Critically evaluating the marketing mix of an academic programme. The case of Master of Science in Business Management and Technology, at CITY College International Faculty of the University of Sheffield

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to analyse and evaluate the marketing mix of an academic programme currently offered at CITY College International Faculty of the University of Sheffield, in South-East European region. Although current literature is merely specialised in the area of marketing the educational experience, there is an effort to adopt, combine and bring forth similar literature findings that provide adequate academic support. The specific programme was initially introduced in 2007 in Greece. After a successful start, the College decided to offer it in two more countries (Albania & Bulgaria) during 2010. There is a thorough analysis on current marketing mix focusing in the concepts of the students’ “buying” behavior, the segmentation- targeting and positioning of the programme, as well as the 7Ps. In addition, there is an argument analysis of why the College followed the specific mix. Literature review is accommodated in all phases of this analysis and evaluation. This study suggests a marketing mix that could be inherent by personalization, one-to-one marketing and social marketing elements towards adding value in the supply chain of “Student-Programme-College” experience. A combination of SWOT and PESTEL analysis is re-introduced as a compass for adapting the marketing mix in a rapidly changing environment.

Keywords: 4Ps, 7Ps, Marketing Mix, Marketing of Services, Academic programme, Service experience

1. INTRODUCTION

In this section we aim to give a description of the service. In the next section there is an attempt to discuss issues on marketing planning as well as the analysis of the environment that did the College before launching the programme. In section three, there is an analysis and evaluation of the marketing mix adopted. In the fourth and final section, there are certain suggestions on a set of tools that could be further developed as well as a combination of marketing mix elements in order to achieve sustainability and create growth through this programme.

The programme of “MSc in Business Management & Technology” -originally introduced as “MSc in Technology, Innovation & Entrepreneurship (TIE)” in 2007- is a Masters Degree academic programme which is offered at CITY College the International Faculty of the University of Sheffield. It is offered in a definite scheme, which is a two-year programme with obligatory classes that take place once a month (Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday). There is a total of nine modules plus a dissertation that students have to participate and be assessed. The assessment is fully based on written course-works, submitted one for each module while the dissertation is a research oriented survey-case which includes: literature review, research methodology, data collection and analysis, findings and discussion in a technological-entrepreneurial oriented subject.

The programme has run for the first time on 2007, in Thessaloniki where the basis of College is. It had a successful start with a group of students, coming from a variety of academic disciplines and industries. At present it runs successfully in two more countries, Albania and Bulgaria in cooperation with local Universities.

The purpose of this study is to identify the marketing mix elements as used since the beginning and analyse and evaluate them with the help of literature review. Our aim is, through this evaluation to provide recommendations in the College in order to improve current efforts and usage of the mix as a marketing tool in terms of future moves.
2. MARKETING PLANNING & ANALYSIS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

According to Magrath (1986), Neil Borden introduced the concept of marketing mix in 1962 while Jerome McCarthy popularised the 4Ps in 1964 (Product-Price-Place-Promotion). The idea was to provide a portfolio model in order to build the organising framework for integrating diverse marketing tasks. Waterschoot and Van den Bulte (1992) defined, the term “marketing mix” as the mixture of elements useful in pursuing a certain market response. Therefore, marketing mix is consisted of a set of inseparable tools, which reinforced marketing planning. As a result, marketing planning became a strategic choice for the decision makers of a company, who afterwards were capable of relating seemingly indifferent elements and define their strategic objectives.

Philip Kotler (1999) introduced the 4Cs in regards to 4Ps, describing the following equivalence:

![The 4Ps versus 4Cs](image)

The College applied a marketing plan based in marketing mix elements, which corresponds to the 7Ps of services marketing mix (Mudie and Pirrie, 2006). Moreover, it has built its primary plan in the identification of an existed market share, and market growth opportunities, which mostly derived from the changes introduced by the economic, political and legal environment in the whole region (Hatziapostolou, 2011). Especially, the Computer Science Department was designing and preparing the programme intensively for two years prior to its launch.

The first strategic action was to identify and understand the environment in terms of both micro and macro dimensions. The thorough and detailed approach in this situation analysis created the axes where the whole marketing plan depended on. In Appendix A, is given first of all the SWOT analysis of the academic programme as this was the first step of the attempt. It was identified that the programme has unique characteristics, runs ahead competition but may face two difficulties. First it needs to be correctly positioned in the perception of prospective students and second it may face a delay in its acceptability since it is considered too advanced. Service positioning possess a number of characteristics which makes it more difficult and challenging in contrast to products positioning. These are: (a) intangibility, (b) inseparability, (c) perishability, (d) heterogeneity, and (e) non-standardization (Blankson and Kalafatis, 1999). Therefore, the attempt from the College was to proactively process and measure the candidates’ perceptions towards the new programme. That was implemented through the use of all elements of the marketing plan.

