

Comparative Analysis of the Perception of Students among the Private and Public Higher Education Institutes- A Study of Select Private and Public North Eastern Universities

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ABSTRACT

The education system in India is governed by very strict policies and regulations by the government in order to ensure the imparting of quality education to the students. With increasing private players in the field, it becomes important to understand the perception of students and draw a comparison between the two. The study includes a total of 397 students studying in public and private universities in the northeast India. Based on the statistical analysis conducted using Multiple Linear Regression, it is found that for both public and private university students the perception is determined by tangibles and satisfaction of the students. For public universities empathy has a significant contribution to perception while for private universities personal motivation and responsiveness exerts a significant impact. It is quite important to mention that the satisfaction of students and the tangible properties of the universities can have an important impact on enhancing the perception of students for both type of universities.

Keywords: Perception, Students, Higher Education, Public, Private Universities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Stringent government policies and regulations govern the education system in India, aiming to guarantee the provision of quality education to students. There are a number of students who travel from other countries to seek higher education in India. The country offers one of the largest education networks and is inclusive of a total of more than 1000 universities and more than 42000 colleges. The Indian higher education system is one of the largest in the world which ranks third worldwide after United States of America and China. The higher education system in India, compared to those of the other developed countries across the world does require substantial improvement. The definition of perception stands at the level of understanding an individual derives out of any aspect either through observation, consciousness or awareness. The student's perception measurement plays an important role when trying to study about the prospects of growth and development in the education sector (Chong et al., 2018). It highly depends on how the students perceive a particular attribute and how largely it has been able to cause a significant impact on them. There are a high number of studies in the literature that focus on determining the perception of students towards various aspects of the education system. While it is believed that continuous engagement of students is highly essential in order for students to gain academic success and for the adaptation of the students in the education system (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Watt et al., 2017). There is evidence that for the students who manage their studies by themselves, stick by the rules often perform better. There are a number of factors that leads to the building of perception among the students which have been already established in literature. These include factors such as self-efficacy, the engagements at cognitive and affective levels, the perceived support received from the stakeholders etc (Cai & Liem, 2017; Chong et al., 2018). However, the studies have concentrated majorly on the overall developed nations, the study here attempts to lay its focus on the northeastern region of a developing economy India. The northeastern India is quite different from the mainland and the composition of students differ as well. In such a situation, focusing solely on the geographic location and with increasing private players in the region this study would be able to provide a number of interesting insights into the topic.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Amirmokhtar Radi & Shokouhyar, 2021) used social media analytics to find out the perception of consumers towards the sustainability of cell phones. As the companies and consumers both are moving towards focusing on a sustainable practice in terms of marketing efforts and strategies. The companies have been using Triple Bottom Line method to focus on the social and environmental concerns related to it. With the method of content analysis, the findings from the study suggested that the key components where the consumers show high levels of interest include corporate social responsibility, technology, environment and material. There is differences in the perceptions of the companies noticed. (Neumann et al., 2021) included the studying of consumer perception levels to that of the fashion industry and the sustainability measures related to it. The study aims to find the relationship between the purchase intention of consumers for fashion items based on the sustainability factor through the measurement of consumer perception and trust. The study includes a total of 216 primary respondents which are analysed using the structural equation modelling approach. The results from the analysis shows that the perceptions of the consumers with respect to that of the social responsibility factor does impact the overall purchase intention of these factors. (Russo et al., 2019) based on their study of consumer perception towards the closed loop supply chain management in the bio- waste products. There have been several efforts made to convert the waste products into recycling and attaining new products. These when measured to understand the consumer perceptions, it is found that there is no significant impact caused by the gender of the consumers and the level of involvement in the process. But there is implications found based on the age, past experience of purchase self- identity and the attitude of the consumers towards these type of products.

(Bhalla et al., 2018) conducted a study to find out the perception of consumers in determining the purchase intention towards electric vehicles. There have been increase in the use of electric vehicles across the world and with the high level of advantages provided by technology, the number of users preferring to buy electric vehicles have increased in the past few years. In order to understand the purchase intention of such vehicles at commercial levels especially in India, the factors affecting consumer perceptions have been analysed in this study. The study have shown that it is the environmental concerns, the trust in technology, the government rules and infrastructure plays an important role in the process.

