliers can understand and manage well, will benefit their business more efficiently. (Anderson & Liedman 2013, 4-10.)

### 3 CUSTOMER'S EXPERIENCE

#### 3.1 Customer's Experience is Important

Due to the rapid development of the world nowadays more and more suppliers have joined the sellers' market than before and customers have more choices for their needs. So, in the sea of similar products that suppliers offer, customers nowadays tend to prefer something true or real experience instead of satisfied quality. Good service is not enough, customers need differentiated services (Lee 2016, 7). There is nothing that impresses a customer more than real experience. And, there is nothing easy and effective as sharing through true experience. (Smith 2016, 4.) Moreover, focusing on customer experience helps businesses and organizations build more-than-enough quality and improves competitiveness with competitors.

#### 3.2 Definition of Customer Experience

The term customer experience has been defined and used for almost twenty years (Smith 2016). In this thesis, the author referenced and selected some definitions to discuss and analyze based on author's study's viewpoints. First, customer experience can be understood as customer's awareness, impression, feeling through every interaction between customer and the supplied business services (Smith 2006).

In other definitions, customer experience was defined as what a company or organization can create and bring to customer through people (Smith 2006, 4). Organization or company needs to pay attention to help customer feel the services by all the senses they can; from taste, sight, touch, smell, sound, feel and awareness. (Lee 2006, 6-8).

#### 3.3 Customer Experience Management (CEM)

Since customer experience is significant element in service business, it is necessary to have a customer experience management plan or system to upgrade business' activities to customers. When talking about customer experience management (CEM), there are many ways to help us understand and apply it. Basically, CEM is known as actions to seek, observe and manage all activities with customers in order to meet the needs of customers. (Ratcliff 2015.)

Gartner – a global research and advisory company, defines CEM as "the practice of designing and reacting to customer interactions to meet or exceed customer expectations and, thus, increase customer satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy" (Gartner 2019).

Sampson Lee from Greater China Customer Relationship Management associates (GCCRM) – an independent customer management organization founded in 2001 in China - defined CEM as including three elements. First, CEM is a perception. It means if customers experience and have good feelings, a business needs to pay attention to building or even replicating those feelings. Furthermore, according to Lee, a memory collected through an experience will influence directly on the next buying decisions. For example, from Lee's perspective, CEM can be built deeply through five senses. The more positive impression of products or services that suppliers create for their customers, the better buying rate suppliers can achieve. Second, CEM is a process. To manage customer experience, suppliers should notice the whole process from the moment of first interactions to after-sales services. For instant, CEM should be followed up from the first step of doing market research actions, consulting, guarantee, customer feedback to the step of doing after-sales services for customer. CEM might be through public information, face-to-face discussions or online channels. There is no limit to how a company interacts with customers. The importance is how a company transforms the most unique value to customers in the most efficient way. The third element in definition of CEM is branding. Once a good perception is built deeply and strongly in a customer's mind, it helps to increase the buying rate. Branding well and differentiating is the key in CEM, thus increasing a customer's concern and loyalty. (Lee 2006, 6-8.)

### 3.4 CEM and CRM (Customer relationship management)

There is another way to define and help people understand about CEM and that is by considering CEM in a comparisomal view with Customer Relationship Management (CRM). CRM is the chain of methods such as practices, strategies and technologies suppliers apply to consider and manage customer interactions to increase customer service relationships and assist sales activities. (Rouse 2019.) In general, both CEM and CRM are understood as methods or processes to manage all company's relationships and interactions with customers to finally aim to increase sales efficiency. However, if CRM focuses on customer behavior such questions will be relevant: What channel do customers usually buy their products or services from? What kind of product or service has a customer bought? What questions do they usually ask from the seller? CEM deals with customer attitudes. Are they willing to use the services again? How do they feel with the current service or product? Will they introduce the current services or products to their relatives? CRM usually concentrates on what happened and is happening with customers, while CEM shows more about what happen in present and in the future. Collecting data for CRM is less abstractive than CEM, because it can be done through controlling and

recording customer behavior, while collecting data for CEM is more abstractive because it needs to be done through analysis for feeling, thought or attitude. (Chisholm 2006, 36-37.) Overall, both CEM and CRM are two important factors supportive of each other and needed in customer management.

## 4 CASE INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in introduction part and limitation part, the author chose to do research about Vietnamese students because author is a Vietnamese student at one of FUASs. In the time of studying at Lahti University of Applied Sciences, author observes and recognizes that many Vietnamese students do not have clear orientation or understanding about what they want and expect to receive from FUASs. This causes difficulties for students in the time of studying and for FUASs to match students' satisfaction. Therefore, thesis researches about Vietnamese students' expectations for and experiences of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences study programme and schools. The author hopes FUASs can utilize the study' results in further developing their educational offerings.

The thesis aims to FUASs' readers which include 23 universities of applied sciences throughout Finland as follows:

*Arcada University of Applied Sciences, Centria University of Applied Sciences, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Humak University of Applied Sciences, Häme University of Applied Sciences, JAMK University of Applied Sciences, South-Eastern Finland University of Applied, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Lahti University of Applied Sciences, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences, Tampere University of Applied Sciences, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Vaasa University of Applied Sciences, Novia University of Applied Sciences which offer higher educational programmes. (Friman & Lahtinen 2018.)*

## 5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this thesis, the research data was collected by using an online survey with Vietnamese students who are using education services at FUASs. Therefore, this thesis is an empirical research because the perspective is practical and is analyzed (Bhat 2019).