The second action was an attempt to identify the micro and macro environments of the College. In Appendix B, is given the diagram that describes the immediate environment of the College as an attempt to register and identify the participants. The College accepts immediate impact and copes with a number of entities which are: (a) staff, (b) students, (c) media, (d) suppliers, (e) competitors, and (f) shareholders.

In continuous, in Appendix C, is given a PEST analysis, which represents the major impacts and changes in terms of the broader environments of the College. Economic crisis and forces of restructuring create opportunities for entering in new markets and boosting growth. Both legal and political environments force changes that are expected to affect quickly the sector of education. Since the College is an independent institution, self-funded with high entrepreneurial orientation, is expected to continue being the pioneer in the region. Thus, the specific programme could lead this effort and predefine the framework for future moves.
3. ANALYSIS and EVALUATION OF CURRENT MARKETING MIX

Various researchers have concluded that although the 4Ps marketing mix framework stand as a dominant marketing management paradigm, it took criticism throughout the years (Constantinides, 2006; Waterschoot and Van den Bulte, 1992; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995). Constantinides (2006) identified in the mix two significant limitations, (a) the model’s internal orientation and (b) the lack of personalization. Education belongs to services marketing, as it is mostly characterised by intangibility. Differences between tangibles and intangibles were the fundamental reason of considering the 4Ps approach, as inadequate.

In the current study is considered significant to give the literature taxonomy on services marketing as presented by Constantinides (2006) in Appendix D. There is a number of interesting findings through literature which some of them were adopted by the College and were incorporated in its marketing mix. In addition, this taxonomy may support future plans in terms of revealing new ideas and concepts. Furthermore, in Appendix E, is given a table with the characteristics of the service in relation to its marketing implications and positioning strategies.

3.1 Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning

Ruskin (1999) highlighted that there is a previous strategic element to the marketing mix, the combination of (a) segmentation, (b) targeting, and (c) positioning. In other words, it is necessary first to divide the market place into homogeneous groups of customers, in order to identify and choose which of these groups will be focused and finally position the service in order to attract them.

According to Sotiriadou (2011), the target group of candidates for the specific programme had the following characteristics. They should: (a) either have a Business or IT-related academic background, (b) have small professional experience, (c) preferably be recent graduates, (d) be employed in middle-level managerial positions, and (e) be hybrid professionals referring to technology, innovation and entrepreneurship sectors. It is true that the Computer Science Department, which runs the programme, had identified a need, which came across changes that acknowledged by European Union and supported from various frameworks (Sotiriadou, 2011; Hatziapostolou, 2011). To be more specific, innovation with the effective use of technology in order to foster entrepreneurship is the next model of entrepreneurialism and differentiation that Europe encourages versus other global poles, such as BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and USA.

Actually the introduction of this new programme (MSc in Business Management & Technology), aimed to redefine the market place, if could be used such term, and to trigger young managers to cultivate their entrepreneurial spirit. Therefore, it succeeded in to get in a niche market which was early recognised as a high-promising one. Furthermore, there was a gap in the market, since no similar programme existed. As Ruskin (1999) stated, to make a successful segmentation there must be three conditions:

1. to have a gap in the market (unsatisfied needs);
2. to have a market in that gap (large enough for viability);
3. to be able to communicate with the segment;

Below is given an interesting cascade diagram which illustrates briefly the strategies for segmenting a market.
A segmentation strategy for services is different than products. Again Ruskin (1999) presented an interesting approach which could be taken into account in the present case of an academic programme.

Since the programme runs only for three years, it is considered that is still in its early position in terms of entering the certain market of SEE. Actually, adapting Ruskin (1999), we identify that it is in the phase of experiencing the major “chasm” among the early adopters and early majority. Below is given a figure which illustrates this crossing path from one side to the other.
The early majority, which according to figure 3 represents a crucial part of the market - includes another subset, the "patrollers". A niche marketer, such as the Marketing Department of the College, which promotes the programme, is dedicated to identify individuals and companies among the group of early majority that are expected to support in the invasion to the big part of the market.

Such strategy helps in diffusing innovation and activates a series of links in the community that operate as intruders and opinion shapers. To be more specific, the Department has already planned to (a) identify, (b) target, and (c) select such entities (individuals and companies) in all South-East European (SEE) markets in order to bring them closer to the philosophy of the programme.

In terms of targeting, there is a standard series of questions which responds each time to the crucial decision of entering in a market, or not. Each question, according to Ruskin (1999) needs to be weighted accordingly.

- What is the market worth now?
- What could it be worth in the future?
- Where is the market on its life cycle?
- How competitive will the company be in the new market?
- What are the barriers to entry (old and new markets)?