(Benlahcene et al., 2020) conducted the study to investigate the perception of students about a student centred process of learning adopted in a public university in Malaysia. The model used for understanding the effect includes the factors of cognitive, affective, environmental and meta cognitive attributes. A qualitative analysis being conducted during the study found that students do implement the processes of the model in the learning phase. The most extensively used method among the student includes the cognitive mediation process. (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020) analysed the feedback mechanism process in the learning of MBBS students specifically. The researchers in the past have agreed to the importance of feedback in the process of assessment. But the feedback structure are not one- to one based and lack a number of effective features. There are 42 students involved in the process and after analysing the results from the study it is found that there is a positive perception among the students towards the feedback process. There have been acknowledgment about the importance of the feedback system for understanding the mistakes being made by the students and to build a good relationship with the students. (Kkese, 2020) understood the perception of students having certain disabilities and their difficulties during the online teaching phase of Covid-19. The Mc Gurk effect has been analysed with the help of this study by undertaking students and adults who have learning disabilities. The student found that with the online method of learning, these type of students can have a very suitable mode of attaining audio visual information receiving medium. As there are very high number of computer aided facilities provided with the process, it can be utmost usefulness in the process. (Timizar-Le Pen et al., 2020) in their study targeted towards understanding the perception of nursing students specifically. The study is based on the implementation and acceptance of reflective writing in a professional course such as that of nursing. There have been two separate questionnaires provided, one for the students and the other for the faculties and a total of 1527 students with 131 faculty members are enquired. The results upon being analysed showed that the situation is different for that of both teachers and students. While the situation are above 97% authentic for that of the students, their main concern is the relationship generated with the students and that of their own practices. (Joshi et al., 2021) conducted their study to find out the overall impact caused by the Covid-19 pandemic on the education sector in India with respect to the online modes of teaching and learning processes being used. The study included semi-structured interviews conducted amongst 19 teachers to understand the barriers they faced with the new model. The barriers being reported includes lack of the minimum facilities, less amount of technical support, less training and clarity and a very high budget for the purchase of updated technologies. (Mishra, 2020)

based their study towards understanding how there is a requirement for rethinking about the methods of higher education in India after the emergence of Covid-19. There have been several new methods of the teaching learning process organised all over the world during this time of the pandemic. In such a time there is requirement to upskill the students in the higher education sector in India to get the maximum results from it. (Banerjee et al., 2015) tried to understand about the quality assurance feature of the higher education sector in India during the era where cross border education is highly prevalent. The one important way through which the economic conditions of India can be improved is the proper education system. There is the challenge of quality assurance in Indian higher education sector and requires some look out. It includes components such as lack of faculty members, lesser focus on the research and development programmes, the gap in demand and supply, low in innovation, employability and the effective designing of curriculum.

This section shows that perception-based studies have been conducted in the past with respect to a range of different activities overall. Even, those focusing in the education sector is also quite abundant. In this study, there is an amalgamation of the two concepts i.e., perception of students in higher education is done with regards to the northeastern region in India. The region is a newly emerging region with a number of private players entering the market. Hence, the analysis of the students' perception would provide an overall idea about the nations with similar composition.

The objectives laid down for the study are as follows

To compare Public Universities and Private Universities in the states of North Eastern India in context of student perception on higher education.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on primary data collection methods. Five states Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura, and Meghalaya were considered as these states have paved the way for Private Universities. The sampling unit will be Students studying in private universities and few public universities located in north eastern states of India. The sample size will be selected that would be adequate enough to represent the whole population, and also give the true picture. The present population is expected to be more than 60,000 in the chosen six private universities and five Public Universities. With 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval, the total sample size would be restricted to 397 student respondents studying in the private universities located in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura, and Meghalaya under the study. The researcher has applied multistage sampling technique which is carried out in various stages. The sample have been selected taking into consideration following factors.

1. Respondents should be aware of English to certain extent and should be studying in that university where the experiment is going to be conducted.
2. The respondents should have at least stayed in the university for 12 months
3. The respondents should be at ease and should have sufficient time for filling the questionnaire of the surveyor.

The sample size of 397 respondents was selected from 6 private and 5 public universities located in different places of North-Eastern states. In this research only the students were taken into consideration for the collection of data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected have been analysed using SPSS. Before, moving into comparing the public and private universities, a look into the demographic profile of the respondents are put forward.

