

Relationship Marketing Strategies for Attracting Students in Higher Education Institutions

Relationship Marketing Strategies for Student Recruitment in Higher Education Institutions

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Summary

With increasing competition in the Higher Education market, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) face significant challenges in attracting and retaining students. This chapter explores relationship marketing strategies as a crucial approach to attracting and retaining students. The decisive factors in choosing a higher education course, the challenges faced by HEIs and recommendations to improve their student prospecting and retention practices are analyzed.

Key words: Relationship marketing, Higher Education, Student recruitment.

Abstract

With increasing competition in the Higher Education market, institutions face significant challenges in attracting and retaining students. This chapter explores relationship marketing strategies as a crucial approach to attract and maintain students. It examines key factors influencing the choice of a higher education program, challenges faced by institutions, and recommendations to enhance their student recruitment and retention practices.

Keywords: Relationship marketing, Higher Education, Student recruitment.

Introduction

With growing competition in the Higher Education market, it is imperative to establish strategies that analyze candidate behavior, understanding their perspectives, desires and the decisive factors in choosing a higher education course. Customer satisfaction, in this context, depends on the external perception of the educational institution and the tools it offers to face market demands.

Given this scenario, it is essential that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) seek new approaches to prospecting students. This chapter's general objective is to present and analyze relationship marketing strategies for prospecting students in HEIs, highlighting their importance for attracting and retaining customers in the educational environment.

The specific objectives include identifying the main relationship marketing strategies applicable to higher education, analyzing their effectiveness in prospecting and retaining students, investigating the challenges and opportunities faced by HEIs in implementing these strategies, and proposing recommendations to improve relationship marketing practices. relationships in institutions.

Despite the increase in the number of HEIs in Brazil, especially distance learning ones, many face difficulties in attracting and retaining students due to growing competition. The lack of effective prospecting strategies can result in low recruitment and high dropout rates, compromising the financial sustainability and reputation of institutions.

As editor-in-chief of a scientific publishing house and magazine, I witness up close the challenges faced by higher education in Brazil. Prospecting students is a central issue for HEIs, being related to their survival and success in the educational market. Implementing relationship marketing strategies can be an effective solution to this problem, promoting student engagement and building lasting relationships.

This chapter is relevant given the urgency for HEIs to develop effective prospecting strategies to stand out in a competitive market. The recommendations and analyzes presented can provide information for managers and professionals in the educational sector, contributing to the improvement of student recruitment and retention processes, and to the quality and sustainability of higher education institutions in Brazil.

The methodology used involves bibliographical research, using books, peer-reviewed articles and official documents to address the theme of this chapter.

1 Market Segmentation: Strategies for Business Success

Market segmentation is the process of dividing a market into distinct segments based on predominant customer characteristics (Mafra et al., 2023). According to Ribeiro and Sobreira (2023), segmenting the market means creating subsets of consumers based on their needs and characteristics. This practice is an essential strategic tool that

facilitates penetration into established markets, allowing customers to gain preference for certain brands and helping to face competition.

Mintzberg (2000) defines a company's strategy as a pattern of behavior over time, reflected in a consistent set of decisions. In this way, market segmentation allows companies to focus their marketing efforts on specific targets.

It is recognized that it is not possible to satisfy all consumers in a market in the same way, which highlights the importance of segmentation. Through segmentation, the company can develop specific products for each segment, more precisely meeting the needs of different groups of consumers (Gouveia, 2021).

Kotler (2008) clarifies that market segmentation is the recognition that each market is made up of distinct segments, each with different needs, purchasing styles and responses to variations in supply. He states that no single offering will satisfy all buyers, and each segment represents a unique opportunity. Therefore, the company must study opportunities in different market sectors before positioning itself.