We could add though in the above, a sixth element and this is "how effectively can we communicate our service to the target". Despite this, there is a College general policy to apply niche marketing. As Blythe (2005) highlighted, this is usually single segment concentrated marketing. The niche marketer concentrates on being the very best within a single tiny segment. Thus, targeting is ultimately bended to this strategy. Nevertheless, achieving the right targeting policy is essential while doing niche marketing, as false decisions may easily out-market the service.

Regarding positioning, this is closely related to perceptions. On this occasion, it describes how potential students perceive the specific programme and in which position they have placed it in their perceptual map. On the other side, this defines College's decision to identify which position the specific programme wants to occupy in the specific segment.

Kotler and Armstrong (2006) introduced that a product's position is the way a product is defined by consumers on important attributes and the place the product occupies in consumers' minds relative to competing products. Another interesting approach was that of Keegan and Green (2003) who defined positioning as the process of developing strategies for "staking out turf" or "filling a slot" in the mind of target customers.

This statement of course involves the sense of implanting in the segment the unique and attractive attributes of the academic programme. On the same manner, we admit that College shows a global marketing attitude, as it continuously cultivates a global consumer culture positioning, among its members and potential students, meaning the development of a unique strong identity of belonging to a transnational community culture. This could be considered as a strong competitive advantage among others, towards competition.
3.2 Consumer Buying Behaviour

According to Cox (2004), consumer behaviour drives the development of marketing mixes. The College perceived early the cultural diversity of SEE markets and focused on developing skills and competences in all levels, in order to cope with this challenge. The next figure illustrates the strategic factors that comprised the marketing behaviour of the College as adapted from Bradley (2005).

![Cultural determinants of College's marketing behavior](image)

**Figure 5. Cultural determinants of College’s marketing behavior**

Furthermore, it was identified that three factors were crucial and seemed that formed the consumer behaviour, which in this case, corresponds to the candidate’s choice for education. These are: (a) personal factors, (b) psychological factors, and (c) social factors or reference groups.

3.3 The Seven Ps

3.3.1 Product (Service)

As mentioned in the programme’s handbook (Computer Science Department, 2010), it aims to prepare students for management roles in any type of organization. This is achieved through examining cutting-edge and emerging ICT (Information & Communication Technologies) that enable and support business processes and innovation. In addition, through the combination with a strategic, management-focused approach, the MSc in Business Management & Technology intends to build the necessary knowledge and skills that drive effective strategic management. Moreover, it enables students to become innovative business leaders in today’s technology-driven and global competitive marketplace. To be more precise, according to Hatziapostolou (2011), the programme aims to develop hybrid skills in order for the students to cope with changes through innovation. Moreover, it requires critical ability from the students in order to integrate the knowledge derived from the modules.

The curriculum of the programme is given right below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module name</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship and Innovation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Society and ICT Policy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT for Strategic Management</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Knowledge-Driven ICT Projects</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Strategic Change</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-networked Business Enterprises</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Technologies for Innovation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation Management and New Product Development</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, there is a “Bridging Unit” which aims to prepare and synchronize students from different disciplines. This takes place prior to the first module and affects positively the students since it introduces them in the philosophy of what follows (Hatziapostolou, 2011).

In brief, approaching the academic programme as a service offered to students, this aims:

- To provide an innovative, multidisciplinary and rigorous curriculum in business management and innovation;
- To develop knowledge and skills to tackle management challenges and seize business opportunities;
- To enable students to identify, assess, and communicate the strategic competitive advantages enabled by information technology;
- To provide students with an understanding of communication and information professional and ethical issues in society and knowledge-based economies;
- To expose students to the major trends of globalization and technology integration that are shaping the business environment;

Such aims are performed through the teaching and learning methods, which are considered part of the service experience and besides that, is an integral part of the educational “product”.

Student learning experience consists of a variety of teaching and learning methods, which consequently defines the service’s framework and its diversity and mentality.

The programme utilises the following methods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small classes</th>
<th>Laboratory classes</th>
<th>Videos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interactive lectures</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra classes</td>
<td>Student conferences</td>
<td>Simulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest speakers</td>
<td>Debate sessions</td>
<td>Role playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel lecturing</td>
<td>Real life projects</td>
<td>Collaborative work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual tutoring</td>
<td>Company visits</td>
<td>On-line structured activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, the service includes a number of extracurricular activities which include formation of College Academic Clubs of various interests and participation in associations with scientific and professional background.

3.3.2 Place (Distribution)

The programme is currently offered in three cities (a) Thessaloniki, Greece, (b) Tirana, Albania and (c) Sofia, Bulgaria. Although originally it was offered in Thessaloniki, last year the Department decided to host the programme in the two other cities, through cooperation with reputable local Academic Institutions. On this occasion, the College managed to bring locally the opportunity for candidates to get this service experience and get advantage of acquiring one of the best degrees while living and working on their base country.

