

STUDENT RISK PERCEPTIONS AND THE SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY OF MARKETING EDUCATION AS A SERVICE WITH CREDECE QUALITIES

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ABSTRACT

When teaching marketing, faculty members have an asymmetrical level of information with respect to students such as the information to be learned and expectations of student performance. Additionally, the students have limited expertise in evaluating their educational experience and it is typically limited to perceptions of the faculty member, method of delivery and learned material. This qualifies marketing education as a service with credence properties which tends to increase perceived risk. Students develop uncertainties identified as risk perceptions. We propose that by ascertaining the nature of these risks and the criteria used to evaluate service quality, the risks can be reduced and evaluations improved.

The relationship between students and faculty can be viewed a couple of ways. One view is that we, as faculty, are the producers and the students are the outputs. Another view, and the one the authors prefer to adopt, is that we are the service providers and the students are the customers. As customers, students face a number of perceived risks in the process of this service delivery and the faculty is hoping to be successful in the delivery process. Unfortunately, the students face a situation of having incomplete information, no real way of judging this service prior to their experience and once having completed the course, a less than perfect way of judging its success.

Owing to the asymmetric nature of information in the educational transaction system, we approach and examine this system as a service with credence qualities. Credence services have been described as those not only provided by the seller, but the seller acts as an expert determining the customer's requirements due to the customer's lack of familiarity with the service. Therefore, an asymmetry of information between the consumer and the service provider exists.

A proposed conceptual model identifies and examines factors for the assessment of services with credence qualities that balance the risk borne

by the customer and the service provider. In this case, risk is considered to be an objective characteristic of a given situation, with the consumer (student) bringing their own characteristics into the situation and their appraisal of the risk (Conchar, Zinkhan, Peters, and Olavarrieta 2004). Risk is characterized using those dimensions identified by Conchar et al. (2004), based on the existing risk literature. These suggested dimensions of risk are: a) financial, b) performance, c) physical, d) psychological, d) social, e) time/convenience and f) linked decision. It is our belief that students experience, at any given time, one or more of these types of perceived risk.

The actions of the faculty as service providers are evaluated using the dimensions of service quality (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler 2006). These dimensions include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. We propose that in implementing these dimensions, the consumer's risk perception will be reduced and there will be a positive experience of service quality.

We also propose that under the condition of existing market information, consumers' risk perceptions will affect their attitudes and information acceptance and the success of the service delivery. In addition, it is also suggested that the provider's contribution to the service delivery will moderate the effect of the perceived risks of the customer.

REFERENCES

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