To segment a market effectively, it is crucial that the administrator considers consumer behavior, their desires, needs, motivations and the benefits they seek. Segmentation is based on product characteristics, consumer lifestyle and other factors that influence consumption (Porto, 2023). According to Cobra (2009, p. 278),

The market is made up of buyers, and these buyers are individualized in tastes and preferences. Identifying buyers with homogeneous purchasing behaviors is the challenge of market segmentation." This means that segmentation must be accurate and reflect consumers' true characteristics and behaviors.

Segmentation can reveal specific characteristics of a target audience, identifying market niches (Porto, 2023). A niche is a subdivision of a market segment, made up of a group of customers who seek a mix of distinct benefits and differentiated products. Companies specialized in specific products serve market segments that need or want these products (Ribeiro; Sobreira, 2023).

Ferrell (2000, p. 93) points out that the idea of niche marketing is a market concentration strategy, focusing efforts on a small, well-defined segment with specific needs. Hooley, Saunders and Piercy (2001, p. 306) highlight that "a characteristic of successful niche explorers is their ability to creatively segment the market, identifying new and potential niches, undetected by competitors".

Kotler (2008, p. 226) simplifies this concept, defining niche as "a more restricted group of buyers, a small market whose needs are not being well met". According to Kotler (2008), companies find market niches by dividing a segment into subsegments or by aligning distinct characteristics of groups, seeking a special combination of benefits. The biggest advantage of this strategy is finding a specific segment where the company can apply its skills in a superior way.

In this way, market segmentation and niche identification are interconnected practices that allow companies to offer products and services that best meet the specific needs of their consumers, thus ensuring greater efficiency and effectiveness in their marketing actions (Freitas, 2017).

The following table presents the possibilities for market segmentation.

MODALITIES	CRITERIA
Geographic	Potential market extension, geographic concentration, transportation and access, polarization, neighborhoods and streets, traffic, shopping centers.
Demographic	Age, sex, home, family, life cycle (young, adult, elderly)
Socioeconomic	Income class, education, occupation, status, migration, social mobility
Consumption Patterns	Purchase frequency, place of purchase, brand loyalty, Heavy & Light Users, ABC Curve
Benefits Wanted	Satisfaction, prestige Social, Emulation-Price Favorable, Quality/Durability, Cost Reduction, Customer Service/Service
Life styles	Life Expectancy, use of time, predominant interests, participation in events and social groups, use of money, friendships and personal relationships
Personality	Cultural bases, attitudes and values, leadership, change agents
Description Economic	Activity sector, company size, competitors' performance, accessibility, Usus and Applications, purchasing decision unit, derived demand

Table 1 – Possibilities for market segmentation. Source: Lima and Richers, 1991

Geographic segmentation divides a global market into homogeneous groups and is used in conjunction with other types of segmentation. Companies can choose to operate in one or more geographic markets (Gouveia, 2021).

Demographic segmentation is one of the most popular, as consumer needs and wants vary with demographic changes. Companies segment a market based on two or more variables, such as gender and age. Socioeconomic segmentation, also known as psychographic, segments the market according to social class, income or occupation (Ribeiro; Sobreira, 2023).

These three segmentations – geographic, demographic and socioeconomic – are used by companies because they complement each other and do not require extensive field research, as the

Data can be obtained from secondary sources. On the other hand, segmentations based on consumption patterns, lifestyle, benefits sought or personality require field research, which requires more labor. Although they are less used, these segmentations are efficient (Mafra et al., 2023).

Market segmentation aims to group individuals whose responses to marketing efforts are similar, allowing companies to select the most convenient segments to focus their efforts on, thus increasing competitiveness in relation to competitors (Porto, 2023).

Customer satisfaction, as defined by Kotler (2008), is the feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing the perceived performance of a product or service with the buyer's expectations. If performance meets expectations, the customer will be satisfied; if it exceeds expectations, the customer will be satisfied or delighted.