3.3.3 Price

Although education is an inelastic service, this corresponds mostly to the public and government-funded one. The private education is elastic and especially in Greece is a monopolistic oligopoly. Services that include a pro-longed experience, as in the case of education, incorporate a number of hidden costs which preserve high costs.

The College follows a combination of price skimming and psychological pricing. This strategy requires keeping close track on any changes in competition and observing students behaviour as potential customers. Also, it is needed to cultivate your strong brand and inspire high quality of your services. This is called prestige pricing (Blythe, 2005) and directed the College to be the price leader.

In addition the College offers a variety of Scholarships based on application’s credentials as well as a number of fee-waivers. This is due to the price-adjustments pricing policy it follows, according to circumstances and changes in the environment. Such price adjustments are discounts and allowances. Moreover, for alumni that decide to continue their studies in another programme
there are certain discounts which fit to the so-called quantity discounts pricing policy (Kotler et al., 2005).

3.3.4 Promotion

The College does not follow the same promotion strategy for each market. As a result, the marcom tools used are diversified according to the local market’s attributes. Birnin and Bowman (2007) named that strategy as marketing mix regionalization or clustering. Clustering is a generic strategy which compromises with localization and standardization, two other generic strategies. Localization is suitable for customer-based marketing strategies, while standardization may accommodate cost-based competition and innovation-based strategies.

According to Kapnopoulou (2011), the Marketing Manager of the College, the advertising policy is to focus mostly in the College name rather than specifying in a programme. For that reason, more budgets are dedicated to advertising media that promote the whole list of academic programmes offered in each market. Under circumstances, it is possible to promote separately an academic programme, mostly when it is introduced for the first time. Besides that, this policy is related to literature where, as Carpenter and Lehmann (1985) stated, the advertising of a service strengthens the overall brand name attraction.

The Marketing Department do focus on AIDA model (Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action) and such actions are combined with investment on almost all promotional tools (PENCILS: Publications, Events, News, Community involvement activities, Identity media, Lobbying activities, Social responsibility activities and Social media and networking).

According to Grove et al. (2000) services experience could be compared with the elements of a theatrical production, since human factor plays a significant role in this framework. Education, demonstrates the characteristics of a service experience. Rafiq and Ahmed (1995) researched the 7Ps model, which beyond the 4Ps introduces the elements of participants, physical evidence and process. Booms and Bitner (1981) presented many years earlier, the 7Ps model especially modified for services where special emphasis given in the human factor.

3.3.5 People (Participants)

People are the only significant P that points the difference between tangibility and intangibility in the service marketing. As people, in this case, we may consider academic staff which delivers the modules but also the students who participate. In education, such as in other “high contact” services, there is a simultaneous production and consumption. This, by itself, creates a human-centred system which influences the perceptions of students by defining a quality framework.

Furthermore, the administrative staff is considered as participants, since they contribute to the maintenance and support of the environment in order for the teaching and learning methods to take place. Also the Computer Science Department which offers the programme, utilises joint forces from internal permanent academic staff, external visiting lecturers from industry, alumni and other experts. The College invests in its staff continuously through a specific scheme which among others includes: (a) encouragement of people to participate in joint European programmes, (b) organising of conferences and publications, (c) research, (d) sabbaticals, (e) support of academic development of its staff etc.

3.3.6 Process

The academic and administrative procedures that define the educational framework of the programme may be considered as the process. Among other procedures, the Department offers a pastoral support to the students of the programme which is consisted of a combination of: (a) tutoring, (b) advising, (c) chat sessions through an internal on-line system, (d) skype office hours and (e) intensive dissertation supervision (Sotiriadou, 2011).

Internally the Department applies continuous academic staff moderation in order to enhance communication among staff and students. Furthermore, new digital education platforms are introduced for improving the academic process (Claroline, Elluminate, etc.)

The above are not simply processes but part of the offered experience to the students. Actually, these are elements of the augmented service, which brings value-added benefits and creates a sustainable competitive advantage for the institution.

3.3.7 Physical Presence or evidence

As physical presence, could be considered all tangible goods that facilitate the run of the programme in all markets of SEE. Specifically, this refers to the environment that the service experience takes place and provides the instruments, accessories, academic tools, premises etc.
for the performance and the implementation of the programme. The College offers the master programme in high quality fully-equipped premises in all countries, as this is considered part of the educational service, according to its philosophy and strategy.

The effect of location is relative to other marketing factors as well as to the financial flexibility of an organization (Lai and Poon, 2009). In addition, the physical environment and in extent the place where the studying experience takes place is extremely important and acts as a key service component. Actually, the “servicescape role” in student’s purchase decision process is the ultimate mean which marketers should focus and can build bulk of campaigns upon it (Hightower et al., 2002).