Table 1: Demographic Representation

Demographic Variable	Frequency	%
Gender	250	63.0
Male	147	37.0
Female		
Age Group (<i>in years</i>)	246	62.4
18-20	119	30.2
21-23	29	7.4
24-26		
Education Level	44	11.1
Graduation	353	88.9
Senior Secondary School		
Father's Employment	172	43.3
Central/State Government	84	21.2
Private Sector		
Public Sector		
Undertaking		
Self-		

Employed/Business	69	17.4
Not Employed	71	17.9
	1	0.3
Family's Yearly Income(in Rupees)	28	7.1
Less than 4 Lakh	284	71.7
4 Lakh to 6Lakh	83	21.0
6 Lakh to 10 Lakh	1	0.3
More than 10 Lakh		
Duration of Study in the Institution		
1-2 years	48	12.2
2-3years	339	85.8
3-6years	8	12.0

The table above represents the demographic variables of the students quite evidently. With 63%, the respondents here are majorly male. The largest age group category is that of 18 to 20 years with 62.4%. Moreover, 88.9% of the respondents have joined the university post their senior secondary education. Enquiring about the financial well-being of the family of these students, it is found that majority of the student's fathers work for the government followed by private sector jobs. The highest slab of yearly income among the students' family is 4-6 lakh rupees. It is also found that 85.8% of these respondents have spent around 2-3 years of duration in their respective educational institutions.

A comparative analysis using chi-square tests are conducted to determine if there exist differences in these factors based on the type of university the student is a part of.

Table 2: Contingency Tables

Type of University	Central/State Government	Not Employed	Private Sector	Public Sector Undertakings	Self-Employed/Business	Total
Private	101	1	58	61	29	250
Public	72	0	25	8	42	147
Total	173	1	83	69	71	397

Table 3: χ^2 Tests

	Value	df	P
χ^2	37.9	4	<.001
N	397		

The chi-square test conducted among the type of sector the father or guardian of the student and that of the type of university they study in. It is found that with a p-value of less than 0.001, there is a statistically significant association between these two variables.

Table 4: Contingency Tables

Type of University	Less than Rs. 300000	Rs.300000 to Rs.500000	Rs. 500000 to Rs.1000000	Rs.1000000 And above	Total
Private	7	197	46	0	250
Public	21	87	37	1	146
Total	28	284	83	1	396

Table 5: χ^2 Tests

	Value	df	P
χ^2	26.1	3	<.001
N	396		

In the similar manner, when the association using chi-square test is conducted among the type of university and the family income, it is found that there also exists a significant association between the two.

Table 6: Contingency Tables

Type of University	B-TECH	LAW	MBA	Other Courses	M-TECH	BBA	BCA	Total
Private	2	3	4	240	0	0	0	249

Public	6	8	4	121	1	5	2	147
Total	8	11	8	361	1	5	2	396

Table 7: χ^2 Tests

	Value	df	P
χ^2	27.0	6	<.001
N	396		

It can also be found that the program decided to be pursued by the student also has a significant association with that of the type of university they have been a part of.

In a series of questions asked to the respondents, there was one question where they had to answer their choice of career they prefer based on a number benefits offered to them. While the career prospects include working for the central or state government, any Multinational corporation (MNC), any PSU, private sector in India and being self-employed. On the other hand the criteria of providing their responses include salaries and perks, working hours, leaves and breaks, retirement benefits, growth and learning opportunities, social prestige, work culture and job security. Cross tabulation is conducted for the above-mentioned categories and the tables below represent their results.

Table 8: Contingency Tables Salary and Perks

Type of University	Central/State Government	MNC (Abroad)	PSU	Private Sector(INDIA)	Self-Employment/Start-Up	Total
Private	212	2	8	18	6	246
Public	119	10	4	7	7	147
Total	331	12	12	25	13	393

Table 9: χ^2 Tests Salary and Perks

	Value	df	P
χ^2	13.6	4	0.009
N	393		

Table 10: Contingency Tables Working Hours

Type of University	Central/State Government	PSU	Private Sector(INDIA)	Self-Employment/Start-Up	MNC(Abroad)	Total
Private	177	20	19	5	0	221
Public	119	4	6	7	8	144
Total	296	24	25	12	8	365

Table 11: χ^2 Tests Working Hours

	Value	df	P
χ^2	21.9	4	<.001
N	365		

Table 12: Contingency Tables Leaves and breaks

Type of University	Central/State Government	MNC(Abroad)	PSU	Private Sector(INDIA)	Self-Employment/Start-Up	Total
Private	135	2	11	8	1	157
Public	100	0	0	1	0	101
Total	235	2	11	9	1	258