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the online survey and the second part explains how the data was analyzed.

### 5.1 Online Survey

The online survey included seventeen questions in English since the author does not know Finnish and the survey's targeted participants are Vietnamese students only. The survey was created and carried out through Google Docs and sent to Vietnamese students via school email and social media to deliver to targeted group. There were 29 participants but only 28 valid results were returned from this survey. The survey had three main parts.

**The first part** included general information about participants such as age, gender, study programmes, major.

**The second part** concentrated on asking Vietnamese students about their expectations and experiences for their study programmes.

**The third part** of the survey included questions about Vietnamese students' expectations and experiences for their schools.

There were two further questions about "Do/ Did you have any expectations for the Finnish society during your time of study in Finland?" and "If yes, what are/were they? Please explain."

After one month, the author closed the platform which included questionnaires to participants and started collecting information from the survey's answers. Then using Excel tools, the responses were analysed.

### 5.2 Data Analysis

#### 5.2.1 Participants' General Information

The ages of participants that participated in the survey were from 18 to 28 years old. Most participants were from 18 to 23 years old which account for 82% of all survey's result. The below figure presented the age of the survey's participants.

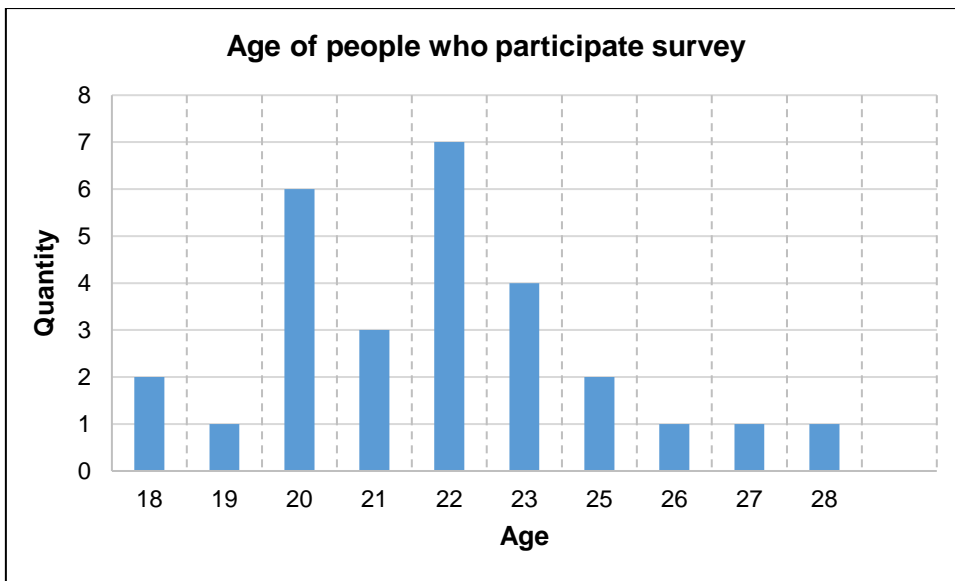


Figure 8 Age of participants who joined the survey

Sixty – four percent (64%) of the survey participants were female, the rest 36% were male.

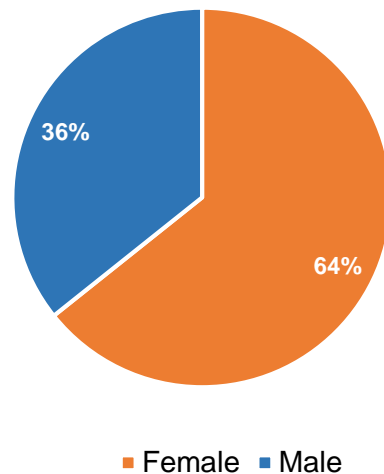


Figure 9 Gender of participants who joined the survey

All of the participants that participated in the survey were in a bachelor degree.

The survey was to be done with participants from FUASs around Finland. There were participants from Lahti University of Applied Sciences, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Vassa University of Applied Sciences, Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Häme University of Applied Sciences, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Saima University of Applied Sciences, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, South-



Eastern University of Applied Sciences, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Arcada University of Applied Sciences, Centria University of Applied Sciences. There were twelve participants from Lahti University of Applied Sciences, which accounted for almost 43% number of all participants. The figure below shows all the different FUASs where students have joined the research's survey.

