








Study of an Analytical Model that represent Student Loyalty: Case Study of a Private University in Peru

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Abstract— *Student loyalty was explained based on multiple factors and variables such as institutional image, educational quality, academic fees, and educational service in a Peruvian university that provides educational service, both at undergraduate and graduate levels. The non-experimental research investigated theoretical models to understand student loyalty from four variables. It was evidenced that educational quality and institutional image were key factors to generate loyalty in students towards their educational institution. On the other hand, although the academic fee is considered by students when choosing a university, it was not shown that it is linked to generating student loyalty, which highlights the importance of evaluating other aspects such as educational service and institutional reputation. It was highlighted that Peruvian universities need to plan and implement quality standards and develop a solid and favorable image to encourage student permanence.*

Keywords: Loyalty, perception, university, students.

Resumen— *Se explicó la lealtad estudiantil a partir de múltiples factores y variables como imagen institucional, calidad educativa, tasas académicas y servicio educativo en una universidad peruana que brinda el servicio educativo, tanto a nivel de pregrado como posgrado. La investigación no experimental indagó modelos teóricos para comprender la lealtad estudiantil a partir de cuatro variables. Se evidenció que la calidad educativa y la imagen institucional fueron factores clave para generar en los estudiantes lealtad hacia su institución educativa. Por otro lado, aunque la tasa académica es considerada por los estudiantes al elegir una universidad, no se demostró que esté vinculada con generar lealtad estudiantil, lo que destaca la importancia de evaluar otros aspectos como el servicio educativo y la reputación institucional. Se resaltó que las universidades peruanas requieren planificar e implementar estándares de calidad y desarrollen una imagen sólida y favorable para fomentar la permanencia de los estudiantes.*

Palabras claves: Fidelización, percepción, universidad, estudiantes.

I. INTRODUCTION

The number of institutions providing educational services in higher level has increased, driven by the growing demand from the student population and the need to face an increasingly demanding social landscape on personal and professional levels. In this situation, universities opted for diversification of their educational offerings, implementing strategies to attract and retain students, advertising their image position through different national and international rankings [1].

Loyalty is not merely understood by the duration a student stays at an educational institution or university, but rather, it manifests and continues after graduation. It begins with the judgments of value that graduates form regarding a university and influences the decision to pursue further professional studies, thus connecting to a particular institution. The current university educational model includes a connection with alumni after their graduation, through different activities and promotions [3].

In the national context of Peru, the National Superintendence of higher University Education [4] aims to guarantee quality in benefit of the students. This organization has evaluated 144 universities and granted licenses to 95, both public and private [4], which resulted in a reduction of higher education offering in the country and a constant competition to enhance the institutional image of licensed institutions. Following that, universities embarked on a campaign to foster trust among their students and alumni.

The General Education Law 28044 stipulates that the student serves as the focal point of the educational process and system, wherein it is incumbent upon them to receive an efficient service. Teachers bear the responsibility for their learning and training. Educational institutions are committed to providing respectful treatment, delivering educational services of high quality, and offering appropriate and timely guidance at the commencement, throughout, and conclusion of their education.

In response to this imperative, the Peruvian University Law 30220 advocates for the continuous and progressive enhancement of educational quality. Article 107 [5] emphasizes

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that universities are obligated to foster amicable connections between the institution and its alumni. This is vital for the implementation and oversight of post-graduation activities, as well as for providing support mechanisms to facilitate graduates' integration into the workforce. The objective is to ensure that their contributions yield a positive impact on society.

In this circumstance, leaders of higher education institutions aim to identify the factors that lead to student loyalty [6], for which is important to consider the current and future requirements of job markets [7;8]. Student satisfaction in terms of loyalty constitutes an important factor in university management, as it can lead to the projection of new professional programs, the design of continuing professional programs, the implementation of laboratories, simulators, among others, that enable the students to achieve their educational and professional development.

Reviewing international realities; in China, universities aim to play a leading role in higher education, by developing a curriculum plan that considers all possible factors that could hinder students learning. The study sought to identify the factors that could affect the student satisfaction centering around the theory of customer satisfaction, and having as a result that perceived value and educational quality are determinant of student satisfaction, which in turn positively influences student loyalty and fidelity. [9].

In other case, in Kuning University (Indonesia) it was observed that there is a connection between determinants related to responsiveness, physic evidence, reliability, assurance and empathy with student satisfaction and loyalty levels. This study identified that quality service has an impact among student satisfaction and loyalty levels [10]. In Spain, studies were conducted to determine the student loyalty in a private university, indicating that loyalty is a crucial factor, and achieving student satisfaction is necessary to attain it. [11]. A study conducted in three universities in Marruecos, identified that image, ethics, shared values, and the perceived quality positively influence trust, resulting in an improvement in student loyalty [12].