Consumers create expectations based on previous experiences or recommendations from friends, relatives or neighbors (Mafra et al., 2023). According to Kotler (2008), when creating high expectations, a company runs the risk of not being able to meet them. He states that customer satisfaction comes from using relationship marketing to build a long-term bond.

Las Casas (2017) observes that high competition in the market and growing consumer demands are factors that lead companies to increasingly worry about customer satisfaction. However, few companies are able to satisfy their customers efficiently, often due to cultural factors that make it difficult to implement customer-centered administrative techniques.

Menshhein (2007) believes that adequate service is not limited to delivering the product or performing the service. The relationship established between the company and the customer, through correct service, can generate many opportunities. Good service is the first step towards establishing lasting relationships, favoring the creation of emotional bonds between the company and its customers. Therefore, market segmentation and customer satisfaction are interdependent, and both are crucial to the success and competitiveness of companies.

2 Evolution of Marketing: From the Industrial Revolution to Relationship Marketing

Marketing can be observed throughout the history of humanity, even without its current name, and has evolved, becoming essential in modern life. Kotler (2008, p.

27) defines marketing as "a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and exchanging products of value with others". To better understand the concept of marketing, it is useful to take a brief historical tour.

The need to study the market arose with the new reality brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Marketing focused on maximizing profits, without facing competition, and consumers had little negotiating power (Camargo, 2006). After the Second World War, with increased competition, studies began aimed at attracting and dealing with consumers (Gouveia, 2021).

This period, known as the era of sales at any price, made professionals in the field look bad, as they used any method, including deceiving customers, to make a sale. Salespeople at that time relied more on intuition than on professional techniques (Ribeiro; Sobreira, 2023).

According to Nickels and Wood (1999, p. 4), in 1948, the American Marketing Association (AMA) defined marketing as "the performance of business activities directed at the flow of goods and services from the producer to the consumer or user". In the 1950s, Peter Drucker released the first book that presented marketing as a powerful tool, entitled "The Practice of Marketing".

In the 1960s, Theodore Levitt, considered the "father of marketing", published the article "Marketing Myopia", which revolutionized the field by showing the importance of customer satisfaction. In the same decade, Philip Kotler launched the first edition of his book "Administração de Marketing" (Porto, 2023).

Still in 1960, Jerome McCarthy formulated the concept of marketing mix in the book "Basic Marketing". Known as the "four p's" (4P's: Price, Product, Promotion and Place), this concept addresses a set of interests that organizations must pay attention to in order to achieve their marketing objectives. Doyle (2005, p. 203) highlights that "managing the marketing mix is the fundamental task of marketing professionals".

Kotler (2008, p. 38) explains that "the 4P's represent the vision that the selling company has of the marketing tools available to influence buyers". According to him, these variables include: Product (variety, quality, design, features, brand name, packaging, sizes, services, guarantees and returns), Price (list price, discounts, concessions, payment term, financing conditions), Promotion (sales promotion, advertising, sales force, public relations, direct marketing) and Place (channels, coverage, varieties, locations, inventory, transportation).

In the second half of the 20th century, marketing established itself as crucial for the development of companies, with its functions being expanded. In the 1970s, marketing became essential for the survival of companies, and this need increased even more in the 1980s (Ribeiro; Sobreira, 2023). In 1985, the AMA redefined marketing as "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives."

With technological advancement and the use of the internet in the 1990s, customers became more informed and demanding, expanding the field of marketing (Mafra et al., 2023). This period also saw the emergence of Social Marketing, which links consumer satisfaction and public opinion to the responsible conduct of companies (Freitas, 2017).

In the 2000s, marketing focused on consumers, who now have greater bargaining power and access to information, changing the way consumers and companies interact (Camargo, 2006). New forms of marketing have emerged, such as Permission Marketing by Seth Godin, Word-of-Mouth Marketing by George Silverman, Buzzmarketing and Viral Marketing by authors such as Russell Goldsmith and Mark Hughes, each with their specific strategies to engage customers. consumers and spread messages effectively.