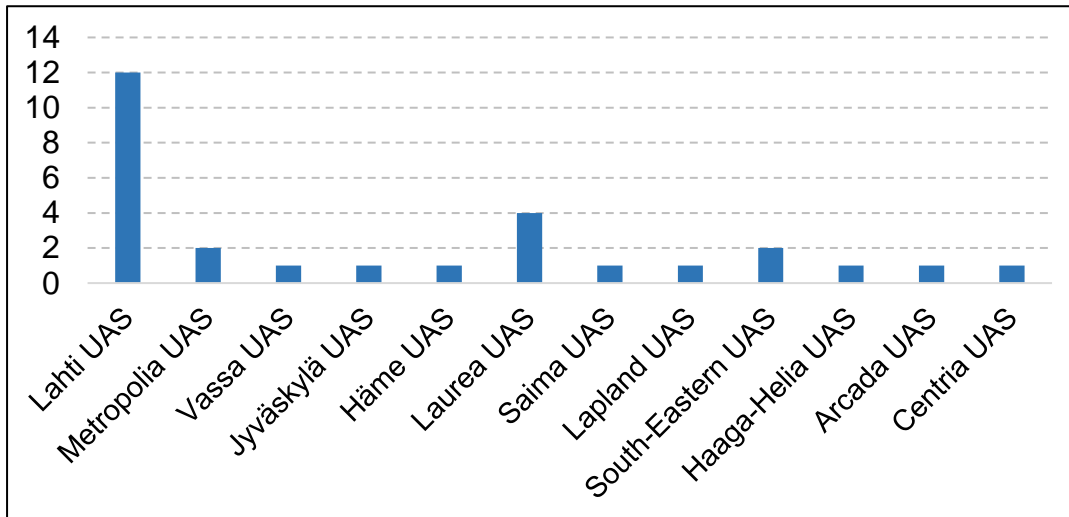


Figure 10 Universities of participants who joined the survey

There were six different faculties that the participants were from. There were two larger participant groups in the survey. Whereby 68% of participants were from Business in general. The second biggest group (11%) was from Business Information Technology faculty. The rest of participants (21%) were from IT, Tourism, Restaurant Management and Civil Engineering. The figure below can help readers see and compare the number of participants in different faculties.

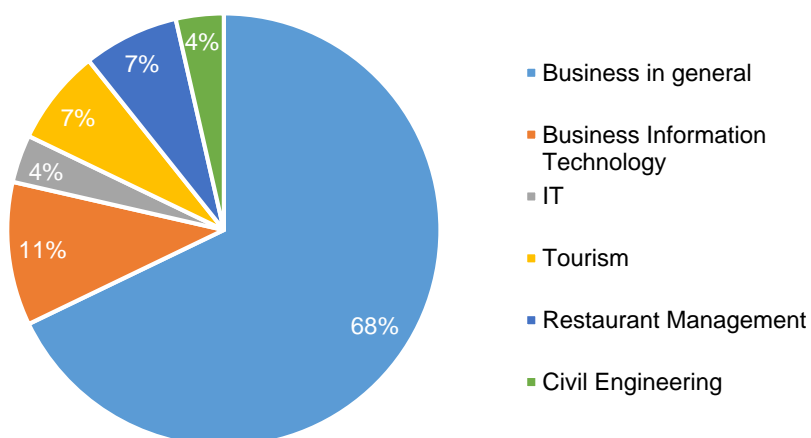


Figure 11 The major of participants who joined the survey

From the survey, around 24% of students were in Finland, six months to two years. Twenty-eight percent of students have stayed in Finland more than two years and 31% of students have almost graduated.

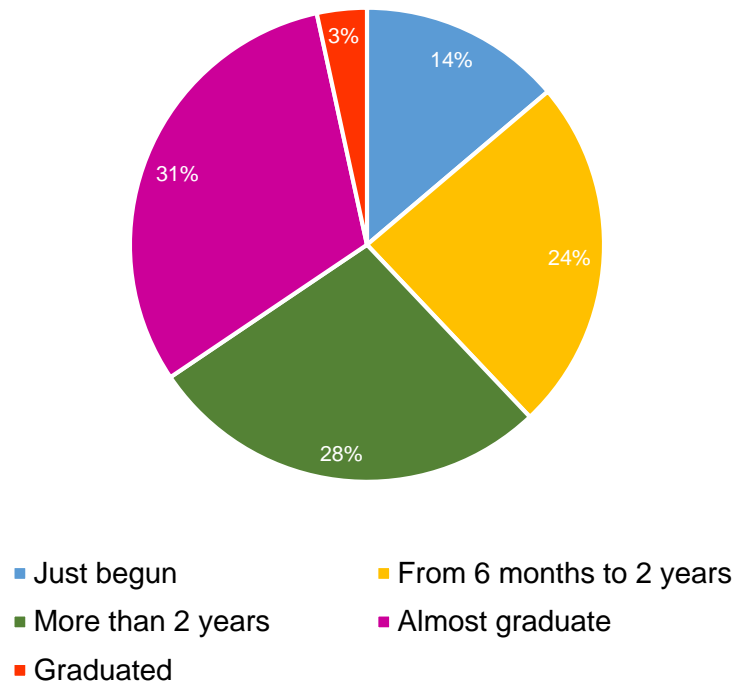


Figure 12 How long have students studied in Finland?

## 5.2.2 Expectations of Vietnamese Students

### Expectations for The Study Program

The survey showed many Vietnamese students' expectations for FUASs study programmes. There were nine different expectation groups from the students. Forty-two percent of Vietnamese students expected "less theoretical, more practical lectures and updated knowledge which the students can apply into real job or life". Sixteen percent of Vietnamese student expected to "improve their current knowledge and skills". Nine percent of students supposed to receive "practical and creative teaching methods with high qualified lecturers". Nine percent of students wished "opportunities for networking or connection to experts and potential employers". On the other hand, there were other expectations such as "international education quality and valid certificate globally" (7%), "more intensive courses" (7%), "creative, active and fair programmes for students" (4%), "well-organized courses" (4%) and "supports for internship and job-seeking process" (2%) etc.

