Social Marketing as a Development Strategy and Social Impact in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research was to analyze social marketing as a development strategy and social impact in higher education institutions in the Municipality of San Juan del Cesar, Department of the Guajira-Colombia. Epistemologically, the research had a qualitative-epistemic focus of symbolic interactionism and the research method was qualitative-ethnographic. Key informants were selected for their coexistence in INFOTEP, their willingness to cooperate, good communicability and availability of time. As an instrument for gathering information, participant observation and the interview were used, constituted by a semi-structured guide, using as a resource the portable recorder. The analysis techniques were developed through categorization, structuring, triangulation and theorization. Among the outstanding results, it was possible to confirm the need to carry out a social marketing plan that focuses on the student as a target audience, inquiring between your needs and desires.

Keywords: Marketing, Strategies, Education

Introduction

Since the 60s, in North America a thought has emerged that proposed the responsible use of marketing and this is how the academic origin of social marketing is recognized from the seventies, specifically product of the works of Fox (2011) [1] and Kotler (2011) [2]. From there, social marketing begins to deve-
lopping, trying to adapt and transfer commercial elements to activities dedicated to defending the interests of society.

Social Marketing is defined by Kotler and Roberto (2003) [3] as a strategy for behavior change, and combines the best elements of traditional approaches to social change in an integrated planning and action framework, while using advances in communications technology and merchandising techniques. They also indicate that the administrative process of social marketing it consists in analyzing the environment, investigate the target population, define the problem or the opportunity of social marketing, design marketing strategies, plan the social marketing mix programs as well as organizing, implementing, controlling and evaluating the effort.

According to Pérez (2010) [4], social marketing is the design, implementation and control of programs aimed at encouraging the acceptance of social ideas, by including factors such as product planning, price, communication, distribution and market research. Attending to these considerations, Social marketing can be considered as a process in which an efficient plan is made, constituted by strategies and objectives focused on solving social problems. Now, social marketing is a tool to represent activities aimed at increasing the acceptance of social causes. This has increased the interest of many organizations toward this strategy. In this order of ideas, Kotler and Roberto (2011) [3], define social marketing as a strategy for behavior change, than combines the best elements of traditional approaches into an integrated planning and action framework.

Undoubtedly, the definition of social marketing strategies allows the analysis of the needs of individuals and organizations, in addition to following the evolution of the market, the segmentation of existing products, diversification of the new product portfolio and even specify the mission of the institution of higher education, defining objectives and determining the development actions in order to ensure the positioning in the sector.

In this sense, the generation of social marketing in institutions of higher education has been constituted, in recent times, in a research object for the construction of theoretical systems that make planning viable, management and evaluation of knowledge creation in the field of sustainable development. For this reason, higher education institutions have to implement marketing strategies, if they really want to determine market demand, identify threats, opportunities, base its activity on solid strategic options, establish environmental surveillance systems, determine the ability to adapt and training needs. According to Lambin et. al (2011) [5], these are based on the analysis of the needs of the individual and of the organizations, to be able to offer this type of service. In this regard, Walker et. al (2012) [6], considers that the main thing must be to generate resources and activities to achieve the objectives, as well as guiding the organization towards attractive opportunities.
In this situation, the marketing strategy consists of analysis, development and implementation activities to reach a vision about the markets of interest to the organization, select strategies on the target market, define objectives, implement and manage the positioning actions to satisfy the value requirements of the consumers in each market, particular case: the student community.

**Materials and Methods:**

**Design of the investigation:** The present study is within a qualitative research approach and framed in a postpositivist paradigm, which allowed to collect the information directly from the subjects that generated it and in the space where it originated. For the development of the study it was considered pertinent to analyze social marketing as a sustainable development strategy in higher education institutions, based on the qualitative paradigm, which considers that there are multiple truths socially constructed and constantly changing. His method was ethnographic, considered as a methodological alternative in the social sciences. For Cerda (2002) [7], this type of qualitative method studies very specific groups. The design is interactive, dynamic and emergent, as indicated by Bonilla and Rodriguez (2005) [8], since the role of the researcher is to capture knowledge, meaning and interpretations that individuals share about the social reality that is studied, defined as a historical product, that is, validated by the same subjects.

In the same methodological context, the research was developed in direct communication with key informants, under the application of interviews in order to collect as much data as possible, that according to Martínez (2008) [9], by not having a definition of the subjects or of the scenarios with specific characteristics is expected to ask general interest questions and strategies will be defined to the extent to advance the investigation.

According to Yuni and Urbano (2005) [10] they emphasize that the design of the research is linked to the “decisions and valuations as well as conceptual alternatives and procedural that guarantee that the descriptive model as explanatory of the theories correspond to the characteristics of the phenomenon” which allowed the researcher to answer their questions and study objectives.