The following table summarizes the evolution of marketing in history:

IT WAS	PERIOD APPROXIMATE TIME	IN	PREDOMINANT ATTITUDE
Production	Before the 1920s		"A good product will sell itself."
Sales	Before the 1950s		"Creative advertising and selling will overcome consumer resistance and convince them to buy"
Marketing	1950s and 1960s – Mass 1970s – Segmentation 1980s – Niche 1990s – Client		"The consumer is king! Look for a need and satisfy it."
Relationship	1990s and 21st Century		"Understand your consumer's needs and manage your relationship with them"

Table 2 – Marketing throughout history. Source: adapted from Boone and Kurtz (1998, p.7); Rapp and Collins (1996, p. 252)

In the 21st century, traditional marketing, which is concerned with acquiring customers and obtaining short-term profits, has become inefficient (Porto, 2023). It is essential to build

lasting customer relationships to achieve sustainable profits. Companies, therefore, need to not only win new customers, but also anticipate their desires and needs to satisfy them, thus ensuring their loyalty and increasing market share (Ribeiro; Sobreira, 2023).

Las Casas (2017) emphasizes that one of the main elements of marketing is consumer orientation. Directing all marketing activity to satisfy customers in a specific market is the key to the success of any enterprise. This evolution of marketing, which has become increasingly present in people's lives, highlights the importance of continuous learning with customers so that companies can maintain their competitiveness.

Establishing a relationship with a customer, however, is no easy task. This demands a long process that requires commitment from the entire company and whose results are seen in the long term. However, such results are effective, in a market full of similar products, where companies' main weapon is to seek customer satisfaction to build loyalty. In this context, Relationship Marketing presents itself as a crucial tool (Gouveia, 2021).

Gaining market endorsement is vital to success. Market positioning is determined in part by the perceptions of the people who are part of the infrastructure. (Porto, 2023). Credibility is fundamental in the positioning process (Mafra et al., 2023). McKenna (1997) states that, with the number of new products and technologies available, consumers feel intimidated by the decision process, often unaware of the technologies used in the products.

To establish a solid position in the market, organizations need to create images of credibility, leadership and quality, offering not only products or services that meet customers' needs and desires, but also protection and security. Relationship Marketing is essential for developing leadership, consumer loyalty and rapid acceptance of new products and services (Luna, 2023).

The management of organizations is essential for the success of a company, with its quality being decisive for business performance. Management focused on customer relationships emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a tool to make companies more competitive (Freitas, 2017).

Stone and Woodcock (1998) elucidate that Customer Relationship Marketing Management is relevant for business administration, based on action planning and

strategies linked to information technology and oriented towards customer satisfaction and loyalty, providing a sustainable competitive advantage.

Professionals responsible for Relationship Marketing Management must focus on adding value to products and services, enabling customer recognition and differentiation (Freitas, 2017). It is noteworthy that all aspects of Relationship Marketing Management, such as strategies, databases, procedures, partnerships and channels, are essential for building and maintaining the relationship between company and customer (Luna, 2023).

According to Peppers (2003), to build a lasting relationship with the customer, the company must prepare to serve each of them differently. This requires active customer participation in the product or service development process, allowing companies to identify their customer profile and create personalized offers.

Therefore, Relationship Marketing Management is a crucial path for companies to survive and remain competitive in the market. Through this management, it is possible to establish lasting relationships with customers and increase financial gains in a sustainable way (Porto, 2023).

3 Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Changes in the business world illustrate the dynamic nature of technology-based ventures. Launching a new product or founding a company is a complex process, which requires advanced technology and good management, as well as a clear definition of a unique position in the market. A company that develops a good product but does not have a coherent vision and whose leadership does not understand the business and the path forward will face internal conflicts and failure (Luna, 2023).