Table 1 Vietnamese student's expectations for study program FUASs

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Less theory, more practical and updated knowledge which the students can apply into real job or life | 42% |
| Improve student's current knowledge and skills   | 16% |
| Practical and creative teaching method with high qualified lecturers                                 | 9%  |
| Opportunities for networking or connection to experts and potential employers                        | 9%  |
| International education quality and valid certificate globally                                       | 7%  |
| More intensive courses   | 7%  |
| Creative, active and fair programmes for students  | 4%  |
| Well-organized courses   | 4%  |
| Supports for internship and job-seeking process  | 2%  |

### Expectations for The School

At the same time, students had a lot of expectations for the school where they chose to study. Seventeen percent of the participants did not expect any more from the school, everything to them was perfect. Ten percent of the participants expected more practical activities, ten percent of students wished to have more community activities through school to connect students instead of going to bars or parties and ten percent of participants mentioned good quality, materials, experienced and enthusiastic lectures as their expectation for the school. On the other hand, good course content, updated learning material, more optional courses availability (7%); international study environment (7%), more support from school for seeking practical training (7%) respectively account for a high percentage among expectations.

Table 2 Vietnamese student's expectations for the school at FUASs

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Everything is perfect. Don't expect anymore  | 17% |
| More practical activities  | 10% |
| Have more community activities to connect students (not going to bars or parties)  | 10% |
| Good facility, materials; experienced and enthusiastic lecturers                   | 10% |
| Good course content, Update learning material; wider optional courses availability | 7%  |
| International environment  | 7%  |
| More support for practical training/internship seeking                             | 7%  |
| Graduate soon and easily   | 3%  |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Enhance competences for future careers.   | 3% |
| knowledge and skills that are relevant in our expertise as well as in life              | 3% |
| More subjects and programmes offered in English   | 3% |
| Be fully equipped with updated devices and provide wide entertainment choices.          | 3% |
| Maybe once a week the lunch should be from a different cuisine.                         | 3% |
| Improve the training program  | 3% |
| Reasonable or even low tuition fee, because there are many people want to study in UAS. | 3% |
| Providing more core subjects  | 3% |

### 5.2.3 Experiences of Vietnamese Students

#### Experiences for Study Programme

##### a) Positive experiences

There were various diversified and interesting experiences of Vietnamese student's at UAS, see Table 3. There were five positive experiences feedback which were also as compliments for FUASs as below. Twenty-nine percent of students respected the interesting study method, less theoretical, more practical activities at FUASs. Eighteen percent of students were keen on free and independent studying style which was flexible for students. Thirteen percent of students were interested in international and multicultural study environment. Thirteen percent of students appreciated a lot of school support such as travel trips, company trips, exchange programmes and overseas internships. Seven percent of students respected kindness and support from lecturers. Vietnamese students were interested in essential and updated knowledge (5%), very nice Finnish or other language courses (4%), online courses (4%), networking (4%), great library (2%), many cultural courses (2%).

Table 3 Positive experiences of Vietnamese students for study programme

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Interesting study method, less theoretical, more practical activities                             | 29% |
| Free and independent study style  | 18% |
| International/ multicultural study environment  | 13% |
| Lot of school supports such as travel trip/ company trip/exchange programmes/ overseas internship | 13% |
| Kind and supportive lecturers   | 7%  |
| Essential and updated knowledge   | 5%  |
| Nice Finnish or language courses  | 4%  |

|                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Online course                 | 4% |
| Networking                    | 4% |
| Great library                 | 2% |
| Many cultural courses offered | 2% |

#### b) Negative experiences

There were also eleven different negative experiences from same group of students, see Table 4. There were five main experiences that the students did not like. First, some supposed there were unnecessary, out-of-date or boring courses (27%). While some still thought that there was lack of theoretical basement and intensive knowledge for the offered major (17%). Thirteen percent of students mentioned less practical activities. Some students were dissatisfied with boring teaching methods (10%) and not-related, unprofessional homework or projects in study programme (10%). Another idea mentioned was that there were too many Vietnamese students in the same class (7%) or most of the interaction between lecturers and students were from emails in online courses (3%), lazy teammates (3%), the way to grade the assignments or exams (3%), less support for internship and jobs after graduating (3%).

Table 4 Negative experiences of Vietnamese students for study programme

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Some unnecessary, out-of-date or boring courses   | 27% |
| Lack of theoretical basement and intensive knowledge  | 17% |
| Less practical activities   | 13% |
| Boring teaching methods   | 10% |
| A few not-related, unprofessional homework or projects in study programmes                  | 10% |
| Too much Vietnamese in the same class   | 7%  |
| In some online courses, most of the interaction between teacher and student are from emails | 3%  |
| Lazy teammate   | 3%  |
| Not many IT course offered in English   | 3%  |
| The way to grade the assignment or exam   | 3%  |
| Less support for internship or job-seeking  | 3%  |

#### c) Vietnamese student's feedback for study programme

Through study experiences at FUASs, Vietnamese student participants gave many interesting feedback for study programme, see Table 5. Forty-five percent of students gave feedback about more intensive courses for the majors that school offered. Ten percent of students wish to have more interesting lectures for the programme. Ten percent of students gave feedback to have more networking for students to university's partner or potential employers. At the same time was the support from school for practical

training, job-seeking (10%). Other feedback mentioned about practical projects for students (5%), more courses in English (5%), stricter ways in giving grades (5%), updates for the courses (5%), supports to have clearer study paths for each major (5%).

