

Using Marketing Research in Education Field

by

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Abstract. Social marketing as a marketing specialization is a result of its extensive development. The social marketing is characterized by its own scope, well defined (activity of social organizations). Educational marketing (which is a component of social marketing) involves designing educational institutions to effectively meet identified needs. In this respect it is necessary to properly define the educational offer (seen as product policy) tax policy of universities (as part of the price policy), distribution and effective communication techniques with students. Traditional methods and techniques of marketing research, both quantitative and qualitative, can be used to study environmental factors influence educational. Besides general purpose needs to identify potential customers and adapting educational programs, marketing researches includes analysis or the perception that students have towards the services offered by the university. The purpose of this research project is the assessment of student satisfaction (in the master programs) to internship from the time of Bachelor cycle. Importance of marketing in universities is given by diversification of educational needs and the marketing research represents an important factor.

Key words: social marketing, educational marketing, marketing research, internship, universities

JEL classification: M31

1 Introduction

Intensive and extensive marketing development has led to the use of marketing concept evolves beyond the scope of the usual goods and services (Balaure, V. et al., 2002). Gradually, from commercial area, the principles of marketing have taken shape in other sectors, non-profit activities. Marketing can be used not only for companies looking for profit, but also non-profit organizations such as museums, churches, charitable organizations, educational institutions that want to attract customers, volunteers and funds.

1.1 Marketing social definition

Thus, in the 70s the concept of social marketing was outlined, which was first introduced by Kotler and Zaltman (1971), who considered that social marketing involves the use of techniques and marketing principles to promote a social cause, ideas and behaviors.

Bruhn and Tilmes (1994) propose a definition that makes the difference between used marketing profit organizations (traditional marketing) and non-profit organizations. The two specialists emphasizes this definition, arguing that social marketing is the planning,

organization, implementation and control of marketing strategies and activities of non-profit organizations that aim, directly or indirectly, to solve social problems..

Another definition of social marketing was given by Andreasen (1994), which argues that social marketing involves the application of commercial marketing techniques in order to analyze, plan, execute and evaluate marketing programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and society to which they belong.

A note to be made vis-à-vis the implementation of the social marketing is that profit entities can be involved or take action to the social problems, in this case applied marketing is called societal marketing. Thus social marketing as a marketing specialization is a result of its extensive development, characterized by its own scope, well defined (activity of social organizations).

Societal marketing is an innovative concept that has social implications, apply marketing classic, but not exceeds its coverage and entered as a result of its intensive development (Zaharia R., 2001).

1.2 Educational Marketing

The marketing application in education is known as the educational marketing. Kotler and Fox (1995) believes that educational marketing involves designing institutions to effectively meeting the identified needs and wants and use market price, communication and distribution to inform, motivate and serve the market. The particularities of marketing in higher education are explained by two reasons:

- higher education in most countries is a non-profit sector, therefore marketing concepts applied to the sector do not function as in the business sector, where the primary goals is profit making;
- higher education is a social need, therefore all peculiarities applicable to the social marketing and marketing of services apply to higher education (Nicolescu, 2009).

Therefore, educational marketing uses, besides the "4P" marketing mix of already known variables, 3 more components that can be a competitive advantage. Thus includes variables: "people", "physical evidence" and "process". They could be employed in the distribution, but as it assumes a special importance in this area, it is appropriate to give them a place in the marketing mix classic.

1.3 Importance of marketing research in educational marketing

To know the exact market which needs to be addressed, its characteristics and needs for adequate strategic planning, an educational institution may use marketing research. Kotler (2008) believes that marketing research is systematic work of defining, collecting, analyzing and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation facing the company.

In general, the educational marketing, marketing research is to identify the needs of potential customers in order to provide appropriate educational programs. Analysis of the perception that students have towards the services offered by the university which is leading to improve or develop new programs. For that, traditional marketing research methods, both quantitative and qualitative, can

be used to study environmental factors influence educational (Filip, A., 2012). A particularity of marketing research in education is represented by the moment of the research is made. When expectations are measured at the beginning of a period, the extent to which they are fulfilled is not a strong predictor of course satisfaction. (Appleton-Knap, Krentler 2006)

The analysis of the strengths, the causes attraction or rejection of customers, educational institution can determine its own, and even quite accurate, market position. Thus, a marketing strategy in education is formed based on information collected and involves in the development of specific programs target audience. This takes place through the application of the essential functions of marketing in education: identify social needs, investigating individual aspirations and choices, increasing adaptability learning society requirements, meeting individual aspirations and training, continuous assessment of the education system.

Beyond the use of marketing research in order to identify the needs of potential customers and adapting to attract their educational programs, marketing research have increased importance for perception analysis that students have towards services offered by the university. Perception can be defined as the process by which an individual chooses, organizes and interprets information it receives in order to create an image of a particular brand.

This aims to improve or develop new programs offered, which contributes greatly to creating an overview of the university among its students.

Another study (DeShields, Kara, 2004) examines the relationship between student retention and their satisfaction. This study shows that changes in their satisfaction can have significant financial implications for the institution. This is explained by the fact that revenue from a student, it depends on the duration of the relationship with the university. Customer satisfaction, whether they are students, parents, alumni or staff, should be the main objective of higher education. Thus, focusing on increasing customer satisfaction at universities is crucial for the creation of added value. How the university is perceived influence

long-term satisfaction of the student and his loyalty to the institution. The student loyalty is one of the biggest goals of educational institutions and a loyal student is considered a source of competitive advantage in this field (Thomas, 2011). In business to consumer marketing, loyalty to a brand has the effect of recommendation trademarks to customer friends, relatives. The same thing happens in educational marketing, in which a student can determine a future loyal student to make a particular choice regarding the continuation of studies. This loyalty can be considered important in marketing education because the decision to pursue an institution of higher education programs over another is more important for a student because represent an investment in the future.

