Is the co-creation a good practice for the University? A review of the literature

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Abstract
This paper discuss the co-creation environment applied at the university world. The principal co-creation variables are detected through the compilation and analysis of several papers. These variables are involved in the process where the higher education institution create value with the student as the principal actors. At present, there are a lack of information of this trend in the educational sector, and the purpose of the research is to collect and analyze the studies developed in recent years in order to propose a framework on this topic.

Keywords: Co-creation, Communicative Participation, Satisfaction, Loyalty, Higher Education, Marketing, Collaboration, Structural Equation Models.

Introduction
The last marketing trends focus in services co-creation with the active collaboration of the target clients. Here the customer is involved in a rich communications channel (Muñiz and Schau, 2011; Bolton and Saxena-Iyer, 2009). This initiative constitute an innovative approach which allows the firm to know what the customer consider valuable (Bettencourt et al., 2013), and despite being difficult to develop, it permits the institution to make a difference in the market. Berthon et al.(2009) comment about how branding co-creation facilitates understanding the criteria and necessity of all the stakeholders involved. The co-creation promotes a strong communication between the involved parts and increase the productivity (Rexfelt et al., 2011). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) propose a framework which includes dialog, access, risk and transparency as the main important element in the co-creation process.

As Witell et al.(2011) discuss, the traditional method only involves the customer in the last phase of prototype testing, nevertheless the co-creation transforms a client in an active agent with a role since the initial phases of ideation. Vargo and Lusch (2004) refer about the service-centered dominant logic, where the co-creation is the cornerstone of value defined and created by the clients.

Berthon et al.(2009) comment the importance to manage the stakeholders communications and mutual knowledge, where essential understanding of the user is a necessity. Bolton and Saxena-Iyer (2009) in their research dig about clients participation in the interactive services, characterizing two measurement: “the extent to which the customer participates” and “the extent to which technology is utilized in the creation and delivery of the service”. Also, they reflect the customer interaction with the firm’s technology and the positive impact in service quality.

Witell et al.(2011) study the effect of the proactive and reactive market research techniques, obtaining different results, proving that the first method brings to the companies more possibilities of “offerings with greater customer value”. The co-creation challenges, according Rexfelt et al.(2011) are necessary to change the roles of the involved actors because of the urgency of new types of design environments. In their investigation, they focus in the application of new methods at early stages of services development.
Methodology

The literature research was conducted with the review and critical analysis of several papers in the field. The literature review offers to the academic world an enrichment experience (Hart, 1998; Webster and Watson, 2002) and the researchers can access valuable intellectual resources with the objective of “developing a knowledge base” (Tranfield et al., 2003). Keele (2007) comments that literature reviews allow to summarize the existing evidence about a topic and identify the existing gaps which permit future investigations to grow, and delimit the research problem (Randolph, 2009).


Research question

This study explores and analyzes the relation existing between different factors that interact in the co-creation process at the higher education sector. The principal variables are: communicative participation, trust, satisfaction and loyalty, and all of them turn around co-creation as the center of all the events. There is a proposed model, which includes different hypothesis established between the aforementioned variables. A deeper literature review guarantees the sustainability and solidity of the links suggested by the authors. The proposed model will be validated in future works through the structural equation modeling (SEM), a technique that allows to confirm the proposed framework (Hox and Bechger, 1998; Schumacker and Lomax, 2004; Byrne, 2013).

Few studies refer to the co-creation in the undergraduate programmes. Ribes Giner et al. (2014) developed and validated a model for post-graduate programmes, and Peralt Rillo and Ribes Giner (2013) described the principal tools that could be applied at this level with an active participation of the stakeholders involved at co-creation.

Conclusions

The university constitute an educational market, where the product offer to the society is considered as a service, being the students the principal users (Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012; Ena, 2011). In the co-creation world at higher education, there are present several stakeholders, which constitute a complex network (Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012). It is important for institutions to generate strategic actions in order to increase the visibility and gather competitive advantage, identifying what the students really want (Maringe, 2006). The present research, constitutes a solid alternative in order to establish marketing methods to improve the quality and gather more fidelity in the educational universe.
References


