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Identifying the Most Prominent Gaps in Private Higher Education

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ABSTRACT Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in South Africa play a crucial role in the global service sector, making effective service methodologies essential in competitive markets. However, PHEIs face sustainability challenges due to increasing competitive pressures. Therefore, they should seek effective strategies to maintain their relevance within the market. The research objectives were to identify the most prominent SERVQUAL gaps in PHEIs. By identifying these SERVQUAL gaps, PHEIs can formulate strategies to mitigate competitive risks. Utilising the SERVQUAL model, the study creates a measurement matrix to pinpoint and prioritise service quality gaps. A quantitative research approach was followed employing a SERVQUAL questionnaire consisting of 22 items across five dimensions. These dimensions are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The findings reveal that responsiveness presents the largest gap, consistent with previous research outcomes. Understanding these gaps enables PHEIs to better position themselves to navigate the competitive landscape and improve overall service quality.