3.4 Why the College followed this mix?

The College follows this mix mainly for two reasons. Because it has a strategic plan and mission to work and invest on (a) brand equity, and (b) student loyalty.

Consequently, the marketing mix elements, as described above, were derivatives of strategic choice which the College followed by foreseeing, on the one side, the value of early investment in the dimensions of brand equity while on the other side, perceiving the strong influence of overall customer-student loyalty.

As Chattopadhyay et al. (2010) presented in their study, the marketing mix elements are strongly related to the overall brand equity of an organisation. Therefore, College got a competitive advantage through this mix as it provided a framework where “students-customers” spread a positive word-of-mouth, which in return is considered a determinant of brand equity. Besides that, word-of-mouth could be considered, by itself, as a marketing mix element, impacting the equity and choice of final customers-students. Moreover, in services marketing, like in education experience, this could work more effective versus advertising frequency.

Actually, the College follows a model, as given below, which defines the environment of repeating customers and in extent a repeating value.

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**Figure 6. Conceptual Framework of Brand Equity**


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Another important study on branding of Lencaster and Corte-Real (2010) introduced an innovative model which actually is a three-pillar approach that defines the three dimensions of the brand for a company. In the next figure we present it. It is an attempt to describe the different components of the brand and their interactions.
In the same manner, a clear orientation in cultivating a customer loyalty, proved to be a comparative advantage which besides that, discourages competition to advance. Furthermore, according to Hu (2009), an aggressive marketing mix especially in the elements of price and promotion increases customer loyalty. In addition, a training plan for employees focusing in increasing the service quality may be proved not enough unless it incorporates a strong dedication to promote customer loyalty. To achieve that, human capital of the College is recommended to adopt a more attentive personal profile.

However, the continuous efforts both in brand equity and student loyalty, seems to provide a certain framework which is used to comply with future uncertainties, in terms of market evolution. Such strategic choices, has proved throughout the years, that embraced uncertainty rather than avert changes and risk.

Summing up the description of the marketing mix adopted by the College, it is clear that it has a global strategic attitude, which derives from all the mix elements as well as the reasons of adopting this mix as explained in the previous paragraphs. This high quality of the mix enhances performance and this is done also through an extensive export planning (Shoham and Kropp, 1998). Therefore, the College maintains a strong channel of communication among its markets and segments which reveals possible premium opportunities.

Furthermore, there are elements of internal marketing which are present to foster the service quality culture. The College and the Department of Computer Science follows a five-factor benchmarking to identify the level of service quality: (a) reliability, (b) assurance, (c) tangibles, (d) empathy, and (e) responsiveness (Alexandris et al., 2002).

According to Chen and Green (2009) marketing mix, brand equity and loyalty are strictly linked and interrelated so as to interact and define the broader marketing plan.

4. PROPOSALS ON THE MARKETING MIX

The aim in this section is not to suggest changes in the established marketing mix, described in previous sections. On the contrary, through literature review and empirical analysis, followed by the interviews of the staff members involved, it is considered more valuable to reveal a number of tools that could help the Marketing department of the institution to embrace uncertainty through scenario planning. Therefore, through digging-up of literature and identifying current weaknesses, the marketing mix could be flexibly adapted according to changes.

A synthesis of SWOT and PESTEL analysis, continuously identifying changes and serve scenario-planning, could contribute in the selection of appropriate marketing mix for each academic programme including the one in current study. As Arora et al. (2008) stated, the tailoring of a firm's
marketing mix to the individual customer is the essence of one-to-one marketing. Furthermore, as Carpenter and Lehmann (1985) asserted, there is always a way to gain significant new insights in investigating the impact of marketing mix in terms of competition and market structure. It is necessary for a firm to develop a marketing mix variables model, which should be used to identify the changes in the environment and feedback the next mix ingredients.

Providing education is an experience which includes not only academic advancement for the student, but cultural enrichment, as well as a building personality framework. Furthermore, this experience has strong characteristics of variety, diversity and daily differentiations, which turns it to a challenge. This, by itself is an integrated value chain for the student, which according to Birnik and Bowman (2007), should be researched in order for the institution to understand the relationship between the student’s experience and the operational delivery.

Technology on the other hand, through recent tools can help the College to acquire a full and updated profile for each student from the starting status as a candidate throughout the duration of his/her studies. Such choice could contribute in the application of both personalization and customization as a marketing practice. According to Arora et al. (2008) the services industry has made ample use of personalization. Below is given an illustration of the relation among personalization and customization in terms of degree segmentation.

Moreover, Waterschoot and Van den Bulte (1992) have introduced a revised Marketing Mix which emphasizes in the communication. Actually this alternative mix focuses on personalization, since it is built on the determination and judgement of marketing instruments to be used according to consumer’s behaviour. It is considered significant for this study to give this revised mix in Appendix F.

