



Universitatea
Transilvania
din Braşov

HABILITATION THESIS

**Title: Enhancing the Competitiveness of Educational Services
Market Organizations by Implementing Sustainable Marketing
Strategies**

Field: Marketing

**Author: Assoc. Prof. PhD. Dana BOŞCOR
Transilvania University of Braşov**

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(A) Summary

Given the globalization of the markets, the increase in the competitiveness of the companies relies more and more on the qualified and well-educated human resource, the role of the educational system being to create specialists that meet the requirements of the labor market. The need for consumer education also arises in other areas because an educated consumer increases the effectiveness of marketing strategies adopted by firms. The empowerment thesis on "Enhancing the Competitiveness of Educational Services Market Organizations by Implementing Sustainable Marketing Strategies" presents the strategies adopted by universities to increase the quality of the educational process, to increase the satisfaction of students as direct consumers and companies as indirect consumers educational services, training strategies for tour operators and tourists for sustainable development and strategies for educating road users to improve road safety.

In the introductory part of the paper are presented the marketing strategies used by universities to improve the position in the international rankings, to increase the visibility of the study programs, to increase the quality of the educational services and to increase the degree of internationalization. The trends in university education at international level related to the use of new technologies in the teaching process, the development of online courses by numerous universities, the increase of investment in classrooms, libraries, campuses, the introduction of new game-based teaching systems and simulations as well as increasing the number of national and international partnerships between universities and firms are analyzed.

The link between university and students is created during high school studies, continuing during university studies, and then the link is maintained throughout life through alumni networks. This link is presented in the first chapter through researches carried out on the university education market in Romania, research analyzing the vocational counseling of students for choosing university studies and future career, research on student satisfaction regarding the quality of educational services and research on the insertion of young graduates on the labor market in Romania. The results of the research conducted with colleagues are compared with the results of other researches conducted on different international markets and show that the educational system must rely more on critical thinking, individual study, and in teams and interdisciplinary experiences

involving a community of people involved in educational process - practitioners, business people, graduates. Between teacher-centered education and student-centered education there must be a balance and teachers must be prepared to provide students with permanent answers and turn into guides that advise students on educational activity. In this way, universities come to adopt personalized, student-centered strategies that enable them to differentiate themselves in this highly competitive market. Students get to control the learning process and get involved actively, increasing the efficiency of learning and critical thinking.

In the strategy adopted at the Ministry of National Education it is proposed to find solutions for placing the teaching staff in some short-term companies for better information on the skills and abilities required by graduate firms. It is also proposed to rethink the tax system so that there is a greater interest in collaboration between firms and universities.

Universities need to get involved in developing business support plans in local communities, set up Career Counseling and Career Centers that better relate the education system to the labor market, and need to carry out permanent research on graduates' professional insertion on the labor market and research among employers to present the skills they require from graduates. In this way, business representatives will have a greater influence on curricula and on adapting skills to company requirements and standards.

The National Strategy for Tertiary Education in Romania focuses on reforming the teaching process, developing partnerships with the business environment, developing a culture of innovation and new approaches to quality assessment. It is trying to implement systems to evaluate feedback from firms on the skills needed for graduates. The central element of the European Commission's Education and Training 2020 strategy is the notion of a "knowledge triangle" based on education, research and innovation. There is a growing emphasis on partnerships between universities and private companies, research institutes and civil society.

The internationalization strategy involves promoting the mobility of teachers, researchers and students, developing online programs, increasing international cooperation on innovation and increasing the quality of European higher education. The internationalization strategy adopted by the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration in Brasov is analyzed through a qualitative research that presents the experiences of students involved in Erasmus + and Work & Travel mobility and how these experiences help them to integrate into the labor market.

The second chapter of the thesis highlighted aspects of the education of the tourist services

consumers and the managers of the tourism units in order to approach sustainable development practices. Sustainable education in tourism is a key element in increasing the competitiveness of the tourist destination and adopting differentiation strategies in a highly competitive market.

The education system must embrace the values of sustainability and students must acquire knowledge and skills to integrate the values of sustainability into their lives and their community. Sustainable development has economic, environmental and social dimensions, being a concern for governments, organizations and educational systems.

The UNESCO Initiative "Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014" calls for action by those involved in the education system to improve the quality of education, to reorient current education towards addressing sustainable development issues, raising public awareness of these issues, and providing training practice. In response to this initiative, many governments have adopted these recommendations to integrate sustainable development into education programs.

This chapter analyzes the sustainable development practices in mountain tourism in the Romanian Carpathians and presents the barriers that companies face in the process of introducing sustainable development practices such as access to finance for investment in green technologies, of the tourist services consumers.

According to the research, few managers are interested in the negative effect of tourism on the environment and are more concerned with the cost reduction and accuse the lack of support from the government and local authorities. The majority of managers interviewed want to attend training sessions to improve their knowledge with on sustainable management and are willing to pay for these training activities. In the managers' opinion, the effects of adopting sustainable development measures include: improving the company's image and the opportunity to use these measures in marketing campaigns, competitive advantages and the possibility of adopting differentiation strategies, reducing operational costs and facilities in accessing funds for development business and customer loyalty.

The main barriers to adopting sustainable development measures are the lack of money and knowledge, which demonstrates the importance of the educational component. Achieving managers' information programs on sustainable development practices and organizing training programs by the Ministry of Tourism can support the efforts of tourism managers to apply sustainable practices.

The issue of rising operating costs can be partially resolved by providing government incentives to

companies that adopt sustainable development practices. EU funded programs can be an important source of funding, and investment by firms can be encouraged by exempting from taxes and duties. Within the Ministry of Tourism, there should be departments that provide advice to firms wishing to access European funds and banks should be involved in lending to companies wishing to make such investments. On the Romanian market there is a small involvement of banks in the financing of these projects, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The third chapter presents the importance of education in the field of road safety, outlining the results of a research carried out on a sample of 3120 people, research presenting the behavior of traffic participants in Romania in the wearing of the seat belt in to increase road safety. Research has many similarities to other international studies and focuses on coercive measures that have a greater impact on driver and passenger education. The results of the research were the basis for the adoption of specific measures included in the new Romanian Road Code, which entered into force in 2015 and which provides for increased penalties for those who do not wear the seat belt. Changing driver behavior is possible through the adoption of coercive measures.

In the final part of the empowerment thesis are presented the career development and development plans, both in the direction of didactic activities and in the research activity.