

INFLUENCE OF THE PRIDE OF BELONGING AND OTHER VARIABLES IN THE MODELLING OF REPURCHASE BEHAVIOR. AN APPLICATION FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

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RESUMEN

El presente trabajo en curso incluye una revisión de la presencia de la variable repetición de compra y del constructo lealtad dentro de la literatura e investigación académica en el contexto de la educación superior, como industria de servicio. Esta intención de repetición de compra será modelizada a través de diferentes variables, algunas ya consideradas en otros estudios y a las cuales se les suma la posible influencia del sentido de pertenencia, de tanto significado para los estudiantes y exestudiantes. En esta investigación sobre la importancia del comportamiento en la recompra se considerará una nueva variable vinculada a la estimación del tiempo de recompra.

Palabras clave:

Recompra, lealtad, sentido de pertenencia, educación superior, valor del cliente/estudiante.

ABSTRACT

The present research includes a literature review of the variable purchase repetition and the construct loyalty within the literature and academic research in the context of higher education as a service industry. This repurchase intention will be modelled through different variables, many of them already considered in other studies to which is added the possible influence of the pride of belonging, of such significance to students and alumni. In this study on the importance of the repurchase behavior, a new variable will be considered: the estimated time of repurchase.

Keywords:

Repurchase, loyalty, pride of belonging, higher education, value of the client / student.

1. Introduction

Nowadays there is a constant need to learn and acquire new competences. We are living in the digital age and the technological advances which have taken place in the last twenty years at a greater pace than at any other moment in human history. This is a clear chance for all educational institutions in the world which have also an opportunity and a responsibility for the professional development of people.

The purpose of this research is to explore the strategies that universities and higher education institutions may implement to increase the rate of alumni who return to study new programs. Therefore, our research is based on the study of the repurchase variable, its meaning and which marketing variables influence in the repurchase behavior of customers, in our case: the alumni.

This work is an approximation, for both academics and practitioners, to the higher education (HE) context, deepening the understanding of the importance given by many students to having a good level of service quality, a high level of perceived service and total satisfaction. All of these must be translated into the enticing of alumni back to the university, enrolling in a new grade, a master, or even a MOOC (Massive Online Open Courses), as different forms of continuous education and professional development.

For these reasons, the repurchase intention emerges as a key variable to manage universities and schools from an economic point of view. This new framework should encourage HE institutions to strive for excellence in their daily performances to direct their students toward further learning opportunities.

2. Structure of Objectives

2.1. Main Objective

To model the repurchase behavior in the HE context using “Pride of Belonging (Membership)” in conjunction with other variables, and to measure the influence of the pride of belonging on this behavior.

The pride of belonging could be a key variable to understanding the behavior of alumni, in relation with others constructs such as loyalty and engagement. The pride of belonging is especially present in alumni who have studied at certain prestigious HE institutions and this pride of belonging becomes effective in behaviors of repurchase when institutions propose continuous education for their alumni.

This pride of belonging is equally present in business models in which there is a relationship among members at social clubs, country clubs or non-governmental organizations, etc.

2.2. Specific Objectives

- To measure **quality service** in the context of HE.
- To measure **perceived value** through effort in the context of HE.
- To model **pride of belonging** in the context of HE, taking into account alumni networking, WOM (word of mouth) activities and recruiting as arguments to scale this variable.
- To relate **customer satisfaction** with **pride of belonging**.
- To relate **perceived value** with **pride of belonging**.
- To relate **repurchase intention** with **pride of belonging** and other moderating variables such as new products (programs and courses), prices, place, times, etc.
- To introduce the **repurchase estimated time** into the calculation of customer value.
- To determine the **influence of the pride of belonging in the estimated time** of repurchase.

3. Research Design and Methodology

This search has been divided in three parts.

The first part of this work is a review of literature on the repurchase intention (Dlagic, Arslanagic, Kadic-Maglajlic, Markovic, & Raspor, 2014), (Duque, 2014) versus constructs such as engagement and loyalty (Kumar, 2010), (Kumar & Pansari, 2016) in the HE context.

This research reviews the literature on the repurchase intention and repurchase behavior in the HE context over the last ten years (2007-2017) (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). In addition to the repurchase variable, customer's loyalty and engagement in this HE context requires revision to obtain the exact state of the art.

With this research, the conceptual differences between the loyalty, the engagement and the repurchase behavior in the alumni of an HE institution may be determined, should they exist.

Marketing investigators have been researching these variables and constructs in depth for several years. In the HE context, the research may detect some differences among the variables and constructs as there may be a gap between the loyalty and the eventual repurchase behavior.

Loyalty is not a pledge of repurchase, nor does the repurchase behavior mean there will always be a loyalty. This research hopes to find some differences between these two variables of marketing. Beyond loyalty, the pride of belonging may appear as a stronger construct to generate repurchases.

Most students in any institution of higher education will remain loyal, but there is no certainty that they will return to these institutions to study again.

On the other hand, the pride of belonging of the alumni will be related to the actions carried out through the memberships, donations and events in which alumni participate, for instance the alumni annual meeting.

V. Kumar (Kumar, 2010) proposes four components to assess the engagement of a customer with a firm. The first component would be the referral value, the second component would be the influencer value, the third would be the customer knowledge value and the fourth would be the repurchase behavior.

In a context of HE, students and alumni can interact and create value for institutions in many ways. Both of these groups act as referrals in their social and work environments; secondly the alumni have a power of influence in recruiting processes for firms when they look for candidates who have studied in the same institutions; the third point is when some of the alumni are a reference by social recognition.

