

Higher Education student complaint behavior from the perspective of the Service-Dominant logic

Díaz-Mendez Montserrat, Saren Michael, Zamora-Ramos Moisés R.

Purpose – Higher Education (HE) service has lately attracted the attention of scholars due to the growing competition among HE institutions to attract students (Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012). Consequently, the tendency in the HE sector is to adopt management concepts and strategies based on traditional marketing performance. The analogy of students being treated as customer has been long discussed in the literature with great criticism from a group of authors who claim HE service complexity does not allow the systematical adoption of traditional market management approaches (Svensson & Wood, 2007; Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012; Díaz-Méndez, Saren and Gummesson, 2017). In this work, we focus on a specific service management area: the student complaint behavior. It is essential to understand and properly manage this behavior since it is influenced by service quality perception and loyalty (Tronvoll, 2012). Specifically we aim to frame the study of HE student complaint behavior (SCB) from the Service Dominant Logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2016) perspective, distinctly from other customer complaint behavior (CCB) approaches with the purpose of providing new insights to HE institutions which allow them to better manage students satisfaction so as to improve institutions' quality and positioning.

Design/methodology/approach – This study comprises a literature review which outlines and examines the various theories related to SCB and SD-logic differently to CCB. This theoretical research is based on empirical data from the literature and previous studies' findings.

Findings – The complexity of the HE service and the differences between students and other customers are highlighted. The literature reviewed highlights the aspect of considering the university student a customer or refer to them under different labels and so concepts. We present the current debate on this subject which is discussed in a rather polarized manner, with limited agreement. HE service is described as a relevant element of social development embracing multiple factors, it is a highly complex service and easily differentiates from other areas of service. We contend that the concept of SD-logic is appropriate for the study of SCB, an approach that has been little studied so far and argued. As well as that SCB should be examined in a different manner to the traditional CCB study.

Practical implications – This study emphasizes the importance of High Education Institutions and identifies the relevance of differentiating students from other customers by tracking the similarities and differences between them. Thus, enabling institutions to focus their efforts on knowing and understanding their SCB better from the SD-logic perspective. The study of SCB under the SDL, differentiated from other types of customers, allows public and private universities to develop appropriate and specific strategies for responding specifically to student complaints. Thus increasing students' satisfaction and helping to devise more efficient quality policies which will impact on a better positioning of the university

Originality/value – Hitherto there is no relevant research that points to the relevance of analyzing the Higher Education SCB under the SD-logic approach.

Keyword - Student complaint behavior, higher education, complex service, Service Dominant Logic.

Paper type – Conceptual paper

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