Chapter 6

An Approach on Attachment in Public Marketing and Higher Education Management Contexts

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ABSTRACT

In the recent years, the educational market has become more dynamic and complex. There are many market forces that are trying to shape the educational environment. The competition between universities is increasing. Public marketing is a fundamental tool in the promotion of places, one that must be present in the strategies of local government representatives, helping and promoting a sustainable economic and social development of the regions and universities. The propose of this chapter is to analyze, measure, and perceive the impact of brand attachment on consumer behavior in the specific context of higher education in Portugal, based on the affective and emotional relationship between students and the higher education institutions. The results allowed us to conclude that the brand attachment has a preponderant role and impact in the relationship between the student and the institution of higher education. This chapter aims to further develop the understanding of the educational marketing for higher education institutions. Implications for future research are also presented.

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INTRODUCTION

With a globalised economy that causes successive changes in the market, the universities not only need to adopt instruments of reaction and rapid response to these changes but also to adapt to the new ways and styles chosen by their citizens and students, in order to maintain their vitality and attractiveness. Therefore, competition among universities has risen, which has resulted in a higher demand for strategies and attractiveness tools. The future of several institutions will depend on the collaboration between the public and the private sector to meet the new global forces. In order to accomplish projects and attract private investment, the involvement of the public sector is understood as the responsibility held in political activities and of local government which both sectors must have in view not only of financial factors but also all the cultural, social, historical, image, and pride factors of its population. Esch, Langner, Schmitt and Geus (2006), for example, ensure that for marketers have to act beyond the basics of marketing-mix. Besides that, the same authors consider that they have to concentrate on the development of strategic and tactical initiatives that reinforce customer satisfaction and confidence, while at the same time creating a sense of strong emotional connection with the Brand. In this sense, and being a construct with great exploratory potential and with several applications, the present research focuses on the study of the impact of brand attachment on the consumer behavior. In specific terms, the present investigation focuses on the of this subject in the context of public higher education in Portugal, especially with regard to opinions, perceptions and attitudes of the students regarding the effects of the brand attachment. Analysing specific public contexts (e.g., public universities in Portugal) and studying its profile, the research intends to understand how marketing can help the sustainable growth of the public organizations (Schaltegger, Burritt, & Petersen, 2017), the attracting students and other investors, as well as the permanence and satisfaction of its customers. Specifically, the present study intends to understand the importance of attachment in public management and specific marketing contexts (i.e., public universities). The objective of this research is to assess the student’s experience in the University, measuring the impact of the affectivity variable (attachment) at the level of its emotional and functional connection and other behavioural intentions (i.e., satisfaction and loyalty). In this sense, the main objectives of this paper are: (1) to analyze the predisposition of students for satisfaction, commitment, trust and loyalty to the brand and its relation to brand attachment; (2) understand the specificities of the student’s decision-making process for choosing the higher education public institution through the existing alternatives; (3) to analyze the profile and behavior of the consumer in specific marketing contexts (in this case, the student’s profile and behavior towards higher education institutions); and (4) to identify the practical implications of brand attachment in public higher education in Portugal.
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