Chapter 8

Students as Customers in the Design of an Erasmus Mundus Educational Program on Neuromarketing

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ABSTRACT

Students are the heart of the education system, being the main customers for different educational offers. In higher education, renowned institutions are starting to delineate the voice of their students when designing new curriculums for successful enrollment and final student satisfaction. The Erasmus Mundus program envisages the creation of new masters with a multicultural and multidisciplinary focus. The present chapter aims to present the design of an Erasmus Mundus Master on neuromarketing based on the Kano approach. Several student requirements are presented into a Kano questionnaire and 104 potential students from Romania and Turkey express their opinion about them. After analyzing the results, the hybrid education system is preferred together with specific disciplines and enrollment requirements. The study represents a starting point in assessing the voice of the student in the design stage of new curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic was a turning point for the traditional educational system worldwide. It envisaged for the first-time online education as a safe and sometimes the only option for students and teachers alike, and therefore was promoted on a global scale from preschool to higher education institutions. But in a post-pandemic era, is online education still the best option? Potra et al. (2021) argued that according to

lessons learned, in Romania a hybrid approach can become a bridge between exclusive face-to-face and online education, offering "blended learning in adaptable forms for student satisfaction and qualitative results". Also, this hybrid option has been earlier thought of as having multiple advantages for students with busy schedules and work responsibilities (Hall & Villareal, 2015), being the most promising approach for higher education (Means et al., 2010). Nevertheless, as argued by Gleason and Greenhow (2017), further design studies are required to draw a clear conclusion about the future of blended learning in higher education.

Thus, should new curriculums consider online learning, exclusive face-to-face learning, or a hybrid approach? What are the current needs and requirements of the Master student regarding these concerns and others when designing innovative programs? The proposed research questions are designed to expand current knowledge on the topic.

The objective of this study is to examine and consider the voice of the student from the design stage of an Erasmus Mundus Educational Program on Neuromarketing using the Kano model. The student's viewpoint has often been overlooked since master curriculum is difficult to manage and courses depend on the university staff knowledge, laboratories, and bureaucratic hurdles. But Erasmus Mundus is shifting the focus from university resources towards student needs. It is designed to create new curricula based on multiple universities' resources around an international student who applies for a scholarship and an innovative experience. In this way, the educational package becomes an offer, and the student represents a potential customer who needs to be attracted and transformed into a loyal advocate for the program. In line of this reasoning, the Kano questionnaire is intended to uncover the mindset of the student as customer to provide a pertinent and convenient product, the master program. Even if it might appear as a commercial approach to new curriculum design, in fact it represents the basis for the successful educational programs of the future. By referring to students as customers, next offers will adapt to current needs faster than ever before, promote open education and learn from their stakeholders and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new Master curriculum has been developed during the PANEREMA project, an Erasmus Mundus Design Measure project implemented from February 2022- May 2023 by three universities, namely Eskishehir Osmangazi University – Turkey, Politehnica University Timisoara – Romania and University of Malaga – Spain. Since Erasmus Mundus implies the collaboration of multiple higher education institutions from different countries, the study has been conducted on two student segments, namely, Romanian, and Turkish third and fourth Bachelor years of study and first and second Master years of study to understand their viewpoint regarding the characteristics of a new Master program in the field of neuromarketing.

The neuromarketing field has been chosen for several reasons. Ale Smids is credited with creating the term "neuromarketing" in 2005 to characterize the area of study that applies neuroscience technology to the conventional objectives and topics of interest in the marketing sector (Bastiaansen et al., 2018). Neuromarketing represents a mixture of marketing and neuroscience that provides a behavioral overview between humans, the market, and market exchanges based on an analysis performed using neuroscientific methods (Bhardwaj et al., 2023). This definition has two inferences; (1) neuromarketing is not merely the use of neuroimaging by commercial interests for their benefits, (2) the scope of neuromarketing does not solely focus on consumer behavior but spreads out to encapsulate a variety of fields of interest which are prevalently applied in the marketing research domain (N. Lee et al., 2007).

To measure customer emotion, cognition, and preference in traditional marketing, in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups are typically conducted. Despite being straightforward, these tools are

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