

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT AS A SERVICE MARKETING STRATEGY OF TOP UNIVERSITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

The session explores descriptive methods of analysis to examine the concept of reputation management and how the top universities in the Philippines use reputation as an advantage in marketing its services. Services expand the traditional marketing mix (i.e., product, place, price and promotion) to an extended mix that defines the intangible aspect of service-related offerings which include physical evidence, process, and people (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2008).

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT AS A SERVICE MARKETING STRATEGY

“What’s in a name or reputation?” has become a synonymous cliché actualized through perceptions of quality, reliability and confidence. Customers and publics link reputation similarly as they would associate image, number of recognitions, citations, price, facilities, and, predominantly, the product (and/or the brand). Market or consumers easily associate reputation with brands that withstood time; that is, being recession proof, overcoming societal condemnation through crisis management adaptation of technology and modernization, innovation through creativity, and lastly, word-of-mouth. Brands, as attained by those in the fast-moving consumer industries, are principally tangible; hence, marketing its reputation can be straightforward such that it can appear in its label, posted on counter-racks, or maximized in traditional advertising media which are television, radio, and print.

In the case of education, more importantly the universities and colleges, availing the service would be a participatory investment to the consumer. It is an investment since results of the service, though it is consumed in a given period (i.e., weeks, semesters or years), will only obtain the desired results once the consumer (in this case, a student) is able to complete the whole course. It is participatory since it requires the student to comply with requisites as part of the fulfillment of the consumption. Hence, service is utilized in the field of education if two parties, the service provider and the user, perform both conditions to achieve the desired outcome.

THE PHILIPPINE CONDITION

The 2008 indicators of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) reported that from the 90.5 million population (i.e., recorded men and women), 29.25% of it has reached tertiary education. Of this, on the other hand, 31.14% or 8.24 million attained their bachelor’s degree and/or had taken higher education.

In a separate study conducted by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), the 2007 results reported majority of universities and colleges in the Philippines included in the top 20 rank are from the Mega-Manila area. This summary was obtained based on rate of board examination passers. Mega-Manila rated 45% or nine out of 20 universities, followed by 30% from island of Mindanao, and 15% and 10% respectively for the islands of Luzon and Visayas.

Dissecting this fact, the ranking is focused on higher education institutions (HEIs) that have extensive concerns to disciplines involving information and technology; mechanical arts; quantitative and applied sciences; and those that achieved educational “titled” roles in career landscapes. It justifies that the number of graduates with titled roles contribute to ranking; thus, a linkage to the school’s reputation. However, this does not besmirch any theory indicating that performing arts and courses not listed among necessary board requirements are not rationale disciplines that would be considered to indicate universities and colleges in the ranking. Significant recognition engaging in the arts and finance (i.e., business) heightens the institution’s perceived rank.

In this situation, reputation among universities becomes an instrument of quality; that is, linking credibility by association. Noticeable actions of a student lead to recognition, and should be acknowledged. In fact, service acquisition of student may even sound as risk to an institution if the assumption is that the student will put into jeopardy the reputation of the HEI. On the other hand, on the part of the institution, meeting of expectations is

required to facilitate the future of the individual.

PERCEPTION OF REPUTATION

People are influencers. Societal network relate “Who’s Who?” as influencers who can assist in forming future careers for graduates in these institutions. Thus, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are marked with reputation by relation to the graduates it produces and how these graduates shape the community. For instance, the state university, the University of the Philippines, takes the lead as the most reputable school when the subject matter is the quality of the student.

CAMPUS AND FACILITIES, AN ENVIRONMENT EQUIPPED FOR LEARNING

Two top universities in the Philippines account a Level Four accreditation from Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU), namely: De La Salle University and Ateneo de Manila University. The level of accreditation also associates the institutions complement to physical evidence. In the service marketing mix, physical evidence is the environment in which the service is delivered and any tangible goods that facilitate the performance and communication of the service. In this case, the campus, physical buildings, equipment, and even the accompaniment such as available security, reliable maintenance staff, ratio of student and faculty, and so forth complete the whole physical evidence of the institution’s services.

PROCESS OF SOCIALIZATION AND MODERNIZATION YET ROOTED IN TRADITION

Affiliations, particularly those administered by religious orders, are connected with these institutions. It affirms that students attain holistic education if both mind and being are attuned to learn. Institutions that allow students to develop relationships implicate development of loyalty and a perception of moral quality. Hence, students will develop the habit to engage with other individuals not directly competing with their school but instead manifest “teammanship.”

HEIs that support advocacy drive students to become more productive because institutions know how to support both mind and social progress. In the Metro Manila study conducted by the proponent, for instance, the University of Sto. Tomas was ranked one of the top 3 schools, other than Ateneo University and De La Salle University when the concern was on the “most ethical schools.”

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT AS AN INVALUABLE STRATEGY IN SERVICE

Certifying bodies ranked top universities in the Philippines according to professional licensure results which associate Higher Educational Institutions or HEIs as reputable based on board passers. An independent survey polled top universities in Mega-Manila based on perception yet still linking reputation based on outcome of graduates.

If top universities are examined based on the criteria assigned by accrediting bodies, it will be identified that results of level accreditation will be similar to the elements of the services marketing mix, particularly the extended mix which are physical evidence, process and people. A case in point is Lyceum of the Philippines University, which includes campuses in Manila, Makati, and Cavite, was recently certified by International Standards Organization with ISO 12000, Version 2008 international accreditation. This is a proof that the University has met the international standards of “process” which other Philippine schools have yet to attain.

Thus, reputation of top universities in the Philippines is a result that streamed from the perceived tangible indications of the current stature of the institution and would be future of the student.

If reputation then is a valuable asset to attract enrollees, it should be incorporated and amplified by the institution. Designing communication that will hype the HEIs reputation would add to a positive mass perception. If reputation elevates perception, polls may override any published ranking. In the end, private HEIs, as service organizations, will still need to survive based on number of enrollees partnered with proper systems, facilities, faculty and programs.

References Available on Request