The theoretical model used to evaluate the measurement index of consumer satisfaction in the United States is The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) model [13] meticulously establishes the causal relationship between customer satisfaction, its antecedents, and the resulting consequences. This model has been extensively utilized in numerous studies. Furthermore, several countries have adopted this model to shape their strategies for enhancing customer satisfaction.

The ACSI model assesses consumer satisfaction through measurements applied across diverse organizations. These measurements involve analyzing the acceptability of consumer satisfaction based on variables tailored to this model, with satisfaction as the primary variable of interest. The measured variables encompass the following aspects: Background:

perceived quality, expectations, and perceived value; Consequences: complaints and loyalty [14].

The ECSI model, developed by Eklöf in 2000, is utilized in Europe. It is derived from the ACSI model and incorporates fixed variables, including perceived quality, expectations, perceived value, satisfaction, and customer loyalty [15]. Whereas the ECSI model, es employed in Europe. The latter is a modification and adaptation of the ACSI model and unifies the client expectations with the quality and perceived value, and the latter with consumer satisfaction. These factors are linked with customer loyalty (Figure 1).

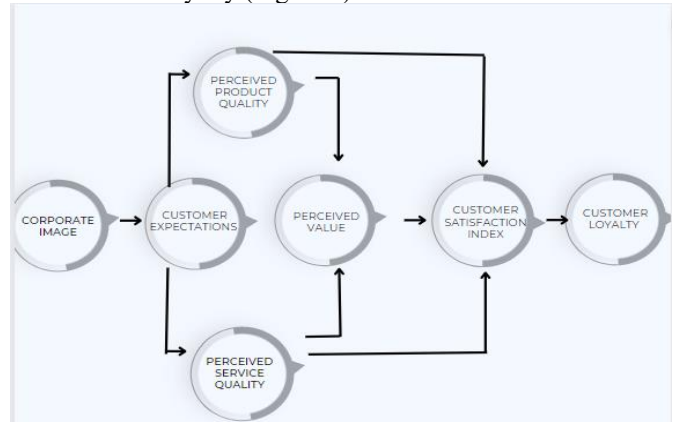


Fig. 1. ECSI european model reviewed on Van-haaften.nl

The permanence and positive relationship between the recipient of a service and the providing center are observed. ECSI measures the satisfaction index; however, the wuropean version is used to explain the consumer loyalty. This model is compared with previous studies where institutional image and student satisfaction at a university significantly influenced student loyalty [12], furthermore it was influenced by corporate image and the student satisfaction through the perception of quality service. Quality sevice has a direct impact in student satisfaction [16].

There exists an effect of service quality present in educational services and teaching methods on student satisfaction, and this, in turn, affects the loyalty they express towards their institution [17]. The consumer loyalty is perceived as a capacity to reciprocate around an obligation, devotion, and intrinsic fervor towards and individual or entity, implying a commitment of fidelity and identification. It is important to note that approaching loyalty as an organizational value predisposes dedication, diligence, and transparency from employees towards executive and the institution, allowing for optimal management and the fulfillment of planned objectives [18;19].

Loyalty entails the conscious fulfillment of service effectiveness, as well as the alignment with ethical principles of the institution and the beneficiaries. Which is reflected in their loyalty. For that, loyalty is ongoing, evidence gratitude for providing individuals with professional, academic, or situational opportunities to those who placed their trust in their actions. Additionally, it involves the development of emotional

and working relationships and bonds fostered through shared experiences. [16,18].

Behavioral loyalty conceptually aligned with the continuous usage of a service, where individuals, even in the presence of other options, prefer a specific institution. [19,20]. It is important to consider that regular patronage predisposes customer loyalty as long as the provided attention manages to meet their satisfaction. It is relevant to consider that emotional bonds play a crucial role in this process, as individuals, feeling content and grateful leads to a continuous return to the institution [21, 22].

It is considered that individuals actions will be influenced by the organizational conditions and behaviors involving good treatment, mutual respect, as well as appropriate attention to users. People tend to become loyal when they achieve both individual and collective satisfaction, which strengthens the institutional image in the medium and long term [23, 24].

Attitudinal loyalty refers to the decision to acquire a service based on the appreciation expressed by the student towards their institution. It is perceived as a relative force between individual aspect and continuous acquisition behavior. In this way, it tends to approach loyalty as a repetitive behavior inherent to attitude [25, 26]. Regarding convenience, it is approached from the perspective of the user and the acquisition they make of a good or service to satisfy their needs without making significant effort. This way, convenience involves specific characteristics of potential users who evaluate educational services for subsequent acquisition. [27, 28].