These aspects are part of alumni engagement with the HE institution and they increase the pride of belonging. Hence the question is whether the pride of belonging is an important part of engagement or whether the pride of belonging is even a step beyond.

Therefore, this research proposes to review how the variables repurchase, engagement, loyalty and pride of belonging appear in scientific marketing literature in the context of HE, and what gap there is between them, if they mean the same, or whether they can be partially used as part of management strategies in educational institutions.

The second part of the research is based on a survey carried out to students and alumni of several educative institutions in different parts of the world in order to model the repurchase intention.

The first part of this work will have discussed the different meanings between repurchase behavior, loyalty of an alumnus to an HE institution and the engagement or the pride of belonging and the second part of this thesis will model the repurchase behavior through certain variables which have been determining factors in other contexts of industrial services such as quality service, perceived value or customer satisfaction.

This research intends to obtain positive relations between the repurchase intention or behavior and the service of quality, the perceived value or customer satisfaction. It cannot take for granted any pre-concepts regarding the pride of belonging and the repurchase intention, even considering that, a high pride of belonging does not ensure the returning to study at the same universities. The results expect to reveal some moderating variables which explain these possible behaviors.

The behavior of the repurchase should be related with the time. The estimation of the repurchase lead time may be of great use in order to manage the relationships with the alumni. The hypothesis raised in this part of the research will be whether a high pride of belonging is related positively to the time of repurchase or not.

The study will be based on the measuring of variables such as quality services and satisfaction (Dlagic, Arslanagic, Kadic-Maglajlic, Markovic, & Raspor, 2014) whilst the model will be taking into consideration a new variable in this context: **the pride of belonging**. The main objective of this research is to relate the pride of belonging with the repurchase behavior, considering that there are also other moderators and mediating variables.

This research will use a quantitative design. A survey will be carried out to collect data that will later be analyzed. To start with, a questionnaire will be designed based on scales which will allow us to measure:

- **Quality service** (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), (Zeithaml V. A., 1988), (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996), (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996), (Brady & Cronin, 2001), (Carrillat, Jaramillo, & Mulki, 2009); perceived value (Zeithaml, 1988), (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996), (Sweeny & Soutar, 2001), (Yang & Petersen, 2004), (Lin, Sher, & Shih, 2005), (Gallarza & Saura, 2006), (Carrillat, Jaramillo, & Mulki, 2009);
- **Customer satisfaction** (Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999), (Szymanski & Henard, 2001), (Elliot & Healy, 2001), (Duque, 2014), (Carrillat, Jaramillo, & Mulki, 2009), (Hsu, Wang, Cheng, & Chen, 2016), and;
- **Pride of belonging and engagement** (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992), (Gruen, Summers, & Acito, 2000), (Palmatier, Dant, & Evans, 2006) of the alumni with their universities.

This questionnaire will gather data on estimated time regarding the repurchase intention and repurchase behavior (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001), (Hellier, Geursen, Rodney, & Rickard, 2003), (Carrillat, Jaramillo, & Mulki, 2009), (Chiu, Hsu, Lai, & Chang, 2012), (Dlagic, Arslanagic, Kadic-Maglajlic, Markovic, & Raspor, 2014), (Wu, Chen, Chen, & Cheng, 2014), (Dawes, Meyer-Waarden, & Driesener, 2015) of alumni considering them as customers (Eagle & Brennan, 2007).

The proposal of this study goes further; it is also a modeling of the estimated repurchase time.

In order to evaluate the variable *estimated time of repurchase*, the question should be, how long it will take the alumni to decide to enroll in a new program or course.

Bearing this in mind, we will aim to find a scenario that allows us to ask students from different universities and higher education institutions such as business schools in different countries: Spain, the United States, Colombia, El Salvador, etc.

Finally, a structural equation model will be used to model the relation between variables, considering the repurchase intention as a dependent variable.

And the third part of this research is the possible reformulation of the alumni value for the universities, considering the probability of returning to study another program at the same educative institution. Thus, having estimated the time of repurchase as a variable, the Customer Value calculation (Reinartz & Kumar, 2003), (Gupta & Lehmann, 2004), (Lam, Shankar, & Bvsan Murthy, 2004), (Malthouse & Blattberg, 2005), (Gupta & Zeithaml, 2006), (Gupta, 2009), (Blattberg, Malthouse, & Neslin, 2009), (Verhoef & Lemon, 2013), (Braun, Scheweidel, & Stein, 2015), (Sunder, Kumar, & Zhao, 2016) may be viewed more easily and with finer adjustment as, in this manner it will be possible to obtain an accurate forecast of when cash flows are likely to occur.

3.1. Model of Research

As a result of the above-mentioned gap we propose a model which represents the need to research, in greater depth, into the relationship between customers and companies based on quality service, satisfaction, value, brand and other constructs. This work aims to find the relation between the perceived values, customer satisfaction and repurchase intention and the pride of belonging and *“membership”* and the positive relations between them. We expect to verify that pride of belonging influences positively on the repurchase and that a high level of the sense of belonging will be determinant.

4. Conclusions

This research is expected to provide results that allow the modelling of the repurchase in an HE context using variables such as service quality, customer satisfaction, perceived value and other moderator variables, also introducing the pride of belonging to and membership of the educational institutions as an additional, independent variable.

Moreover, we are expecting the present study to have significant academic and practical implications. The results may broaden the knowledge of the relation between perceived service quality, customer-perceived value, students' satisfaction and the pride of belonging, with the repurchase intention in an HE context, making the study suitable for broader international comparisons.

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