



Structural equation modeling of co-creation and its influence on the student's satisfaction and loyalty towards university



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ABSTRACT

This article aims to measure empirically the impact of co-creation on the key marketing outcomes of student satisfaction, and the consequent loyalty induced, taking as reference the results obtained with a questionnaire used during class time among postgraduate students at Spanish universities.

Our research is an approach to educational institutions' marketing strategy with causal methodology, and, for that purpose, SEM methodology is used, from a conceptual research model with some hypothesized relations based on an in-depth literature review, confirming some concepts such as the influence of co-creation on key marketing outcomes and the importance of co-creation for marketing policies for Educational Institutions.

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1. Introduction

The current global and highly competitive environment among universities is driving their need to develop unique marketing strategies with a “greater focus on the student” to help stand out among them [1–4]. Thus, there is a need among universities to understand the factors that contribute to greater mastery and understanding of what influences student perceptions about the service they receive and, thus, be able to influence and achieve better experiences and higher loyalty rates among students [5]. Helgesen [6] points out that student retention has become as important as attracting them.

Similarly, within this concept of “greater focus on the consumer”, the concept of co-creation appears as an emerging concept that has many opportunities, as it is considered a potential source of competitive advantage for companies or institutions [7–9]. Mathis [10] notes that co-creation is a relatively new research concept with many possibilities to expand. In this regard, Carvalho and De Oliveira Mota [11] note that the student–teacher co-creation process directly contributes to the perception of value by the student. Furthermore, the Fraunhofer Institute, in its recent research, points out that universities are not benefiting enough from the great potential of co-creation and from the possibility of involving students on a day to day basis in order to contribute to the improvement. Ribes and Peralt [12,13] highlight, in their recent publications, the importance that the concept of co-creation can have on education as it may be a unique competitive strategy.

Finally, Díaz-Mendez and Gummesson [14] note that universities should make a change in perspective: from serving education to students to actually co-create it with them by creating the education service with their active participation. The aim of this article is to what extent co-creation (the student works together with the University in order to add value to the educational service) contributes to loyalty and satisfaction levels.

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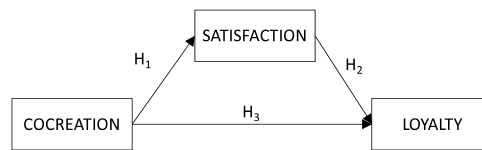


Fig. 1. Proposed model for co-creation and its hypotheses of relationship with satisfaction and loyalty.

2. Background, hypotheses and conceptual model

The aim of this section is, through a literature review, to consider possible relationships between co-creation and marketing outputs in order to suggest a model to be later validated that responds to the issues raised by Rajah et al. [15].

2.1. Co-creation and satisfaction

In education, student satisfaction is defined as the subjective assessment carried out by the student him/herself of his/her experiences and results with education and student life [16]. Along the same lines, Ledden et al. [17] point out that to achieve high levels of satisfaction among students, one must be able to understand their needs and provide them with superior value. In reviewing the literature, several authors stress the positive and direct relationship between co-creation and satisfaction [18–20].

2.2. Satisfaction and loyalty

As a result of increased competition between educational institutions, many authors have focused on the study of student loyalty [11,21,22]. In the specific case of the education sector, the literature furthers the concept by referring to student loyalty as long-lasting even after having completed their studies. Thus, subsequent behavioral patterns by students include donations, alumni membership and social participation and positive recommendations of the same [23]. In the education market, several studies stress the positive relationship between satisfaction and loyalty of the student [24,23,25].

2.3. Co-creation and loyalty

Zhang [26] defines loyalty as commitment from consumers making repeat purchases from the same company despite the efforts of others so that they may try different ones. This relationship between loyalty and repeat purchases intention as shown on this definition is the result of many studies that prove it [27–29].

Several previous studies have shown the relationship between co-creation and loyalty [30–32].

3. Our proposed model

In the literature review in this section the theoretical connections between co-creation and the identified key outcomes, as illustrated in Fig. 1, have been demonstrated. These interrelationships of all these constructs are incorporated in to the model. In particular, it is going to examine the mediating role of Satisfaction and Relationship strength in the impact of value co-creation on loyalty and also the direct impact of Co-creation on loyalty. The validity of this model and its connections will be the main reason for this research.

As mentioned, Fig. 1 presents the proposed model with the research aim to ascertain to what extent co-creation affects the relational outcomes of student satisfaction and student loyalty. Also, the model proposes a relation between student satisfaction and student loyalty and also measures if satisfaction acts as a mediator in the relationship between co-creation and loyalty.

This research aim mentioned is addressed by a series of hypotheses developed in Table 1:

See Table 2 for q (q: questions).

As can be seen, the three variables are composed of a number of questions specifically selected from the questionnaire, creating our measurement scale. The choice of variables and their measurement scale is supported by the theoretical foundations discussed above, thus providing the model with conceptual consistency.

4. Methodology

4.1. Data collection

The targeted sample companies which have enrolled their managers in part time master programs The data necessary to be able to fulfill the objectives of the investigation and to contrast the propose hypotheses was obtained by a questionnaire in class time (face-to-face surveys) answered by the cited managers who are sponsored by their companies to take the

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