Table 5 Vietnamese student's feedback for study programme at FUASs

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| More intensive courses related to offered major              | 45% |
| More interesting lectures                                    | 10% |
| Networking to university's partner or potential employers    | 10% |
| The supports from school for practical training, job-seeking | 10% |
| More practical projects for students                         | 5%  |
| More courses in English                                      | 5%  |
| The teachers should be stricter about giving grades          | 5%  |
| Updates for the courses                                      | 5%  |
| More support for clear study path for each major.            | 5%  |

### Experiences for FUASs' Schools

#### a) Positive experiences

In total, author received 35 different positive experiences for the schools from Vietnamese student's participants which was divided into nine main groups, see Table 6. From the results, there was large number of students respected for friendly and helpful lecturers and staff in FUASs (34%). Many students liked the good school's facilities and equipment (31%). The rest of positive experiences included school projects, school's design for studying (9%), low price for food and coffee (6%), good design with nice color (6%), comfortable environment (3%), freedom of studying (3%) etc.

Table 6 Positive experiences of Vietnamese student for schools

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Amiable, friendly and helpful teachers and staff, practicality | 34% |
| Good facilities and equipment                                  | 31% |
| School's design for study                                      | 9%  |
| School projects  | 6%  |
| It's color way, nice design                                    | 6%  |
| Cheap food and coffee, discounted food                         | 6%  |
| Comfortable environment  | 3%  |
| Freedom of studying  | 3%  |
| Students can take an internship grant.                         | 3%  |

#### b) Negative experiences

When talking about things that Vietnamese students did not like much about the schools, there were many results for this matter, see Table 7. However, the largest number of students answered that there was not much they do not like about their schools (25%). The real biggest disadvantage condition was distance from school to the center, apartment or dorm (17%). The second largest uncomfortable points for Vietnamese students was lecturer's fluent-English ability (13%). Besides, there were other matters that the participants mentioned such as not many multicultural activities for international students (8%), no gym (4%), too much group work in teaching method (4%), computer room and toilet (4%), lack of small nursing room in every campus (4%), repeated meals at school canteen (4%), some lecturers are not supportive and compassionate (4%), priority towards Swedish courses (4%) and small school and without-view library (4%).

Table 7 Negative experiences of Vietnamese student for schools

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Nothing much   | 25% |
| Location far from center, apartment, dorm  | 17% |
| Teachers don't speak English fluently even though it is an English program; Some campuses were downgraded, and some core majors were lack English teachers                                 | 13% |
| Not so many multicultural events for international students  | 8%  |
| Some projects or events are only in Finnish  | 4%  |
| No gym   | 4%  |
| There are always group work in every class. 1 or two assignment working in a group is fine. Nevertheless, it just slows down the productivity when there are group-works most of the time. | 4%  |
| the computer room and toilet   | 4%  |
| If possible, I want to have a small nursing room in every campus, in case of emergency.  | 4%  |
| Sometimes meals at the canteen are repeated  | 4%  |
| Some teachers are not that supportive or compassionate   | 4%  |
| Priority towards Swedish courses   | 4%  |
| School is quite small, and the library is without view.  | 4%  |

#### c) Vietnamese student's feedback for school

Twenty percent of students did not have more feedback for school, see Table 8. Fifteen percent of students expected gym or sport events in school. Ten percent of students expected things or information to be provided in both English besides Finnish. In addition, there were other feedback for school such as more support from tutor for idea planning and event planning (5%), less group work, more interesting courses providing higher level knowledge (5%), more elective courses related to soft-skills for international students to help them get used to Finnish working environment (5%). There were some comments

from Vietnamese students to improve school facilities. For example, currently there were many channels which students have to go through to find important information related to their study such as lamk.fi, reppu.lamk.fi, lukkarit.lamk.fi, peppi.lamk.fi. Too many webpages confused the students at the beginning (5%). Some students expected up-to-date learning programs; wider availability of courses focusing on deeper knowledge in particular fields (5%) or hosting program, joint classes that help international students be familiar with Finnish students (5%). There were interesting but true expectations from student that all things should be changed and better compared with the time that school did not charge for studying (5%), improving general methods for some technical subjects (5%) and bigger library and view (5%).

Table 8 Vietnamese student's feedback for school at FUASs

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| No  | 20% |
| There needs to be more support from the teachers in terms of students coming up and planning ideas and events   | 15% |
| Courses should be more related to each other, in other words, to be focused on a specific Business fields   | 10% |
| Have everything provided in English besides Finnish   | 5%  |
| Having a gym or organizing sports events would be nice  | 5%  |
| less group work, more interesting courses providing higher level knowledge  | 5%  |
| I want school open more elective courses related to soft skills for international student to help them get used to Fins working environment   | 5%  |
| Reppu plus Lukkarit plus Winhawille made me confused a bit in the beginning   | 5%  |
| So far, LAMK has some events for IB students. More events for IT students to expand their networks should be a good idea  | 5%  |
| More up-to-date learning program; wider availability of courses focusing on deeper knowledge in fields  | 5%  |
| It would be better if there was program that foreign students are able to befriend with the Finns such as hosting program, joint classes  | 5%  |
| All things should be changed and better compared with the time that school did not charge for studying  | 5%  |
| Improving general methods for some technical subjects. Example: Not to make lengthy speech or explanation, just simply giving formulas and important note briefly step by steps and then example exercise | 5%  |
| Bigger library and view   | 5%  |



## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned in the first chapter, the research provides the recommendations for FUASs to meet and exceed Vietnamese students' expectations and improve FUASs' customer experiences management.