Internal forces, such as cohesion and strategic alignment, should emerge within a company. However, many managers become so focused on external factors — such as new technologies, competitors and markets — that they end up neglecting to analyze and improve internal decision-making processes. It is essential that companies not only produce goods, but also seek to satisfy customer needs, which requires continuous monitoring and understanding of the market (Ribeiro; Sobreira, 2023).

For sectors undergoing rapid transformation, this monitoring task is even more critical and challenging due to the constant evolution of the environment. Companies in these sectors need

adopt creative and flexible approaches, as traditional market research and statistical analysis techniques may not be effective in rapidly changing contexts. Market statistics often lose relevance when applied to sectors that explore new territories, demanding constant innovation in approaching and understanding customer needs (Assunção, 2024).

CRM (Customer Relationship Management) emerges as an essential strategy to facilitate knowledge management and decision making, with the aim of anticipating and satisfying customer expectations. According to Thompson, CRM is a method for selecting and managing customers, aiming to optimize long-term value (Gouveia, 2021).

To work, CRM requires a customer-focused business culture that supports marketing, sales and service processes (Greenberg, 2001). Thus, CRM involves the entire organization, aiming to provide quality service that translates into long-term profits (Freitas, 2017).

The benefits of CRM are multiple. Swift (2001) highlights that it can increase revenue by providing more suitable products and more satisfied customers. Furthermore, CRM improves the company's resource allocation and efficiency, better directing efforts and funds, resulting in lower operational costs.

Brandão (2006) considers CRM a one-to-one marketing strategy, allowing the company to measure the importance of customer needs, identify and differentiate each one of them, and build effective ways to retain them. CRM also enables companies to identify and analyze new business opportunities, enhancing their competitive advantages.

Implementing CRM in an organization requires complete restructuring. For this tool to be efficient, all processes, systems, organization, people and business culture must be aligned with the objective of improving internal processes and increasing customers' perception of value in relation to the supplier (Mafra et al., 2023). In this way, the implementation of CRM facilitates the management of customer relationships and strengthens the company's competitive position in the market (Porto, 2023).

4 Relationship Marketing in the Brazilian Educational Sector

The education system in Brazil covers several stages, including daycare centers, preschools, primary and secondary schools, and higher education institutions (Ribeiro; Sobreira, 2023). In the public sector, responsibilities are distributed among levels of government:

Municipalities take care of daycare centers, preschools and primary education, while states are responsible for secondary education and some universities (Freitas, 2017). The administration and organization of the education system are coordinated by the Ministry of Education (MEC), which also provides technical and financial assistance to the states (Assunção, 2024).

According to article 22 of Law 9,394/96, basic education aims to develop the student, ensure common training for the exercise of citizenship and provide means for progress at work and in subsequent studies. Preschool, the first stage of basic education, serves children aged 0 to 6, preparing them for the next school years. According to the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB), daycare centers serve children aged 0 to 3, while preschools serve children aged 4 to 6 years. Article 29 of the LDB states that early childhood education aims at the physical, psychological, social and intellectual development of children, complementing family action.

Although early childhood education is provided for in the 1988 Federal Constitution, it was comprehensively integrated into the Brazilian educational system. In the 1980s, early childhood education was considered a privilege, but since then it has expanded and democratized, providing access to all children (Greenberg, 2001).

After early childhood education, children enter elementary school, which lasts nine years and is essential for the basic training of citizens (Greenberg, 2001). The old 1st grade, as it was known, is mandatory and serves children aged 7 to 14. Its objectives include the development of reading and calculation, necessary to solve everyday problems, the understanding of the environment, social relations and natural laws, in addition to the formation of conscious citizens capable of reflecting and creating.

In elementary school, students study subjects such as Portuguese, mathematics, history, geography, physics, chemistry and biology, as well as other possible subjects such as religious education, foreign languages, philosophy, sociology and arts, depending on the social context of the school. It is important to highlight that in public schools, the level of education is still low, with high repetition and dropout rates. To improve student motivation and development, it is crucial that educators promote activities and dialogues that encourage active participation and critical thinking (Porto, 2023).

