

Assessing Stakeholders' Satisfaction of a Catholic University Graduate School in the Philippines



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ABSTRACT. Students around the world pursue graduate education for their professional development, career promotions, and lifelong learning. Seen as an investment, universities faced challenges with rising expectations and industry competitiveness on factors influencing satisfaction to improve graduate school service quality. The paper aims to assess and compare the level of stakeholders' satisfaction of a Catholic University Graduate School in the Philippines using the 7Ps of a marketing framework, including the product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. The study applied the quantitative research design using a descriptive and comparative approach. The respondents were the 270 graduate school students, faculty members, and alumni determined using the simple random sampling method. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to gather data. Percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used for the descriptive analysis. Meanwhile, the Mann-Whitney U-test was used to

determine the significant differences in the level of satisfaction when the stakeholders are grouped according to their designation, academic programs, average monthly income, and employer. The findings showed that the overall level of satisfaction of the stakeholders of a graduate school in terms of the 7Ps of the marketing mix is high, with the product as the highest rating and price as the lowest. A significant difference was found in the level of satisfaction of the stakeholders when they are grouped according to the designation, academic program, family's average monthly income, and employment. The findings showed that the graduate school in the Catholic university offered good quality graduate education, has qualified and competent professors, has an accessible location, and has effective policies and procedures that exceed the expectations of the stakeholders.

1.0. Introduction

To acquire professional development and career promotions, graduates pursue graduate education and earn master's or doctoral degrees (Ertem & Gokalp, 2019). For this and other reasons, many students around the world have opted to continue postgraduate studies. Specifically, since 2000, college graduates aged 25 and above with the highest degree of a master's has increased to 21 million. Likewise, doctoral degree holders have increased significantly to 4.5 million (Census Bureau's Educational Attainment in the United States, 2018).

Asia accounts for nearly one-half of the world's higher education enrollment, leading to a rise in graduate education, masterate, and doctorate (Sharma, 2014). Predominantly, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2011) estimates that more than 60,000 students from east and south Asia are pursuing master's and doctor's degrees abroad.

In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) statistical data on higher education for postgraduate level enrollment for the academic year 2017-2018 showed a total of 241,501, an increase of 14% from the previous year. Of the 2,299 higher education institutions (HEIs) that offer master's programs, 378 are private institutions, while the rest account for state universities and colleges (SUCs). This increasing trend relates to the country's aspirations for the years 2017-2022 in its development plan as published by the National Economic Development Authority, which includes education reforms to boost enrollment levels and improve the quality of higher education. Furthermore, improvements in the number of higher education faculty holding master's and doctoral degrees rise from 38.87% and 11.09% in 2010 to 40.34% and 12.62% in 2015 (Macha et al., 2018).

Although many studies were directed towards the stakeholders' expectations and perceptions and their satisfaction, the concentration is on the students (Chawla & Sharma, 2014). Therefore, this research will give importance to the stakeholders, both internal and external, to determine



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their overall satisfaction in the different areas covered by the study with the quality of the graduate education of this academic institution which is an essential component of the education quality assurance system (Chevalier, 2014; Humburg et al., 2013).

The paper aims to assess the level of stakeholders' satisfaction of a Catholic University Graduate School in the Philippines using the 7Ps of a marketing framework, including the product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. The findings of the study served as a basis for a proposed marketing plan that will increase enrollment in its graduate programs and improve the delivery of quality support services and assurance initiatives, including reviewing the current system, setting priorities, and planning and allocating future resources for the delivery of graduate and postgraduate programs.

2.0. Framework of the Study

The paper theorized that different perceptions of individual stakeholder's expectations and experiences may result in either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This is anchored to the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP), which was developed to rationalize customer decision-making (Oliver 1997) and considered the most reassuring theoretical framework for the value judgment of customer satisfaction.

Researchers have used the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) to describe customers' satisfaction and repurchase intentions in the field of marketing (Diehl & Poynor, 2018). EDT justifies the process through which consumers establish their level of satisfaction based on their expectations. The design implies that there are forms of expectations about the foreseen performance when consumers acquire these goods and services; thus, the expectation level becomes a standard in contrast to the product being assessed. The outcomes are compared against expectations when these products and services have been received and utilized (Mattila & O'Neill, 2003). If the result provides something equal to that of the expectation, then confirmation materializes. However, given a disparity between these expectations and outcomes, disconfirmation happens. Hence, a positive confirmation will result in satisfaction, while negative disconfirmation will cause dissatisfaction (Schwarz & Zhu, 2015).

