

Investigative Students and Parents perspectives on Educational Consulting Services: The Impact of HR Strategies

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Abstract

This study explores parents' and students' perspectives on Educational Consulting Services and how they interact with HR tactics. These services are essential in an ever-changing educational environment because they offer direction, assistance, and knowledge to deal with the difficulties of making academic and professional decisions. It is essential to comprehend the viewpoints of the main decision-makers and recipients, which are the parents and pupils, while assessing the suitability and efficacy of these services. This research examines the influence of HR strategies on educational consulting services, specifically their impact on service quality and the overall educational experience. Additionally, this study aims to categorize students and parents into distinct groups based on their preferences, financial limitations, and educational goals. This segmentation enables educational consultancies to customize their strategies to cater to the unique needs of each group. The research also uncovers the key factors guiding the selection of educational consultants by students and parents, emphasizing trustworthiness, ethics, and transparency. Understanding these motivators allows consultancies to

strengthen their competitive position, enhance their services, and foster more robust client relationships.

I.INTRODUCTION

Due to the country's changing educational landscape and rising demand for high-quality education, educational consulting services have become increasingly prominent in India in recent years. The goal of these consulting services is to improve the overall educational experience and results by providing a variety of support and direction to educational institutions, students, and other stakeholders. Educational consultants play a multifaceted role in the education sector, offering vital support to students and institutions alike. In the highly competitive educational landscape of India, they serve as invaluable guides for students aspiring to gain admission to schools, colleges, and universities. These experts not only assist in the complex application process but also provide essential advice on course selection and help students prepare for demanding entrance exams. Furthermore, educational consultants offer comprehensive career counselling, aiding students in identifying their unique strengths, interests, and career aspirations. They facilitate well-informed decisions regarding academic and professional paths by shedding light on various career options. For Indian students with international ambitions, educational consultants are a gateway to pursuing higher education abroad. They guide students in selecting the most suitable foreign universities, help prepare the necessary application materials, and navigate the intricate visa and immigration procedures. Additionally, they provide invaluable support in preparing for standardized tests like the GRE, TOEFL, or IELTS, which are often prerequisites for studying abroad.

Few educational consultants go beyond their role in student guidance. Some educational consultants extend their expertise to educational institutions themselves. They assist in curriculum development, faculty training, quality enhancement, and administrative improvements, aiding institutions in adapting to the ever-evolving educational landscape. As technology continues to reshape the educational landscape, consultants help institutions adopt and seamlessly integrate cutting-edge educational technology solutions, including learning management systems and online assessment tools. This technological integration enhances the overall learning experience for students and streamlines administrative processes for institutions. Moreover, some educational consultants actively engage in research and market analysis, identifying emerging trends and opportunities within the Indian education sector. Their insights prove invaluable for educational institutions and investors seeking to make well-informed decisions that align with the evolving educational landscape.

Educational consultancy services provide expert guidance for informed academic and career decisions. They streamline study abroad applications, enhance education quality, and offer personalized support. While they save time and open global opportunities, concerns include varying costs, quality, regulation, dependency, and expertise. It's crucial for students, parents, and institutions to evaluate services carefully, considering factors like cost and reputation to ensure they receive effective guidance and support in the complex educational landscape.

Need for the study

Examining the student perceptions of educational consultants offers valuable insights into how students and families make academic advisory decisions. This understanding helps advisors stay in tune with changing preferences and needs, enabling tailored services for their target market. By categorizing the student and parent population into groups based on preferences, financial constraints, and academic goals, consultants can develop specialized strategies. The research identifies crucial factors influencing consultant selection, enabling consultancies to assess competition, highlight their unique strengths, and improve their services. This study is essential for creating mutually beneficial relationships among students, parents, and consultants, fostering a strong reputation, and securing repeat business through effective issue resolution and meeting client demands.

Literature Review

Educational consultancy firms have recognized the potential benefits of implementing a digital Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Such a system automates intricate and dynamic CRM processes while providing a centralized and accessible platform for information exchange. The adoption of a digitalized CRM necessitates the development of digital infrastructure, encompassing suitable internet systems, devices, connectivity, and the implementation of effective change management (Nataliya et al., 2016). McClure (2017) investigated the approaches and tactics employed by consulting firms in shaping the reform initiatives within US public higher education. By examining four consulting firms (Accenture, Bain & Company, Deloitte, and McKinsey & Company) and their perspectives on higher education reform, the research analyzes the consultative process involving two public universities and two state higher education systems. The study revealed how consultants disseminate crisis narratives and introduce private sector management concepts to public colleges and universities, which are pursuing financial stability and legitimacy.