Table 13: χ^2 Tests Leaves and breaks

	Value	df	P
χ^2	13.1	4	0.011
N	258		

Table 14: Contingency Tables Retirement benefits

Type of University	Central/State Government	MNC(Abroad)	PSU	Private Sector(INDIA)	Total
Private	151	2	6	4	163
Public	116	1	0	0	117
Total	267	3	6	4	280

Table 15: χ^2 Tests Retirement benefits

	Value	df	P
χ^2	7.57	3	0.056
N	280		

Table 16: Contingency Tables Growth and Learning Opportunities

Type of University	Central/State Government	MNC(Abroad)	PSU	Private Sector(INDIA)	Self-Employment/Start-Up	Total
Private	26	1	12	5	3	47
Public	33	4	0	2	0	39

Table17: Contingency Tables Growth and Learning Opportunities

Type of University	Central/State Government	MNC(Abroad)	PSU	Private Sector(INDIA)	Self-Employment/Start-Up	Total
Total	59	5	12	7	3	86

Table18: χ^2 Tests Growth and Learning Opportunities

	Value	df	P
χ^2	18.3	4	0.001
N	86		

Table19: Contingency Tables Social prestige

Type of University	Central/State Government	PSU	Private Sector(INDIA)	Self-Employment/Start-Up	Total
Private	47	11	15	3	76
Public	89	0	0	0	89
Total	136	11	15	3	165

Table 20: χ^2 Tests Social prestige

	Value	df	P
χ^2	41.2	3	< .001
N	165		

Table 21: Contingency Tables Work Culture

Type of University	Central/State Government	MNC(Abroad)	PSU	Private Sector(INDIA)	Self-Employment/Start-Up	Total
Private	22	2	10	3	3	40
Public	20	0	0	0	0	20
Total	42	2	10	3	3	60

Table 22: χ^2 Tests Work Culture

	Value	df	P
χ^2	12.9	4	0.012
N	60		

Table 23: Contingency Tables Job Security

Job Security						
Type of University	Central/State Government	MNC(Abroad)	PSU	Private Sector(INDIA)	Self-Employment/Start-Up	Total
Private	167	2	19	12	3	203
Public	104	0	0	0	0	104
Total	271	2	19	12	3	307

Table 24: χ^2 Tests Job Security

	Value	df	P
χ^2	20.9	4	<.001
N	307		

The results from the cross tabulation conducted shows that while for all the factors there is a significant association found with that of the type of university one is a part of but for the retirement benefits there is no such association reported.

Through the process of analysis the results, along with a total of four variables including the three motivating factors of Personal, Financial and Job Prospect followed by Perception of Students, Satisfaction of Students and lastly Service Quality measure, there is another set of variables that have been enquired only for the purpose of this objective. It measures the perception of respondents across any university about the public and private universities. The descriptives about these factors are as follows.

Table 25: Questionnaire Items

Questionnaire Item	Code Used in Analysis
I feel great about the public universities in Northeast	UNIV1
I feel Confident about the public universities in Northeast	UNIV2
I feel Comfortable about the public universities in Northeast	UNIV3
I feel great about the private universities in Northeast	UNIV4
I feel Confident about the private universities in Northeast	UNIV5
I feel Comfortable about the private universities in Northeast	UNIV6

Table 26: Descriptives

	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
UNIV1	397	4.12	4	0.827	2	5
UNIV2	397	3.61	3	0.746	3	5
UNIV3	397	3.85	4	0.665	2	5
UNIV4	397	4.02	4	0.836	2	5
UNIV5	397	3.92	4	0.624	2	5
UNIV6	397	4.11	4	0.850	3	5

To find out the perception of students for the public and private universities two regression models would be generated one for the public and the other for the private universities. Here, the independent variables considered are the motivating factors, the service quality factors and the satisfaction of the students derived from the questionnaire constructed. The results are as follows

Table 27: Model Fit Measures

Overall Model Test							
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	df1	df2	P
1	0.293	0.0858	0.0645	4.04	9	387	<.001

Table 28: Model Coefficients -Perception Public Universities

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	3.3978	0.5170	6.572	<.001
Personal	-0.0621	0.0515	-1.206	0.229
Financial	-0.0699	0.0417	-1.678	0.094
Job Prospect	-0.0334	0.0512	-0.652	0.515
Reliability	-0.0242	0.0520	-0.465	0.642