The stakeholders' level of satisfaction can be viewed as the outcome of their experiences when they first entered the university and compared with their actual encounters. At the same time, they were associated with the university in terms of the quality of education that they have received, the amount of fees that they have paid, the people and the procedures that they have come across, the convenience of the university's location, the advertisements that the institution had provided, and the facilities that they have used. All of these occurrences may confirm or not their anticipations that will lead to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

3.0. Methods

This study applied the quantitative research design using the descriptive and comparative approach. The design was used to supply information about the degree of satisfaction of individuals regarding the product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence of a graduate school. Specifically, the descriptive-comparative research approach was used to assess the level of satisfaction of the graduate school's stakeholders when they are grouped according to the designation, academic program, average monthly income, and employer.

The respondents of this study were 270 graduate school students, faculty members, and alumni of a university in a highly urbanized city in the Visayas. They were based on the official enrollment and teaching loads, respectively, for the Academic Year 2019-2020 and were determined using the simple random sampling method. The alumni were taken from the last three years (2017-2019) based on the university's registrar office list. They were identified using the simple random sampling method. Their involvement as students, professors, and alumni in the graduate school was considered an essential variable in determining the level of satisfaction of the stakeholders in terms of the 7 Ps of the marketing mix.

A researcher-made questionnaire was constructed based on the study of Malabanan and Legaspi (2017) and the Customer Satisfaction Survey Questionnaire (for Students) of a university in Bacolod City. It is composed of two parts. Part 1 is for the demographic profile of the respondents, while Part 2 is the questionnaire proper, consisting of 41-item Likert type benchmarks for assessing the level of satisfaction of a graduate school's stakeholders in terms of the 7 Ps of marketing. The questionnaire

was subjected to content validity and obtained an average score of 4.8 and was interpreted excellent using the criteria evaluation by Goods and Scates. It was validated by five (5) jury members who are experts in marketing. The questionnaire went through a pilot test to thirty (30) randomly selected graduate school faculty, student, and alumni who did not participate in the actual survey to check the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Using Cronbach's alpha, the reliability statistics resulted in 0.970, which means the questionnaire was reliable.

Descriptive and comparative data analyses were used to analyze and interpret the data on the level of satisfaction of a graduate school's stakeholders in terms of the 7 Ps of marketing and how the demographics of the assessors are associated with their level of satisfaction. Percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used for the descriptive analysis. Meanwhile, the Mann-Whitney U-test was utilized to determine the significant differences in the level of satisfaction when the stakeholders are grouped according to their designation, academic programs, average monthly income, and employer.

4.0. Results and Discussion

Stakeholders' level of satisfaction

Tables 1A and 1B shows that the overall assessment of the level of satisfaction as evaluated by the graduate school's stakeholders is highly satisfactory (M=3.34, SD=0.46) in terms of the 7 Ps of the marketing mix. The results indicate that the stakeholders are highly satisfied with the graduate school's product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence.

Product ranked first (M=3.59, SD=0.43). This signifies that stakeholders are highly satisfied with the graduate school's curriculum considering it relevant and responsive to the needs and designed for the students to achieve professional growth. The stakeholders are highly satisfied with the choice of areas of specialization, which is substantial to cater to the students' demands in their respective degrees, the total number of credit units for the academic degree, which is considerable, and the duration of the program, which is achievable. The respondents also consider the courses offered to be intended to develop the students' competence, character, and faith in God.

Second to product, the stakeholders are also highly satisfied with the place (M=3.52, SD=0.48). This indicates that the university's site is accessible and convenient to almost all public utility vehicles in the city. The respondents are highly satisfied that there are sufficient security and safety measures inside and outside the campus.

Ranking third among the 7 Ps of the marketing mix is people (M=3.44, SD=0.46). The participants are highly satisfied with the faculty members of the graduate school and the staff of the various offices in the university. They consider the graduate school faculty members competent in their field of specialization, manifesting the core values of love, Marian devotion, moral integrity, service, passion for excellence, community life, justice, and peace; qualified for academic monitoring; and competent as research advisers. On the other hand, they find the staff of the Graduate School office, Accounting office, Registrar's office, Library, Clinic, Director of Student Affairs office, and Research and Development office competent, approachable, and accommodating.