2 The purpose of marketing research

The purpose of this research project is the assessment of student satisfaction for internship during the undergraduate. Research programs targeted students who have completed their internship during license studies in the Academy of Economic Studies.

2.1 The research objectives

- Determination of the importance that it has internships, among bachelor students
- Determine students' attitudes in the license cycle, from the organization of the practice;
- Identification of student opinion of the license cycle, the method of assessment practice discipline;
- Measuring the level of the relations between faculty and business;
- Identify main international organizations that have offered internships;
- Determine the degree to which students in the bachelor level needed advice on practical training;
- Identify ways in which the students have completed their bachelor of practice;
- Identify ways in which the students have completed their bachelor of practice;
- Identify the main difficulties of the bachelor

students have experienced during the internship practice;

2.2 The choice of information sources

Researched community was composed of I and II year students of master programs of the faculties of Marketing, Management, Finance Insurance Banking and Stock Exchange, Business Administration (in foreign languages), Accounting and Management Information Systems, which are graduates of the same faculties and have done an internship.

Since this is an exploratory research, as well as the sampling procedure was used without random sampling, the sample of 139 respondents.

2.3 Research results

Taking into account the objectives set, the result obtained is that to make internship is important for about 48% of the respondents and only 11% consider it as unimportant. But of those first mentioned, only 40 students (from sample of 139 investigated students) want to work after graduation in a company to claiming application what they learned into internship.

Almost half of the students interviewed believed that the time assigned from the time of Bachelor cycle practice is insufficient. This is a problem in the current curricula Academy of Economic Studies, and one of the solutions is to increase the only the volume of practical stages in the curricula, because majority believes that the level of importance of the internship, expressed by the number of points allocated to the colloquium credit practice is appropriate. The form of examination used (oral examination) is considered appropriate for the most part of the students respondents.

The main problems encountered by university students in the internship was the lack of involvement of the organizations (36%) and lack of specialized personnel within companies working with students (33%). According to the research 60% of respondents declared that they needed advice on internship.

For a more comprehensive analysis it should be mentioned the very small number of students

who were paid during the internship period (only 6%) or employed in the companies after the internship (7%).

In fact, most respondents believe that the relationship university-business environment is weak or very weak (49.2%) and only consider very good the relation. Additionally students believe that the relationship is not directed to facilitate solving their problems. From this we can deduce that organizations (faculties and firms) should be involved with much more powerful in this process and should be made known benefits of internship organization.

Regarding the methods of organize the whole process of internship, majority of respondents considered that excessive emphasis on formality and less on the final objective of the internship, to come in contact with labour market and apply their skills in the market.

After conducting internship most of the respondents were promoted at the end of the internship colloquium (39%) have completed their expertise (31%) or received the information necessary to complete the diploma thesis (17%), which is a negative aspect of practical stage. It is explicable because a lot of students started the documentation for diploma on first semester and the practical stage is, almost, in the second semester.

Using Crosstabs function was analyzed the relationship between the variables considered relevant for this study. Of the 139 respondents only 38 respondents appreciated the achievement internship as important and very important will strive to hire a company to provide them job in their specialty practice. A problem reported as a result of this research is that a small number of students achieve their internship during the undergraduate in companies operating in the field of specialization of the faculty (especially students from Marketing and Accounting and Management Information Systems Faculty). However 70% of respondents said they would like to engage only in accordance with the qualification obtained in faculty. Another important result is that the student respondents considered that their faculties do not provide sufficient companies for internship programs.

3 Conclusion and limits of the research

This exploratory research project, investigated problems that arise in relation college-student-business environment in order to facilitate the internship. Educational institutions aim to develop bases of a society by influencing the ideas, attitudes and behaviours. Importance of marketing in universities is given by diversification of educational needs and also to increase competitiveness in this segment. Thus, every school must build its image in the market and to support the well-structured marketing plans. In relation to other educational institutions must choose a unique positioning based on a preliminary analysis of the marketing environment. With a distinctive positioning, the institution must communicate effectively only to the segment interested in his services.

A first and major limit of the study is that the results of the research are not representative because the sample under investigation is too low (only 139 respondents). Solving the problem can be done by a research design to include the views of all students who have completed internships, coming from several universities.

A second limit is that the number of questions in the questionnaire is limited for administrative reasons (only 14 questions). For this reason, the study fails to include all possible situations faced by a student during practice. To solve that problem is necessary to increase the number of questions and the number of variables investigated.

Considering that practical training is achieved once a year, it is possible that some variables are directly influenced by economic developments or the student's personal career. A real problem is the effects of the crisis on business. This has reduced marketing budgets allocated to the internships. Thus, some solutions generated by analyzing the results, with the passing of this time period, may not be applied.

For an improvement of the results of research should be achieved annually, systematically, to emphasizing practical program development methodology and to identify changing perceptions towards this activity. The results of

this research reveal both strengths and weaknesses of how to organize internship. To increase satisfaction and achieve a step towards loyalty is necessary that weaknesses to be corrected and future organization of practical stages must be a way for partnership between universities and business.

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Author description

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