### 6.1 Vietnamese Student's Expectations are Fuzzy Expectation

Based on theory mentioned in the first parts of this thesis and the data analysis, author supposed most of Vietnamese student's expectations are fuzzy and implicit expectations.

Why are these expectations considered as fuzzy expectations?

Firstly, when analysed the age of Vietnamese students participated in the research, people can easily recognize the ages from 18 to 23 years old as being too young. In Vietnam, students in these ages usually have just left upper secondary school or in the first or second years at colleges or universities. Upper secondary takes three years to finish and requires students from 15 years old to start this level of study (Thuvienphapluat 2005). So far, there is still no flexible study for students at upper secondary school to reduce the time of study and graduate earlier than 18 years of age in Vietnam. The author believes Vietnamese students certainly have never experienced and finished a full study abroad programme at university level to have much experience to compare and reference when making choices to study at FUASs.

Secondly, most of the survey participants were living in Finland from six months to more than two years. Author supposes again the majority of students is experiencing for the first time Finnish education system. Because there was less information about the development of Finnish education system in Vietnam in the past until recent years. Moreover, from six months to more than two years does not match the normal finishing time for a full bachelor's degree study in FUASs. Finnish bachelor's degree includes 210 – 270 ECTS and it normally takes three and a half to four years to finish English programmes (Studyinfinland 2019).

Third, there is a strong trend to send children to study abroad early in a lot of Vietnamese families in recent years. In 2018 there were 130,000 Vietnamese students studying abroad. (Vnexpress 2018.)

Based on above reasons, it can be said that almost all Vietnamese students in bachelor's degrees at FUASs are very young students who do not have much experience or specific expectations for their study choices. In other cases, many Vietnamese students still choose to study abroad based on other peoples' beliefs due to lack of their own

experiences. So, the action to study abroad is considered as a new experience that no one and nothing are certain about risks or issues which the students can deal with in the time of studying at FUASs.

How to deal with customers who have fuzzy expectation? There is no way better than creating a friendly, direct and informative connection between service suppliers and customers. This first solution is really important because in recent years, the information exchange between FUASs and Vietnamese students was still basic and through word-of-mouth channel, pop-up study-abroad consulting companies in Vietnam, online sharing channels such as Facebook, personal blogs etc. Those transfer-information channels were and is working independently with FUASs and without any duty serves FUASs, so it can lead to lack of correct information, transparency, or misunderstanding from those channels beforehand. Some Vietnamese study-abroad consulting companies earn money from supplying information and education services from the demand of seeking information for study abroad from Vietnamese students such as International Network Consultants (Inec Vietnam), Taleed Academy, Edulinks, Trawise etc. The truth showed there is still lack of direct channel that Vietnamese students can contact and get necessary information about FUASs. On the other hand, Vietnamese people have shy-to-say habits and limited searching skills. When information is transferred through a third party who is not an official brand or representative of main supplier, it is hard to be certain that correct and enough information is supplied. Author suggests the suppliers should consider the opportunities to connect and advice full information for potential customers in general and for Vietnamese students in particular. In addition, using online channels nowadays is supposed to be a smart tool since Vietnamese younger generation is in the trend using technology tools to find information and explore the world.

Second, once there are channels or opportunities to communicate and share information to Vietnamese students, FUASs need to have as much detailed and specific as possible. FUASs can combine between branding about their own school, introducing about the education services and orientating in detailed what the university can supply for students which Vietnamese students can receive. Those steps can help Vietnamese students have correct expectations and make better decisions. Information and connection nowadays are keys to being successful in business. If there is still lack of explanation and orientation steps, why do not FUASs do these actions and connect better with their target customers?

Third, there are different organizations which work to supply educational consulting service to countries in America, Europe and Australia. Some organizations are well-known and established for quite some time, some are younger. Especially for Finnish educational

consulting services, there are a few companies, pop-up groups for entrance examinations or even courses at home with personal tutors for the entrance examinations. Vietnamese government can manage only registered organizations, they cannot manage unregistered groups or tutors. The above facts show that the demand for Finnish education information and entrance-examination preparations are high in Vietnamese young students community in Vietnam. A few well-known educational consulting service organizations are e.g. International Network Consultants (Inec Vietnam), Taleed Academy, Edulinks, Trawise. These organizations have good experience and various services as education consultants for students to Finland. They also understand well about Vietnamese students. Should FUASs consider cooperation, so that these companies can be the partners who supply information for Vietnamese students? From that FUASs can manage the information quality and ensure the accuracy, efficiency and transparency of the information. On the other hand, FUASs can consider these organizations as communication partners or create marketing campaign with support from these organizations.

## 6.2 Vietnamese Student's Expectations are Implicit Expectations

Based on the survey results, expectations are implicit expectations as there are many aspects that a lot of Vietnamese students believed they should receive when choosing to study at FUASs. However, those expectations might be thought not compulsory services included in the education service quality of FUASs. Therefore, author supposed there are different thoughts about same aspects from FUASs and Vietnamese students. If those are not recognized and explained it may lead to dissatisfaction from Vietnamese students and also FUASs. For example, many students expect that the service supplier should build a network or connection for them to potential employers. Yes, support from school to meet and get information is a plus point from FUASs for students, but the students need to notice to get a job partly from their own effort and net-working ability. This issue should be clearer between FUASs and Vietnamese students to avoid misunderstanding.