Institutional or corporate image addresses the perception of the institution held by those who interact with it, this includes attitudes, opinions, prejudices, and feelings expressed over time. A positive relationship between students and their institution has a strong potential to enhance the university's reputation. Moreover, this image is cultivated over a period of time, aimed at showcasing to the community the benefits, advantages, and opportunities that students will have. [30].

When choosing an educational institution, individuals assess the impact it has on the locality and its reputation. Modern infrastructure, indexed research, employment opportunities, extracurricular activities, qualified faculty, and other benefits have contributed to consolidating the institutional image, which will serve as a guide for prospective future applicants. [30, 31]. Educational quality is a construct consisting of various components such as relevance, sufficiency, impact, and relevance [36]. Educational quality positively and significantly influences student loyalty [37]. The quality of academic services is closely related to the demands of the supervisory institution and the opportunities that the future professional will have [38].

In the national context, private universities stand out above statal institutions [39]. Gaining admission to one of these higher education institutions involves academic recognition within the community. Studies indicate that this factor influenced student loyalty [40]. Contrary to expectations, others revealed that the university environment did not have a significant impact on

students' commitment to their institution, unlike the educational quality, which did have such an effect [37, 38].

University fees at private institutions tend to create differences in terms of both quality and institutional image. [37, 39]. Applicants evaluate the total cost they will incur at the university during their permanence (typically around five years). For this reason, they often opt for an affordable budget, and this should not necessarily be interpreted as indicating poor quality [44]. Increasingly, private universities are establishing branches or campuses in different parts of the country to meet the growing demand [45].

Student satisfaction during their educational journey and their performance are evaluated by companies [46], it will depend on the executives to express their opinions on educational quality and the confidence to hire future professionals. Quality education, study conditions for class delivery, practice environments, and inter-institutional relationships all have an impact on the educational viability of professional programs, and consequently on student satisfaction, which is evident in their professional development [47].

Based on this description, the following hypotheses were formulated: (a) educational quality explains student loyalty; (b) both educational quality and service explain student loyalty; (c) educational quality, service, and institutional image explain student loyalty; (d) educational quality, service, institutional image, and academic fees explain student loyalty. The objective is to identify the variables that are associated with student loyalty in the context of higher education institutions.

II. METODOLOGY

The observation of student loyalty was conducted at a private university in Peru. The research design was non-experimental and cross-sectional. Data was collected at the end of the 2022-2 semester (November). The primary method employed was hypothetico-deductive, focused on explaining the relationships among the five independent variables: (a) Institutional Image (II); (b) Student Satisfaction (SE); (c) Educational Quality (CE); (d) Academic Fees (TA); in relation to student loyalty (LE) from the perspective of the study's sample.

The population consisted of 3,074 students. The demographic characteristics of the population were as follows: 1,830 were enrolled in the Business Administration program, 822 in Accounting, 229 in Communication Sciences, and 193 in Tourism and Hospitality. For the sample calculation, a confidence level of 0.95, a margin of error of 0.014, a significance level of 0.05, and a Z-value of 1.96 were considered. Therefore, a sample size of 722 students was calculated, which was then distributed proportionally based on the number of students in each professional program.

Of the total participants, 59.5% belonged to the Business Administration program, 26.7% to Accounting, 7.4% to Communication Sciences, and 6.2% to Tourism and Hospitality. Among the participants, 62.9% were female and

37.1% were male. Regarding career aspirations, 52% of the students indicated a desire to work in a private organization, while 18.77% expressed a preference for working in a government institution, and 29.18% planned to start their own business. Data was collected using the survey technique where the items respond to a Likert-type scale. A questionnaire was designed for each variable, and they were validated beforehand and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was calculated. Additionally, due to the continued remote nature of academic activities in universities in Peru, online questionnaires were administered with the support of Google Forms. It was chosen to utilize online questionnaires with the support of Google Forms, which were distributed via emails and social networks.

To test the hypotheses, inferential statistics were employed through the application of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique. Subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis of the theoretical ECSI model was conducted.

III. RESULTS Y DISCUSSION

It was identified that the study variables are strongly interrelated ($p < 0.05$), as shown in Table 1. The strongest relationship was found between institutional image and educational quality ($r = .785$), followed by educational quality and service ($r = .783$). The weakest correlation was observed between academic fees and loyalty ($r = .479$).

