

FRENCH STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS
CRITERIA IN A MARKETING CAREER

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Abstract

This paper gives results of a survey aiming at determining French students' perception of criteria requested for a successful career in marketing. The research involved 67 French students enrolled in an undergraduate program. Data were gathered using the Nominal Group Technique. Results indicated students thought that criteria based on individual qualities such as dynamism and creativeness, were the most important.

Introduction

Marketing education has been gaining an increasing interest since the last decade and according to Keith K. Cox (1980) the 1979-80, President of The American Marketing Association, this rather recent concern is most likely to continue.

Literature and research focusing on Marketing Education have been dealing with Marketing courses content and pedagogy such as, for instance, methods of teaching Pricing Theory (Beal, 1979) or considerations on the usage of multiple choice questions in Marketing exams (Mc Millan 1979). Another research body mainly concerns student/people reactions to Marketing education; studies on hiring criteria fall into this category (Hafer and Hoth, 1980).

The former received much more attention than the latter. This situation is easy to understand. Overall Marketing educators are interested in getting in-depth knowledge of pedagogic tools in order to improve their ability and quality of teaching. Yet, it should be stressed that knowledge of students' reactions to marketing education might be interpreted as a pragmatic evaluation of the education they received.

Bearing this in mind, we found interesting to identify French students' perception of success criteria in a Marketing career. These criteria might have a direct effect on the potential misapprehension they would face in their first job. Moreover, as we stated earlier, the nature of these criteria and possible discrepancy with actual criteria of success might be interpreted as a sanction on the education students received.

Furthermore, by knowing what students think are criteria to succeed in a Marketing position, educators might adjust their course contents to any potential discrepancy with actual criteria of success. Therefore, these criteria may be seen as inputs as well as outputs for Marketing education.

Yet, it must be pointed out that other intervening variables might originate those criteria. Among them, let us mention students' experience in Marketing practices. Through previous full-time or even part-time jobs, students develop beliefs. Many French institutions recommend their students to have a summer job in business administration to get a feeling of the "real world". No doubt that, at least by watching marketers, they should get a better idea what qualities and knowledge are necessary. The personality of a student itself also influences these criteria: the way he sees and understands his professional life, for instance, are intervening variables. Finally interactions with

others (friends, family) might also influence the nature of those criteria.

The research

Methodology

The exploratory nature of this research required using group interviews.

Unfortunately, conventional methods of group interviews suffered from two major constraints regarding our problem:

1. They would give nominal results. It was far from being obvious that we would have been able to get rank-ordered criteria. Yet, ordinal data would have been particularly relevant to the problem in hand.
2. Nature of the problem and characteristics of respondents (i.e. students knowing themselves) could have caused a biased set of criteria as some more active people (leaders) would possibly influence others.

Bearing these two constraints in mind, we decided to use the Nominal Group Technique (N.G.T.) (Delbecq, Van den Andrew, Gustafson, 1975).

The sample consisted in 67 Marketing students enrolled in an undergraduate program at the Institut Universitaire de Technologie - Besançon (France). All of them were in the final term of their studies, which meant they should have been concerned with their first job and that they all had completed several marketing courses. Consequently, the model we developed earlier in this text was relevant to them. Respondents were divided into groups of, on average, 12 people. They were presented with the following question: "What are the relevant criteria to succeed in a Marketing career?" In order to clarify the question, students were presented with two classified ads sampled from L'Express, a French national executive magazine.

Results

On an aggregate basis, 46 different criteria were recorded. This rather large number depicted a diversity among the students' perception.

Among these main criteria, from the number of points they received, two emerged: Dynamism and Creativeness. Interestingly enough, such criteria are linked to individual qualities and not to the marketing education students received. The first criteria referring to marketing education ranked only fourth. In a second step, we tried to form groups of criteria among the original 46. A careful analysis of these individual criteria resulted in identification of three main categories:

- Individual qualities
- Intellectual Skills
- Education

end of the text available upon request from the authors.