Personalization is expected to create a higher sense of student’s satisfaction although it hides two weaknesses for the College and these are the issue of privacy and the high cost to maintain such a system for attracting candidates and keeping track of their personal characteristics.

Besides that, Relationship Marketing, although a questionable dominant paradigm, correlates personalization with organizational structure. On the other side, it identifies a sustainable functionality of marketing as a driving force owed to the management of relationships (Harker and Egan, 2006). If such paradigm will be adopted, it is expected to increase competitiveness and unpack the so-called relationships’ “black box” usually among staff and customers.

In Appendix G, is given a table which illustrates the contextual factors that influence marketing mix standardization. This is due to fact that standardization benefits organizations to acquire clarity on their strategic objectives and a more effective decision process. Likewise, the decision of adopting higher marketing mix standardization versus a lower one could be supported by the model as given in Appendix H. This model helps marketing department to establish a global planning process which is important for further actions (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1999).
A thorough analysis on the triangle of Students-Competitors-College’s strengths should be coordinated in terms of identifying which is the most advantageous mix element and investigate how its impact could be reinforced and multiplied. An orchestrated effort of combining the other elements could be done in order to highlight and reveal the specific’s element features.

To achieve ubiquity, is questionable, since in education it might not be of a strategic choice. But, in any case, a fluid marketing mix adapted to ubiquity, implies responses to dynamic changes and sustainability for the programme. As Cox (2004) verified, a marketing mix is reactive as the organization tries to adapt its existing services to the demands of a ubiquitous market. In the end, the organization acts proactively since it experiences a pressure for being innovative in its effort to carve out marketing niches.

CONCLUSIONS

According to Graham (2008), all marketing tactics are temporary while the marketing itself is essentially experimental. Consequently, marketing mix is fluid and most probably requires a quiver of tactics rather than a standard set of procedures. Based on fact that the only expert is the student, the hype tension may direct to disorientation. On the other hand, focus on real needs, not necessarily high-leveled ones, could direct out of sidelines.

Positioning a service is more difficult than positioning a product because of the need to communicate vague and intangible benefits (Blankson and Kalafatis, 1999).

Education is a service experience which incorporates its own attributes. Current epoch, actually a transitional one, where the dominant idea is the restructuring, full of uncertainty, education needs to define its own paradigm. The marketing mix needs to serve a standard form of solutions to problems. In such a case, it would be widely accepted as an innovative perspective giving value and creating opportunities both ways for students and the College.

The proposed scheme of personalization and one-to-one marketing throughout the studying experience of the student, although costly, is expected to reinforce both student loyalty and re-capitalize brand equity. Moreover if used in combination with the rest of strategic elements already discussed in this study such as the SWOT analysis, the PEST framework, will make the College and the other two Departments involved, capable of keeping up with tracks and changes in advance.

According to Fisher (1991), service marketers must have a good understanding of their special competitive situation to achieve long-term competitive advantage.

Furthermore, current trends in competition encrypt a new challenge. Students as consumers are not simply participating but they are involved in the education experience. Therefore, should be serviced under their multiple roles of consumer and competitor as well.

Also, may be the time to transfer the commercial marketing tactics to a social marketing framework, since in our case, where education is the object, this could be adapted more easily. Since the core concept of marketing is exchanging of values between two parties (Kotler, 1972), this is an opportunity for the College to ingrain its marketing mix elements in all levels with a long-term relationship approach. Such a move is expected to create growth for the College through interaction and relationships concern.

This study, as stated earlier, attempts to reveal with the help of literature review a number of tools that could be adopted by the College Management team in terms of marketing planning for the specific academic programme, and for others as well.

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APPENDIX A

SWOT Analysis of the “MSc in Business Management & Technology”

"MSc in Business Management & Technology" SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS
- No other similar programme run in the region.
- A programme offered by a top-class University (strong brand).
- The College has a unique academic experience as an International Faculty of the University.
- High-rated staff.
- Great achievements in research.
- The College has significant prior experience in running programmes
- High entrepreneurial spirit and innovation-oriented strategies.

WEAKNESSES
- Academic community may not realize its learning outcomes easily.
- It may be difficult to communicate it in the candidate students.
- It blends two different sectors.

OPPORTUNITIES
- SEE countries are under continuous changes in all macro parameters.
- There is a niche market of candidates who pursue high career opportunities and are willing to invest in their education and training.
- Regular students and executives are re-considering their educational backgrounds.

THREATS
- Direct and Indirect competitors are expected to make their move, especially the ones that have knowledge in relevant sectors.
- Environments and markets may not be ready to accept it.
APPENDIX B

The Micro-Environment of the College

The Micro Environment

- Academic Administrative staff
- Students
- Shareholders
- Suppliers
- Competitors
- Media

The College
APPENDIX C

The Macro-Environment of the College (PEST Analysis)

PEST Analysis

Political-Legal Environment
- The College is a self-financing, self-managing institution with focus in high-entrepreneurial achievements.
- Legislation in Greece adapts to European standards and this creates new opportunities for further expansion.
- There is a changing environment in SEE countries in terms of development.