From the survey's results, a lot of students supposed to be taught more intensive courses. Do the students really know how to evaluate and name an intensive course? What kinds of courses are considered as intensive? What kinds of courses are evaluated as normal? It is crucial to make the information clear enough between education suppliers and service users about what supplier can offer and what customer can achieve. So that, there is better to achieve satisfaction from customers and reduce stress for suppliers.

A lot of Vietnamese students expected practical knowledge from FUASs and this knowledge can be applied to real life. Do they understand what the school can supply is

the tools to help the student easier approach the real life and how to apply studied knowledge partly is from their own effort and skills. Those rules seem to be simple but if there are not informative communication or reliable, direct and open-to-share channels, both suppliers and customers are easily misunderstood.

The suggestion for this matter from author's viewpoint is that FUASs should connect with international students in general and Vietnamese students in particular more to explore what they are thinking, at the same time clarify what the schools can supply then systemize it in to a study plan and explain or instruct the students. Author supposed the more effective that step can be done, the more satisfied and appreciative the students are with FUASs.

### 6.3 Recommendations for FUAS's Customer Experience Management

As mentioned in theoretical part, experience is true feeling that service business needs to add into their marketing and supplying service activities to gain more impression from customers. Customer's experiences should be paid attention from the first step of interaction to even after-sales services. That is the reason why FUASs should notice Vietnamese student's experiences in FUASs activities. The more activities that international students can join and experience the real study life as native students, the more real feelings they can absorb.

To match students' expectations and experiences, FUASs need to know what are the Vietnamese student's expectations and experiences for Finnish universities of applied sciences' study programmes and schools by surveys. The surveys can be done before the courses to know students' expectations and after the courses to know their experiences. The surveys can be done before the students start studying at FUASs to know what the students expect for the schools and when they graduate to know what they experience. From that, FUASs can evaluate and have solutions to improve FUASs' offering services.

On the other hand, there is one more reason that FUASs should focus is language tools. The study programmes that FUASs offer and are chosen by Vietnamese students and non-EU students are mostly in English. English is the international language which is mainly used by Vietnamese students when studying in Finland. However, there is a lot information in FUASs' websites is in Finnish or Swedish. So, this limits the information approach of Vietnamese students when they search for information for their study.

There are many Facebook groups where Vietnamese students ask questions related to how to study and live in Finland and receive answers, sharing experiences from experienced people. For example: Facebook group named "WTF - Cong dong du hoc sinh

Viet Nam tai Phan Lan” where Vietnamese students can ask everything about study matters, living matters, house rent, even helps to do thesis surveys etc. or Facebook group named HAFA18 - Applying to Finland Autumn 2018 where potential Vietnamese students ask and share experiences for applying and taking entrance examination to FUASs or Finnish universities. Such groups work well as some Vietnamese students usually go there to get the reference information before seeking information from official channels. Not only students, but many parents also search for real experiences to use as references for their children’s study-abroad preparation. Therefore, the author proposes that the focus could be more on alumni experiences in the FUAS branding and marketing campaigns. For example, FUASs can invite alumni to come and share useful information about studying life, career paths or CV writing tips, etc. Those real lessons will make the students understand clearer and create better impact to Vietnamese students. On the other hand, FUASs can do online surveys to a wide range of students to know what are their frequent questions, invite successful alumni for sharing study experiences at FUASs related to their study at FUASs and create a platform which includes a collection of questions and answers. So, Vietnamese or other international students can approach and find necessary information from school. By this way, the information becomes more official and the distance between FUASs and foreign students turns into closer.

## 7 CONCLUSION

This chapter of the thesis includes three parts. The first part provides the answers to the research questions. In the second part, the validity and reliability of the thesis are mentioned. In the last part, suggestions for future research are stated.