**Temporary structure:** The present investigation was carried out with the following delimitations: The population was conformed by the members of the National Institute of Professional Technical Training of the Department of the Guajira, where undergraduate and specialization programs are developed with open and distance education methodologies, face-to-face, semi-attendance, of formal, non-formal and permanent education in order to expand the possibilities of service to the community and incorporate the academic activity. Regarding the duration, this investigation was carried out in an estimated time of two years, starting in 2015 and ending in January 2017.
Population and sample size: The population was constituted by all the observations of the universe of interest represented in the higher education systems of San Juan del Cesar the Guajira-Colombia. The interview was applied to members of the National Institute of Technical Professional Training of the department of the Guajira (INFOTEP), where undergraduate and specialization programs are developed with open education methodologies, distance, face-to-face, semi face-to-face, formal education, non-formal and permanent.

The criteria that were taken into account for the selection of the informants were those indicated below in Table 1.

### Table 1. Key Informant Selection Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Institutional Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Informant I *</td>
<td>Official of the vice-presidency of human resources of the Cerrejón, in the position of head of training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2    | Informant II * | 1. Former rector of the University of the Guajira. Research professor  
2. Academic coordinator of INFOTEP |
| 3    | Informant III * | Official assigned to INFOTEP - Research professor |
| 4    | Informant IV * | Official assigned to INFOTEP. Research professor |
| 5    | Informant V * | Student of the occupational risk prevention program - INFOTEP |
| 6    | Informant VI * | Student of the mining program - INFOTEP |


In addition, the key informants also responded to the different alliances that he maintained INFOTEP throughout the region, for being a source of skilled labor, besides being a training institute of the first order. The opinion of students was also taken with the intention of having a broad set of opinions about the existence or not of an adequate policy oriented to social marketing. This will allow the strengthening of sustainable development in the higher education systems of San Juan del Cesar the Guajira-Colombia.

It is also important to establish the coding with respect to the study categories and starting from the same one can establish the priorities of the key informants around the construction of the theoretical scenario that allowed to generate practical theoretical guidelines of social marketing for the strengthening of sustainable development in the higher education systems of San Juan del Cesar the Guajira-Colombia as presented below:
Table 2. Codification of the Informants with respect to the Study Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Categories</th>
<th>Relation of Informants with the Category</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational context of Social Marketing</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Marketing Elements</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs of Students</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Students</td>
<td>L</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


In the present investigation we worked with one (1) unit of analysis which will be constituted by the six (06) key informants that are reflected in Table 2. In this sense, in the present study, population and sample are represented by the same number of informants. This research was supported by the positivist paradigm approach. The type of research was descriptive, using a non-experimental design, transectional of field.

**Instruments:** The instrument of the present study consisted of a semi-structured interview script, as well as audio and video recorders, camera, and even a logbook for annotations in the field when the participant observation is applied. The technique used in this ethnographic method was participatory observation.

**Results and Discussion:** After the reduction of the data and the triangulation of the obtained codes, a general diagram was created that integrated all the elements that emerged from the interviews. Next, in Figure 1, the final conceptual structure of the investigative process is presented.
Figure 1. Integrative Cognitive Structure

Source: self made (2016).

The present integrating diagram, emerges from the triangulation between key informants and of the expertise obtained by the researcher what allows to understand the phenomenon under study. Even, the integration of some elements that can only be identified in the interviews and that due to their conceptual relevance they are added to offer new meanings to research, social marketing emerges as a basic element in sustainable development in higher education institutions in San Juan del Cesar the Guajira-Colombia.

Thus, the category of social marketing emerges as the technique of social context analysis and the determination of its elements to influence the voluntary behavior of students - particular case- oriented towards the satisfaction of their needs which becomes in benefits for the educational institution.

For the present study, this situational analysis was placed on the valuation of human capital, the structural capital review, the relevance of the contents and careers offered with the reality of the context besides the administration of the national budget as the only way to respond to institutional needs.
With regard to marketing elements, they were defined: the prevention of student needs, the portfolio of services to be offered, the strategic inter-institutional alliances as well as the competitive advantages that were generated for the organization, among them, the positioning in the region, the country and the world. Certainly, the requirement that requires the most attention among students it is related to the link of the graduate. This question has to be resolved from the moment the institution begins to establish productive allies that require skilled labor. Because of this, the social marketing process ends up impacting the educational curriculum which must be updated constantly to ensure that the technical professional graduated has the necessary skills and enough of his profession in the labor market.

In the same way, the study showed that conservation of the environment is considered as a transversal element to the competencies of future professionals. For this, an environmental education is required and ecological ethics in accordance with the government's ecological sustainability plans and that it allows to generate biotechnological processes of development in the field in which the future professionals are integrated.

**Conclusion**

By examining the situational context of social marketing in higher education institutions of the Department of the Guajira, it was possible to verify the separation of the institutional with the local. It was also possible to demonstrate the little relevance that exists between the curriculum and the socio-economic processes of the locality. However, the human and structural capital of the organization is perceived as a strength. In the same way, it was possible to characterize the elements of applied social marketing in higher education systems in San Juan del Cesar, the Guajira-Colombia, Finding the need to execute a social marketing plan that focuses on the Student as a target audience, inquiring between your needs and desires in the short, medium and long term.

**References**


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