Economic Environment
- Economic crisis and its impact both in region and global level.
- Open local markets to SEE countries.

Socio-Cultural Environment
- Change of living standards and trends.
- Diversity of demographics in SEE countries.
- Change in laws in the area affects social culture.
- Changes in occupations and job growth.
- Changes in education system.
- Change of attitudes.

Technological Environment
- Information & Communication Technologies.
- Innovation potentials.
- Inventions.
- Access to new technologies.
- Licensing, patents, research.
### APPENDIX D

**Review of Services Marketing Literature (taxonomy)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Arguments</th>
<th>Proposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Booms and Bitner 1981 | Recognizing the special character of the services as products, they demonstrated the importance of Environmental factors (Physical Evidence) influencing the quality perception. They included the Participants (personnel and customers) and the Process of service delivery as the additional Marketing Mix factors. | The Services Marketing Mix includes next to the 4Ps three more Ps:  
  - Participants  
  - Physical Evidence  
  - Process |
| Cowell 1984 | Three aspects justifying the revision of the Marketing mix framework:  
  - the original mix was developed for manufacturing companies  
  - empirical evidence suggesting that marketing practitioners in the service sector find the marketing mix not being inclusive enough for their needs | Adopts the framework proposed by Booms and Bitner |
| Brunner 1989 | The 4P Marketing mix elements must be extended to include more factors affecting the services marketing thus becoming mixes themselves. | o Concept Mix  
  - Cost Mix  
  - Channels Mix  
  - Communication Mix |
| Ruston and Carson 1989 | The unique characteristics of the services-intangibility, inseparability, perishability and variability- make the control of the marketing process, using the generalized tools of marketing, inadequate. | New instruments and concepts must be developed to explain and manage the services intangibility |
| Fryar 1991 | Segmentation and differentiation is the basis of successful positioning services. Furthermore the personal relationship with the customer and the quality of the service are important elements of the services Marketing. | The Marketing of services requires:  
  - Differentiation based on segmentation and positioning  
  - Customer contact  
  - Unique vision on quality |
| Heuvel 1993 | Interaction between the one delivering the service and the customer is very important and has direct effect on the service quality and quality perception. The Product element can be better demonstrated as having two components, the primary and secondary service elements as well as the process. | The Services Marketing Mix:  
  - Personnel  
  - Product  
  - Place  
  - Price  
  - Promotion |
| Doyle 1994 | While recognizing that the content of the 4Ps in the service sector is somehow different from that of the tangibles he does accept the 4Ps as the elements of the services marketing mix. He identifies special difficulties in Promotion and Place preferring to replace them by the terms Communication and Distribution. | Services Marketing Mix:  
  - Product  
  - Price  
  - Communication  
  - Distribution |
| Melewar, Saunders 2000 | The Corporate Visual Identity System (CVIS) is the basis of the corporate differentiation and the core of the company’s visual identity. | A new P must be added in the 4Ps of the Marketing Mix (and the 3Ps of the Services Mix) namely the  
  - Publications |
| English 2000 | The traditional Marketing has never been an effective tool for health services marketing. | A new framework emerges, emphasizing the 4Rs:  
  - Relevance  
  - Response  
  - Relationships  
  - Results |
| Grove et al., 2000 | Services Marketing can be compared to a theatrical production. How the service is performed is as important as what is performed. Critical factor is therefore the customer experience. The traditional Marketing Mix does not adequately capture the special circumstances that are present when marketing a service product. | Four strategic theatrical elements constitute the Services Experience:  
  - Actors  
  - Audience  
  - Setting  
  - Performance  
  These elements must be added to the extended services Marketing Mix model of Booms en Bitner. |
| Beckwith 2001 | Marketing services in a changing world requires focusing on increasing the customer satisfaction and rejecting old product paradigms and marketing fallacies. | The four keys of Modern (services) Marketing  
  - Price  
  - Brand  
  - Packaging  
  - Relationships |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of service</th>
<th>Marketing implications</th>
<th>Positioning tactics and strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intangibility</td>
<td>Sampling difficulty</td>
<td>Focus on benefits and attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strain on promotional</td>
<td>Increase tangibility of service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>element of marketing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No patents possible</td>
<td>Use brand names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to judge</td>
<td>Use personalities to personalise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>price and quality in</td>
<td>service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>advance</td>
<td>Develop reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inseparability</td>
<td>Requires presence of</td>
<td>Learn to work in larger groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>producer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct sale</td>
<td>Work faster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited scale of</td>
<td>Train more service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>operations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterogeneity</td>
<td>Standard depends on</td>
<td>Careful personnel selection and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>who and when provided</td>
<td>training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to assure</td>
<td>Ensure standards are monitored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>quality</td>