Table 1A. Level of Stakeholder Satisfaction of the University Graduate School

Variable	Satisfaction			Product			Price			Place		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Designation												
Internal	3.42	0.41	HS	3.62	0.44	HS	3.19	0.61	Sa	3.61	0.42	HS
External	3.11	0.50	Sa	3.48	0.40	HS	2.88	0.64	Sa	3.30	0.55	HS
Academic Program												
Master's	3.30	0.47	HS	3.56	0.45	HS	3.06	0.64	Sa	3.49	0.48	HS
Doctoral	3.50	0.34	HS	3.72	0.33	HS	3.29	0.54	HS	3.65	0.45	HS
Family's Average Monthly Income												
Lower	3.30	0.47	HS	3.55	0.45	HS	3.07	0.63	Sa	3.49	0.49	HS
Higher	3.42	0.41	HS	3.67	0.39	HS	3.18	0.63	Sa	3.60	0.46	HS
Employer												
Private	3.26	0.48	HS	3.53	0.46	HS	3.06	0.65	Sa	3.50	0.50	HS
Government	3.48	0.37	HS	3.69	0.37	HS	3.21	0.59	Sa	3.57	0.44	HS
As a Whole	3.34	0.46	HS	3.59	0.43	HS	3.11	0.63	Sa	3.52	0.48	HS

Table 1B. Level of Stakeholder Satisfaction of the University Graduate School

Variable	Promotion			People			Process			Physical Evidence		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Designation												
Internal	3.35	0.60	HS	3.50	0.45	HS	3.34	0.50	HS	3.22	0.63	Sa
External	2.79	0.87	Sa	3.27	0.44	HS	2.94	0.66	Sa	2.85	0.77	Sa
Academic Program												
Master's	3.15	0.74	Sa	3.40	0.47	HS	3.19	0.59	Sa	3.09	0.71	Sa
Doctoral	3.40	0.62	HS	3.59	0.37	HS	3.42	0.45	HS	3.26	0.59	HS
Family's Average Monthly Income												
Lower	3.17	0.75	Sa	3.39	0.46	HS	3.19	0.59	Sa	3.10	0.71	Sa
Higher	3.25	0.66	HS	3.53	0.44	HS	3.34	0.52	HS	3.18	0.64	Sa
Employer												
Private	3.10	0.76	Sa	3.38	0.47	HS	3.14	0.60	Sa	3.03	0.73	Sa
Government	3.39	0.62	HS	3.55	0.41	HS	3.42	0.48	HS	3.31	0.59	HS
As a Whole	3.20	0.72	Sa	3.44	0.46	HS	3.24	0.58	Sa	3.12	0.69	Sa

Price ranked the least (M=3.11, SD=0.63). The stakeholders are only satisfied with the tuition and miscellaneous fees charged by the university. For the respondents, these fees are not quite affordable and reasonable; the payment schedule for these fees is not equitable.

The results relate to the study of Gaelic (2012) that graduate students, along with their career choice, will decide that the program or curriculum is their priority; thus, creating a program that takes into consideration students' needs will lead to students' and companies' satisfaction (Enache, 2011).

On the other hand, respondents are also highly satisfied with the place's accessibility; a study showed that stakeholders tend to worry about the distance in choosing an institute (Gajic, 2012). The majority responded that the university is the right place for them, situated at the center of business locality. Finally, stakeholders are highly satisfied with the people; these include all the university staff that interact. This is supported by the study of Mahajan and Golahit (2017) that services provided by the people on the academic and administrative support make a huge difference in customer satisfaction.

Consequently, as depicted in Table 1, stakeholders are only satisfied with the price, promotion, process, and physical evidence. In general, the pricing strategy of colleges and universities should be lower and cheaper than what other competitors are offering as it is critical in the day-to-day operations (Ivy, 2008), although price sometimes is proportionate to the high quality of the product.

As a result, the major goal of all higher institutions is geared towards the satisfaction of its stakeholders (Temizer & Turkyilmaz, 2012), and this knowledge can be used to develop strategies (Hanssen & Solvoll, 2015), leading to a stronger competitive position (Memon & Salleh, 2014).

Difference in the level of satisfaction

Mann Whitney U test was used to determine the significant difference in the level of satisfaction of the stakeholders of a graduate school in terms of product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence as assessed by stakeholders when they are grouped according to the designation, academic program, monthly income, and employer.