Secondary education, the last stage of basic education, lasts three years and serves students between 14 and 15 years old (Assunção, 2024). Its objective is to consolidate the knowledge acquired in elementary school, relating theory and practice in scientific and technological foundations, in addition to preparing students to exercise technical professions. The subjects

they follow the elementary school standard, and may include others according to the social context of the school (Porto, 2023).

After high school, students should be prepared to participate in society. Higher education, which includes undergraduate, postgraduate and extension courses, aims to train young people to exercise their chosen professions, promoting critical reflection and cultural formation (Assunção, 2024). Entry to higher education occurs through the entrance exam, a competitive exam that covers the content studied in basic education. Due to inadequate preparation in public schools, many students resort to pre-university courses to improve their chances of passing (Ribeiro; Sobreira, 2023).

Historically, education in Brazil was seen as an obligation of the State, but this view changed over time, leading to greater social inclusion (Gouveia, 2021). According to Porto and Réginer (2003), education began to be seen as a market product. Economic growth brought renewal to higher education, complemented by public and private institutions. The private sector, responsible for around 80% of enrollments, drove the growth of the educational market, although the quality of teaching has become a concern, requiring new assessments based on criteria such as added value, employability, social responsibility and financial strength.

With the rush of everyday life and the need for quick training, technological courses emerged, which allow you to obtain a technological degree in two years. These courses have the same rights as regular undergraduate courses, although they do not confer bachelor's or licentiate degrees (Mafra et al., 2023).

Another highlight is distance learning (EAD), which grew with the popularization of the internet (Porto, 2023). Distance learning offers a more dynamic teaching process, allowing students and teachers to interact in a more informal environment. The internet facilitates learning with resources such as photos, audios, videos, and a vast amount of accessible information. Furthermore, assessments can be carried out online, making the process more flexible (Freitas, 2017).

Competition in the higher education sector is intense and dynamic, with predictions of bankruptcies, mergers and acquisitions. This scenario attracts investments, including from foreign institutions that enter the market through alliances and partnerships. Growth and competitiveness make the educational sector a fertile field for opportunities and challenges (Assunção, 2024). The following table demonstrates the possible threats and opportunities in this sector:

SITUATION	THREAT	OPPORTUNITY
Sector Growth Educational	Increase in IES/Decline in Quality	Social Inclusion/Social Mobility
Private Education Demand	DESACELERAÇÃO DA DEMANDA/ILUSÃO DA DEMANDA	-
Competition	FECHEMENTE FALÊNCIA DANÓIAS	MELHORIA DO PROCESSO ADMINISTRATIVO DA QUALIDADE DO TRABALHO
purchasing power of Population	Default	A ABSORÇÃO DO TALENTO, DENOTAÇÃO E INSUPRIMENTO

Table 3 – Threats and Opportunities in the Brazilian Educational Sector. Source: FORNARI, 2008.

As described in the table, the educational sector presents both threats and opportunities, which leads higher education institutions to seek new strategies to stand out in a competitive market. It is essential that these institutions identify and implement competitive differences and explore new ways to attract and retain students (Porto, 2023).

To face threats, institutions need to invest in teaching quality. Careful evaluations and continuous improvements are essential to ensure that the courses offered meet the required standards and student expectations (Ribeiro; Sobreira, 2023).

Opportunities must be seized through innovation and flexibility. This includes the offer of technological courses, which provide quick and targeted training for the job market, and the growth of distance learning (EAD), offering flexibility and accessibility to students (Gouveia, 2021).

Additionally, strategic partnerships with foreign companies and institutions can expand the reach and reputation of higher education institutions. The adoption of dynamic teaching methodologies that are consistent with the students' reality is also crucial to prepare students capable of participating in society (Mafra et al., 2023).