<td>Pre-package service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasise bespoke features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perishability</td>
<td>Cannot be stored</td>
<td>Match supply and demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem with demand</td>
<td>effectively (e.g. reduce prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fluctuations</td>
<td>during off-peak)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Customer has access to</td>
<td>Stress advantages of non-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>but not ownership of</td>
<td>ownership (e.g. permit easier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>service activity or</td>
<td>payment system)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardisation</td>
<td>Difficulty in</td>
<td>Create uniformity. Instil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>consistency of service</td>
<td>company’s ethos in personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An improved classification of the Marketing Mix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Mix</th>
<th>Product Mix</th>
<th>Price Mix</th>
<th>Distribution Mix</th>
<th>Mass Communication Mix</th>
<th>Personal Communication Mix</th>
<th>Publicity Mix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Mix</td>
<td>Basic Product Mix</td>
<td>Basic Price Mix</td>
<td>Basic Distribution Mix</td>
<td>Basic Mass Communication Mix</td>
<td>Basic Personal Communication Mix</td>
<td>Basic Publicity Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instruments that mainly aim at the satisfaction of the prospective exchange party’s needs</td>
<td>Instruments that mainly fix the size and the way of payment exchanged for the goods or services</td>
<td>Instruments that mainly determine the intensity and manner of how the goods or services will be made available</td>
<td>Non-personal communication efforts that mainly aim at announcing the offer or maintaining awareness and knowledge about it; evoking or maintaining favorable feelings and removing barriers to wanting</td>
<td>Personal communication efforts that mainly aim at announcing the offer or maintaining awareness and knowledge about it; evoking or maintaining favorable feelings and removing barriers to wanting</td>
<td>Efforts that aim at inclining a third party (persons and authorities) to favorable communication about the offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion Mix</td>
<td>Product Promotion Mix</td>
<td>Price Promotion Mix</td>
<td>Distribution Promotion Mix</td>
<td>Mass Communication Promotion Mix</td>
<td>Personal Communication Promotion Mix</td>
<td>Publicity Promotion Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic product mix during relatively short periods of time</td>
<td>Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic price mix during relatively short periods of time</td>
<td>Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic distribution mix during relatively short periods of time</td>
<td>Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic mass communication mix during relatively short periods of time</td>
<td>Supplementary group of instruments that mainly aim at inducing immediate overt behavior by strengthening the basic publicity mix during relatively short periods of time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g.: product characteristics options, assortment, brand name, packaging, quantity, factory guarantee</td>
<td>e.g.: list price, usual terms of payment, usual discounts, terms of credit, long-term savings campaigns</td>
<td>e.g.: different types of distribution channels, density of the distribution system, trade relation mix (policy of margins, terms of delivery, etc.) merchandising advise</td>
<td>e.g.: theme-advertising in various media, permanent exhibitions, certain forms of sponsoring</td>
<td>e.g.: amount and type of selling, personal remunerations</td>
<td>e.g.: press bulletins, press conferences, tours by journalists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g.: economy packs, 3-for-the-price-of-2 deals etc.; temporary luxury options on a car at the price of its standard model</td>
<td>e.g.: exceptionally favorable price, end-of-season sales, exceptionally favorable terms of payment and credit, short-term savings campaigns, temporary discounts, coupons</td>
<td>e.g.: extra point of purchase material, trade promotions such as buying allowances, sales contests, etc.; temporary increase of the number of distribution points</td>
<td>e.g.: action advertising, contests, sweepstakes, samples, premiums, trade shows or exhibitions</td>
<td>e.g.: temporary demonstrations, sales-force promotions such as sales-force contests etc.</td>
<td>e.g.: all measures to stimulate positive publicity about a sales promotion action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### APPENDIX G

**Contextual factors that influence the Marketing Mix Standardization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stronger evidence</th>
<th>Weaker evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>More standardization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Less standardization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Industrial products</td>
<td>• Consumer products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High-tech products</td>
<td>• High local competitive intensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Market similarities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Products in same stage in PLC</td>
<td>• Products used at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fully owned subsidiaries</td>
<td>• Culture bound products</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | |
| • Essential products | • Direct entry modes |
| • Luxury products | • Local in-country production |
| • Indirect entry modes | • Customer-based strategy |
| • Parent and subsidiary have similar competitive positions | | |
| • High degree of communication between parent and subsidiary | • Size of local market |
| • Foreign operations centralized in an international division | • Country of origin of parent company |
| • Strategy based on either (a) cost-based competition or (b) product-innovation oriented | • International experience of parent |
| • Centralization in decision-making | | |

APPENDIX H

Marketing Mix standardization in multinational corporations: Summary model