Table 2. Difference in the Level of Satisfaction according to Stakeholders' Designation

Variable	Designation		U	p
	Internal	External		
Satisfaction	3.42 (0.41)	3.11 (0.50)	4557.00*	0.000
Product	3.62(0.44)	3.48(0.40)	5457.00*	0.003
Price	3.19(0.61)	2.88(0.64)	5316.00*	0.001
Place	3.61(0.42)	3.30(0.55)	4837.50*	0.000
Promotion	3.35(0.60)	2.79(0.87)	4446.00*	0.000
People	3.50(0.45)	3.27(0.44)	5147.50*	0.000
Process	3.34(0.50)	2.94(0.66)	4580.00*	0.000
Physical Evidence	3.22(0.63)	2.85(0.77)	5103.00*	0.000

Note: *the difference is significant at $p \leq 0.05$

There is significant difference in the level of satisfaction [U=4557.00, p=0.000] of the stakeholders in terms of product [U=5457.00, p=0.000], price [U=5316.00, p=0.000], place [U=4837.50, p=0.000], promotion [U=4446.00, p=0.000], people [U=5147.50, p=0.000], process [U=4580.00, p=0.000], and physical evidence [U=5447.00, p=0.000] when they are grouped according to designation.

The internal stakeholders are more satisfied with the 7 Ps of the marketing mix than the external stakeholders. Academic services, administrative services, and the institution's employees' appearance showed a strong association with students' satisfaction and retention in the private educational institution. This revealed that the students were more satisfied with the services provided by the institution rather than by its building and classroom design (Azam, 2018).

There is significant difference in the level of satisfaction [U=4392.00, p=0.008] of the stakeholders in terms of product [U=4543.50, p=0.000], price [U=4716.50, p=0.037], place [U=4790.00, p=0.049], promotion [U=4643.00, p=0.027], people [U=4403.50, p=0.008], and process [U=4493.50, p=0.013] when they are grouped according to academic program. There is no significant difference in the level of satisfaction of the stakeholders in terms of physical evidence [U=5041.50, p=0.162] when they are grouped according to academic program.

Stakeholders in the doctoral degree program are more satisfied in terms of the product, price, place, promotion, people, and process than those in the master's degree program. Most of the students currently enrolled in the doctoral degree program had completed their master's degree in the same graduate school. Satisfied students remain loyal to the institution; thus, they give back in tangible and intangible forms. They recommend their alma mater and propagate the institution's image by word of mouth and return to study for other degrees (Panda et al., 2019).

Table 3. Difference in the Level of Satisfaction according to Stakeholders' Academic Program

Variable	Academic Program		U	p
	Master's	Doctoral		
Satisfaction	3.30(0.47)	3.50(0.34)	4392.00*	0.008
Product	3.56(0.45)	3.72(0.33)	4543.50*	0.016
Price	3.06(0.64)	3.29(0.54)	4716.50*	0.037
Place	3.49(0.48)	3.65(0.45)	4790.00*	0.049
Promotion	3.15(0.74)	3.40(0.62)	4643.00*	0.027
People	3.40(0.47)	3.59(0.37)	4403.50*	0.008
Process	3.19(0.59)	3.42(0.45)	4493.50*	0.013
Physical Evidence	3.09(0.71)	3.26(0.59)	5041.50	0.162

Note: *the difference is significant at $p \leq 0.05$

There is a significant difference in the level of satisfaction [U=6825.00, p=0.049] of the stakeholders in terms of product [U=6678.00, p=0.024] and people [U=6604.50, p=0.019] when they are grouped according to the family's average income. However, there is no significant difference in the level of satisfaction of the stakeholders in terms of price [U=733.50, p=0.248], place [U=6910.50, p=0.057], promotion [U=7720.00, p=0.626], and process [U=4493.50, p=0.013, and physical evidence [U=5041.50, p=0.162] when they are grouped according to family's average income.