Responsiveness	0.0551	0.0320	1.722	0.086
Assurance	-0.0616	0.0406	-1.516	0.130
Empathy	0.1508	0.0754	1.999	0.046
Tangibles	0.2883	0.0600	4.802	< .001
Satisfaction	-0.1208	0.0556	-2.171	0.031

Table 29: Model Fit Measures

Overall Model Test							
Model	R	R ²	AdjustedR ²	F	df1	df2	P
1	0.462	0.213	0.195	11.6	9	387	< .001

Table 30: Model Coefficients – Perception Private Universities

Predictor	Estimate	SE	T	p
Intercept	4.0680	0.7200	5.650	< .001
Personal	-0.1869	0.0718	-2.605	0.010
Financial	0.0137	0.0581	0.236	0.813
Job Prospect	-0.0890	0.0712	-1.250	0.212
Reliability	-0.1404	0.0725	-1.938	0.053
Responsiveness	0.1082	0.0446	2.427	0.016
Assurance	-0.0716	0.0566	-1.266	0.206
Empathy	0.0414	0.1050	0.394	0.694
Tangibles	0.7051	0.0836	8.433	< .001
Satisfaction	-0.3992	0.0775	-5.155	< .001

Interpretation

Comparing the above two models it can be seen that while both are statistically significant based on the adjusted R² values it can be found that with 0.195 the variance explained in the perception of students towards private universities by the chosen variables is more than that of public universities. Empathy, Tangibles and Satisfaction is significant contributors in case of public universities and for private universities it is Personal motivation, Responsiveness, Tangibles and Satisfaction that explains the variance in case of private universities.

CONCLUSION

The study here is focused on understanding the perception of students towards the private and public universities located in the northeastern part of India about the higher education provided by them. In order to understand the same the four objectives laid down as a part of the study were statistically analysed using the SPSS package and the quantitative results are being interpreted thoroughly to draw the final conclusions from the study. The objective in the study has been designed to draw a comparative analysis between the public and private universities in terms of the perception held by the students towards them. For that purpose, all the 397 students have been enquired on a 5 Point Likert type scale about their overall perception towards both public and private universities irrespective of their association with either of the two. There have been three questions enquiring the perception of the students asked for each public and private universities. Before analysing the same there have been a few preliminary cross tabulations conducted to draw a comparative analysis between the two. The students were asked about the benefits they look for in a job after their higher education in which they have been given a series of options including salaries and perks, working hours, leaves and breaks, retirement benefits, growth and learning opportunities, social prestige, work culture and job security and the career options are given for central or state government jobs, the private sector, being self-employed, PSUs or for MNCs. The chi-square test results shows that there exists a significant relationship between the type of university one belongs to and their choice of career in either of the above given sectors based on all the mentioned benefits except for that of the retirement benefits. This shows that the perception of students belonging to either public or private universities does have difference in opinions about the type of institution they wish to work for based on their salaries, the perks related to growth, job security, social prestige and the work culture followed. Finally when all the included variables in the study i.e., the three motivating factors of Personal, Financial and Job Prospect along with the five service quality factors i.e., reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles along with satisfaction levels of the students are used to find the difference in perception of students from public and private universities, a multiple linear regression is conducted. The regression analysis is conducted twice, each time for the students

belonging to either type of the university. The results show that for both public and private university students the perception is determined by tangibles and satisfaction of the students. For public universities empathy has a significant contribution to perception while for private universities personal motivation and responsiveness exerts a significant impact. It is quite important to mention that the satisfaction of students and the tangible properties of the universities can have an important impact on enhancing the perception of students for both type of universities.

Advertising enhancing all the three motivating factors must be incorporated so that it reaches out to more and more students and helps in gathering positive perceptions about them. Secondly, as the service quality aspects are found to play such a big role in the perception and satisfaction deriving facilities, these must be paid attention to time to time. There must be proper training sessions to the administrative members guiding them about the quick responsiveness attitude and empathy generating principles when dealing with students. Further the private universities must try to build a brand that acknowledges the reliability feature and provides assurance to the students about their future with them. The marketing and brand building aspects must largely focus on these two parameters. Also the tangibles including infrastructure and human resources must be invested upon with high value to generate greater perception levels of the students towards the private universities.

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