TABLE I
CCORRELATION OF EXPLANATORY VARIABLES

		N LE	N CE	N SE	N II	N TA
Pearson Correlation	N_LE	1,000				
	N_CE	,641	1,000			
	N_SE	,677	,783	1,000		
	N_II	,676	,785	,777	1,000	
	N_TA	,479	,611	,636	,662	1,000
Sig. (1-tailed)	N_LE					
	N_CE	,000				
	N_SE	,000	,000			
	N_II	,000	,000	,000		
	N_TA	,000	,000	,000	,000	

Nota: n=722

After identifying the strength of correlation, Table 2 evaluates four theorized models: (a) Model 1 demonstrates that educational quality explains student loyalty by 0.411 ($p < 0.05$). (b) Model 2 demonstrates that educational quality and service explain student loyalty by 0.490 ($p < 0.05$). (c) Model 3 demonstrates that educational quality, service, and institutional image explain student loyalty by 0.521 ($p < 0.05$). (d) Model 4 demonstrates that educational quality, service, institutional image, and academic fees do not explain student loyalty ($p > 0.05$).

TABLE II

Model	MODEL TESTING				
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. F Change
1	,641 ^a	,411	,410	,43488	.000
2	,700 ^b	,490	,488	,40494	.000
3	,722 ^c	,521	,519	,39252	.000
4	,722 ^d	,522	,519	,39246	.268

Note: Predictors of Model 1: Constant, Educational Quality (N_CE); Predictors of Model 2: Constant, Educational Quality (N_CE), Service (N_SE); Predictors of Model 3: Constant, Educational Quality (N_CE), Service (N_SE), Institutional Image (N_II); Predictors of Model 4: Constant., N_CE, N_SE, N_II, N_TA

IV. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the relationship between student loyalty and various influencing factors, such as satisfaction, institutional image, quality of educational service, and academic fees, can be observed through previous studies [1][2][11][12][16][41][42][43].

In the analysis of Model 1, educational quality was observed as a predictor of student loyalty; the result indicated that educational quality plays a key role in student loyalty. In Model 2, educational quality and educational service were identified as two factors explaining student loyalty, supported by a previous study [20]. Analysis of Model 3 demonstrated a better comprehension of student loyalty by including institutional image as an additional predictor; with an adjusted R-squared coefficient of 0.521, there is sufficient explanatory power. This underscores the importance of a strong and positive institutional image in influencing student loyalty [40][44]. In contrast, Model 4 incorporates academic fees as an additional predictor, but no significant relationship with student loyalty was observed [16]. This suggests that academic fees do not constitute a determinant factor of student loyalty in the context of this study.

In this regard, it was observed that educational quality had a direct impact on student loyalty [34]. The relevance and sufficiency of content, the impact and relevance of subjects, were influential components in student loyalty. Meanwhile, the perceived value between the cost of educational services and the benefits obtained also emerged as a significant factor in the analysis of student loyalty [36]. It was considered that prospective students evaluate the total cost of their stay at the university, and this evaluation can influence their decision to become loyal to a particular institution [22][24]; however, it was emphasized that cost was not a relevant factor; instead, educational quality and institutional image were significant, among other aspects. These aspects stood out, with similar results to other studies. [23] [28] [30].

The research demonstrated that the quality of the educational services provided was related to student loyalty, particularly through students' identification with their university. This identification led to a willingness to recommend their institution to family and acquaintances. Based

on these findings, it is imperative for university administrators to prioritize the adaptation and modernization of academic processes and services to achieve a higher degree of commitment from the student community towards the institution [45].

This loyalty was reflected in the desire for continued receipt of educational services. Meanwhile, the institutional image formed an emotional bond between the student and the institution, demonstrating that it is a key element in the loyalty process [30]. It could be emphasized that reputation, institutional achievements, and the role it plays in society form a set of organizational attitudes that influence student behavior and their long-term loyalty. This observation was corroborated by previous studies [34] [44].

It was confirmed that student loyalty towards an educational institution is influenced by multiple factors. Identifying these factors holds key implications for management, development, and growth policies in educational institutions.

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V. CONCLUSIONS

Educational quality and educational service play a key role in understanding the generation of student loyalty to their educational institution. Students value the quality of the education they receive and the way the service is provided to them. This highlights the importance for peruvian universities to plan and implement quality standards that enhance educational services adapted to current needs, in order to foster student loyalty.

In this context, it was identified that institutional image is relevant for understanding student loyalty. A positive institutional reputation leads to a favorable perception by the public and generates loyalty among students. Based on this finding, peruvian universities need to allocate resources to develop and maintain a strong and favorable image. To achieve this, it is important to communicate strengths and benefits to their student audience in order to ensure their continued loyalty.

Regarding academic fees, it was demonstrated that they are not linked to student loyalty. This suggests that while the economic factor is a key consideration for students when choosing a university, it doesn't necessarily guarantee student loyalty. This doesn't mean that academic fees are irrelevant, but rather that other factors, such as educational quality and institutional image, can have a greater impact on students' commitment to the institution.

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