Therefore, to prosper in the Brazilian educational sector, higher education institutions must be proactive and adaptable, seeking ways to differentiate themselves and meet the needs and expectations of their students (Freitas, 2017).

5 Student Prospecting: Competitive Strategies for the Higher Education Sector

The higher education sector faces a series of competitive challenges, including the disorganized growth of the sector, the excess of unfilled vacancies, the drop in the purchasing power of Brazilians and the exhaustion of growth capacity. The relationship between low number

of vacancies and high demand reveals the intense competitiveness of the sector, requiring educational institutions to have effective strategies to stand out in the market (Freitas, 2017).

It is essential that institutions focus their efforts on marketing actions that differentiate them from the competition and transform threats into opportunities. To do this, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the concepts related to prospecting students, such as prospect, prospectus, prospecting and prospecting. Prospecting requires investment of time, patience and persistence, in addition to a proactive stance on the part of sales professionals (Gouveia, 2021).

Prospecting is an organizational tool that involves dynamic processes of communication and delivery of value to customers, contributing to the development of educational institutions and the satisfaction of the interested public. It is essential to adopt a customer-oriented approach, prioritizing relationships and satisfaction (Porto, 2023).

Marketing in the educational sector goes beyond sales and inventory control, encompassing market study, the identification of opportunities and threats, and the analysis and correction of production and sales processes. These practices are essential to guarantee the competitiveness of institutions and success in the market (Porto, 2023).

Student prospecting strategies vary, but some common practices include mass media advertising, word-of-mouth marketing, and creating a "strong brand" that conveys university quality and status. Discounts are also a common strategy in regions with lower purchasing power, but it is important to manage them carefully to avoid negative impacts on the quality of education offered (Mafra et al., 2023).

In view of the above, in a competitive market in which higher education institutions operate, it is essential to meet customer needs and expectations. Therefore, these institutions are reviewing their services and adopting Relationship Marketing to attract new students and retain current ones (Freitas, 2017).

Marketing in educational institutions is expanding, covering both the production and commercialization of goods and services (Gouveia, 2021). The role of marketing, according to Cobra (2009), is to manage the demand for goods and services, stimulating the consumption of products that meet people's specific needs.

Kotler (2008) highlights the importance of establishing a solid relationship between organizations and their customers, strengthening needs and desires through complementary and cyclical factors.

Relationship Marketing, then, emerges as a fundamental strategy for attracting and retaining customers in higher education institutions. Its focus is on processes and factors

necessary to strengthen relationships and engagement with customers, recognizing that satisfied customers can become brand advocates through Buzz Marketing (Mafra et al., 2023).

According to Gordon (1998), Relationship Marketing involves eight essential components, including culture, leadership, strategy, structure, personnel, technology, knowledge and processes. He highlights the importance of adopting attitudes such as partnerships with qualified suppliers, use of support organizations and identification of market needs to prospect and retain customers. Therefore, Relationship Marketing is a vital tool for prospecting and retaining customers in higher education institutions.

Final considerations

Concluding this chapter, it is possible to observe that the proposed objectives were met satisfactorily. The analysis of relationship marketing strategies applicable to higher education allowed us to identify effective approaches for prospecting and retaining students. By investigating the challenges and opportunities faced by HEIs in implementing these strategies, it was possible to propose recommendations to improve relationship marketing practices in institutions.

It became evident that, faced with growing competition in the Higher Education market, HEIs need to seek new approaches to prospecting students. The implementation of relationship marketing strategies proved to be essential to face this challenge, promoting student engagement and the construction of lasting relationships.

The results of this analysis are relevant for managers and professionals in the educational sector, providing information to improve the processes of attracting and retaining students. By adopting effective relationship marketing practices, institutions can attract more students and ensure their satisfaction and their retention at the institution.

Therefore, this chapter highlights the importance of applying relationship marketing strategies in the context of Brazilian higher education, contributing to the quality and sustainability of educational institutions in this competitive market.

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