### 7.1 Answers to Research Questions

As mentioned in the first chapter and fourth chapter, the main objective of the thesis is research and analysis of Vietnamese students expectations, experiences for FUASs to improve FUASs educational offerings' quality. To achieve the target of the research, author set a main research question and four sub-questions. The survey's results and analysis partly answer for the main question "*What are Vietnamese student's expectations and experiences for Finnish universities of applied sciences' study programmes and schools*". In addition, below table below provides answers to sub-questions.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>What is the definition of customer's expectations and experiences?</p> | <p><b>Customer expectations</b> are the basic assumptions of customer about a brand, service or product (John 2017). Customer expectations can be beliefs which are not experienced by customer for a product or service (Oliver &amp; Winer 1987). Or, customer expectations can be the outcome through a learning or absorbing process which sometimes can be created quickly by first impressions (Marketing and Strategy Terms 2019).</p> <p><b>Customer experience</b> is defined as what a company or organization can create and bring to customer through people (Smith 2006, 4). Therefore, customer experiences become customer's awareness, impression, feeling through every interaction between customer and your business (Smith 2006).</p> |
|---|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Why it is important for FUASs to understand Vietnamese student's expectations and experiences?</p>  | <p>Vietnamese students' expectations is important because they are directly relevant to Vietnamese students' satisfaction to FUASs' educational service quality. By understanding, connecting and improving service quality to meet or exceed customer expectations, FUASs are increasing levels of Vietnamese students' satisfaction.</p> <p>Moreover, focusing on customer experience helps FUASs build more-than-enough quality, create unique competitiveness and improve educational service quality.</p> |
| <p>Are FUASs meeting Vietnamese students' expectations?</p>  | <p>Based on the results of the online survey, author believes FUASs met partly Vietnamese students' expectations. However, Vietnamese students' expectations are tremendously various, and the research showed Vietnamese student's expectations are fuzzy and implicit expectations. So, FUASs need to have appropriate approach to manage meeting Vietnamese students' expectations to match Vietnamese students' expectations based on what FUASs are able to offer.</p>                                    |
| <p>What can FUASs do to fulfill the Vietnamese students' expectations and improve Vietnamese students' experience for FUASs' study programmes and schools?</p> | <p>There are some key solutions for FUASs to manage Vietnamese students' expectations and improve Vietnamese students' experience to FUASs. First, FUASs' public information toward international need to be transparent and more detailed. Second, communication keeps an important role in</p>   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | all educational services between FUASs and Vietnamese students. Third, follow up and feedback by applying real experiences helps FUASs approach and get win – win relationship more efficiently. |
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## 7.2 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two essential factors for every research. If validity is the foundational elements in a research report which is commonly applied to check the accuracy of the research's result, reliability is usually used to measure the consistency and stability of a research's result (Stephanie 2016).

The thesis included theoretical part and empirical part which applied both secondary and primary data. The secondary data was conducted by using trustworthy reports, published books, up to date electronic sources, academic articles, etc which is relevant to the thesis topic. The primary data was collected through online survey. The survey was given out using internal school channels and other social media channels. There were twenty-eight valid participants from this survey. The survey's questions are clear and was done in English. The answers to the questionnaires' questions are reliable.

Fourth sub-questions were also stated and based on the information accumulated from the theoretical and empirical parts of the study. It can be summarized that the goal was met and all research questions were answered.

## 7.3 Suggestions on Further Research

The purpose of the thesis is to determine the expectations and experiences of Vietnamese students for FUASs study programmes and schools only. From the findings, the author gives recommendation to fulfill Vietnamese students' expectations and improve Vietnamese students' experiences related to study programmes and schools. In further research, others factors besides study programmes and schools can be continued.

The research would bring the benefits for FUASs to using and improving the educational service offerings for Vietnamese students. Researching more on the same topic but with other international student groups would also help the UASs develop their educational services offerings for all international students.



## 8 SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis is to study Vietnamese students' expectations and experiences for Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences' educational services especially in the area of study programmes and schools. And, the author expects FUASs can utilize the study' results in further developing their educational offerings.

The thesis question and four sub-questions were answered in this research. The author aimed to find out Vietnamese students' expectations and experiences for Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences' study programmes and schools. Concepts such as customer's expectations and customer's experience, the importance of these concepts in business, customer's expectation management and customer's experience management mentioned in the research to be foundations for the whole research.

The thesis applies inductive research and uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data. The data were collected using an online survey. The questionnaire was sent out to Vietnamese students who follow English degree programmed at FUASs.

Author gives recommendations for FUASs to consider and improve their education service offerings such as offer more social activities for students, do surveys for students before and after courses to know what they expect and learn from FUASs' courses, do surveys when the students enter FUASs and when they graduate to know what they want and achieve in the time of study at FUASs, apply English more in school website, create platform with Questions and Answers for students or invite successful alumni to share study experiences at FUASs for students etc.

Chapter seven of the research, author answered the main thesis question and all sub-questions. The validity and reliability were evaluated in this chapter. Some suggestions for further research were also mentioned.

The last chapter, chapter eight was the summarizes of the research. In this chapter, author summarizes the research purpose, main content of the research, research method and mentions briefly recommendations for FUASs.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey form was used to collect data which are expectations and experiences of Vietnamese students with Finnish universities of applied sciences.

Survey questionnaire

1. What is your name? (first name, last name)
2. How old are you?
3. Your gender
  - + Male
  - + Female
4. Which Finnish universities of applied sciences are you studying/ did you study in?
5. Which programme are you studying/ did you study at Finnish UAS?
  - + Bachelor
  - + Master
  - + Other
6. Which field (see below) is/was your major of study at Finnish UAS related to?
  - + Business in general
  - + IT (Information Technology)
  - + Business Information Technology
  - + Nursing
  - + Tourism
  - + Restaurant management
  - + Other
7. How long do you study and experience the education service in Finnish UAS?
  - + Just begun
  - + From 1 to 6 months
  - + From 6 months to 2 years

+ More than 2 years

+ Almost graduate

+ Graduated

+ Other

8. What are your expectations from the education programme that you chose?

9. What is/are the thing(s) that you like most in your study programme?

10. What is/are the thing(s) that you do not like in your study programme?

11. Is there anything about your study programme that you think needs to be improved to meet your expectations? If yes – what are they? Please explain.

12. What are your expectations for the school?

13. What is the thing that you like most at your school?

14. What is the thing that you do not like at your school?

15. Is there anything from your school that you think needs to be improved to meet your expectation? If yes – what are they? Please explain.

16. Do/ Did you have any expectations for the Finnish society during your time of study in Finland?

+ Yes

+ No

17. If yes, what are/were they? Please explain.