Table 4. Difference in the Level of Satisfaction according to Stakeholders' Family's Average Monthly Income

Variables	Family's Average Monthly Income		U	p
	Lower	Higher		
Satisfaction	3.30(0.47)	3.42(0.41)	6825.00*	0.049
Product	3.55(0.45)	3.67(0.39)	6678.00*	0.024
Price	3.07(0.63)	3.18(0.63)	7333.50	0.248
Place	3.49(0.49)	3.60(0.46)	6910.50	0.057
Promotion	3.17(0.75)	3.25(0.66)	7720.00	0.626
People	3.39(0.46)	3.53(0.44)	6604.50*	0.019
Process	3.19(0.59)	3.34(0.52)	6873.00	0.059
Physical Evidence	3.10(0.71)	3.18(0.64)	7662.00	0.563

Note: *the difference is significant at $p \leq 0.05$

There is a significant difference in the level of satisfaction [$U=6207.50$, $p=0.001$] of the stakeholders in terms of product [$U=6461.00$, $p=0.002$], promotion [$U=6527.50$, $p=0.003$], people [$U=6567.50$, $p=0.004$], process [$U=6050.00$, $p=0.000$], and physical evidence [$U=6446.00$, $p=0.002$] when they are grouped according to employer. On the other hand, there is no significant difference in the level of satisfaction of the stakeholders in terms of price [$U=7209.00$, $p=0.063$] and place [$U=7637.00$, $p=0.251$] when they are grouped according to the employer.

Employees in the public sector were more satisfied. Their sense of well-being and level of happiness were greater than those of the employees in the private sector (Singha & Raychoudhury, 2016).

Table 5. Difference in the Level of Satisfaction according to Stakeholders' Employer

Variables	Employer		U	p
	Private	Government		
Satisfaction	3.26(0.48)	3.48(0.37)	6207.50	0.001
Product	3.53(0.46)	3.69(0.37)	6461.00	0.002
Price	3.06(0.65)	3.21(0.59)	7209.00	0.063
Place	3.50(0.50)	3.57(0.44)	7637.00	0.251
Promotion	3.10(0.76)	3.39(0.62)	6527.50	0.003
People	3.38(0.47)	3.55(0.41)	6567.50	0.004
Process	3.14(0.60)	3.42(0.48)	6050.00	0.000
Physical Evidence	3.03(0.73)	3.31(0.59)	6446.00	0.002

Note: *the difference is significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Reasons why students enrolled in the graduate school

Table 6 shows the reasons why students enrolled in the graduate school. The quality of the graduate school education ranked first with 77.4% ($n=270$), teachers' competence ranked second with 54.4% ($n=270$), and Catholic values ranked third with 53.3% ($n=270$). This is an indication that the graduate school truly upholds the university's vision that is "committed to the integral formation of the human person with the passion for excellence and service to Church and Society" and its mission that "educates the mind and heart by providing the climate, the structure, and the means to develop the vocation, knowledge, skills, talents, and attitude of the community as permeated by the Gospel values for the service of humanity, love, and praise to the One God."

Table 6. Reasons why Students enroll in the Graduate School

Reasons	f	%	Rank
Quality of graduate school education	209	77.4	1
Teachers' competence	147	54.4	2
Catholic values	144	53.3	3
Research training	116	43.0	4
Facilities of the university	97	35.9	5
Friend's recommendation	83	30.7	6
Affordability of tuition and other fees	78	28.9	7

Postgraduate students were highly satisfied with their university choice and the quality of its services, both academic and social activities. This proposes the need for more attention by the university administrators on the academic and non-academic services to its students (Sabatayeva et al., 2017).

The overall result of the study signifies that the stakeholders are highly satisfied in terms of the 7 Ps of the marketing mix of the graduate school. This confirmed the theory that the expectation level of stakeholders becomes a standard in contrast with which the product and services were assessed. Hence, the outcomes are compared against expectations when these products and services have been received and used (Mattila & O'Neill, 2003). If the result provides something equal or greater than the expectation, then confirmation materializes and leads to satisfaction.

Furthermore, stakeholders satisfied with their experience in the institution proved to be loyal to the institution by their willingness to recommend and continue studying in the school. Thus, the university is to exert more effort by improving its facilities, sending faculty members to trainings and conferences, and participating in various academic organizations' programs (Santos, 2015).

5.0. Conclusion

The level of satisfaction of the stakeholders of a graduate school in Bacolod City in terms of the 7 Ps of the marketing mix is highly satisfactory. The findings show that the graduate school in the university offers good quality education, has qualified and competent faculty members and office staff, has an accessible location, and has effective university policies and procedures.

The significant difference in the level of stakeholders' satisfaction is influenced by their experiences of the graduate school's product, price, place, promotion, people, processes, and physical evidence. In delivering its services as expected by the stakeholders, it was confirmed that the graduate school provided quality education, which resulted in a high level of satisfaction to its stakeholders.

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