Antonoff (2012) analysed the role of educational consultants in the college admission process was examined. The study incorporated personal reflections and broader perceptions about educational consulting, shedding new light on the field.

Kashthuri & Dhanapal (2016) highlighted the importance of a management consultant's satisfaction, identify and examine the influence on success factors of management consulting on a management consultant's satisfaction, through empirical research. This study's significant implication is that both the management consultant and the client can grasp the significance of various factors that impact a management consultant's satisfaction. This understanding can significantly impact the overall success of the consulting engagement. Rothenberg & McDermott (2000) explores how consultants' observations of education in emerging democracies like Kazakhstan and South Africa can enrich their roles as educators in the United States. Additionally, it delves into how their research efforts can contribute to the examination and utilization of qualitative self-report data. Boxall & Steeneveld (2002) found that Consultancy firms that weathered the significant business upheavals of the late 1980s and early 1990s implemented parallel structural, competitive, operational, and human resource responses aligned with their evolving "industry recipe." This study posits that professional service firms can indeed create opportunities to establish industry leadership by excelling in human resource management.

Statement of Problem

The dynamic nature of the education sector has highlighted the growing importance of educational consulting services in assisting students with their academic and career aspirations. These services, provided by a variety of institutions and organizations, strive to offer valuable guidance and support. Nonetheless, there exists a substantial knowledge deficit regarding the influence of human resource (HR) strategies utilized by these services on the experiences and results of both students and their parents. This study is essential to delve deeper into this area for several compelling reasons. These include the absence of a comprehensive understanding of how HR strategies within educational consulting services impact the quality of services offered to students and the satisfaction of their parents. Furthermore, the role of HR strategies in achieving positive outcomes in the effectiveness of consulting services remains insufficiently documented. This study aims to rectify these gaps by exploring the impact of HR strategies on service quality and the subsequent outcomes.

Research Questions

This research study seeks to address the following research inquiries:

- i. What are the primary determinants influencing customers' decisions to engage educational consulting services, and how do these factors vary across demographics, academic interests, and geographic locations?

- ii. In comparison to competitors within the educational consulting sector, how do consumers perceive the value proposition of a specific consulting services?
- iii. What role does customer trust, trustworthiness, and word-of-mouth recommendations play in their decision-making process when selecting educational consulting services?
- iv. What are the various challenges and obstacles that customers might encounter while utilizing educational consultancy services, and how can a consulting firm effectively address these concerns to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty?
- v. To enhance their market positioning and attract new customers, how can a specific entity adapt its marketing strategies and service offerings based on the consumer preferences and behavioral patterns revealed in this study?

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the key factors influencing students and parents when choosing an educational consultant.
2. To determine the primary sources of information students and parents rely on when searching for and evaluating educational consultants.
3. To assess the effectiveness of marketing and advertising campaigns of educational consultants.
4. To investigate the influence of Gender on Customers' Perception of educational consultants' effectiveness in securing a seat

Research methodology

Research Design

Research design is the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to conduct a study. The design allows researchers to sharpen the research methods suitable for the subject matter and set up their studies for success. The study uses Descriptive Research Design. Descriptive research design is a type of research design that aims to systematically obtain information to describe a phenomenon, situation, or population. More specifically, it helps answer the what, when, where, and how questions regarding the research problem rather than the why.

Data Collection

Data collection is the systematic gathering and measurement of information on certain variables. Data for this study is gathered mainly through structured questionnaire and some interviews with 119 respondents in Bangalore.

Primary Data

Primary data is information gathered for the first time from respondents in order to conduct the study. A questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions was created, and Likert scale-based questions were utilised to collect data from respondents (candidates).

Population

The study's population would be a collection of persons or businesses who have used or considering employing educational consultancy services. Students of undergraduates, and postgraduate students who were seeking help and support for educational planning, college applications, and study abroad options then they decided to avail the services of educational consultants. Parents or guardians of students who were participating in the decision-making process and were looking for advice on educational options for their children & had availed the services of educational consultants.

Sampling Method Used

In non-probability sampling, Selective/Judgement sampling method was used. Selective sampling, is also known as judgemental sampling or purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling, which the researcher chooses selected participants on the basis of their skill, knowledge, or relevance to the study's aims.

Analysis and Discussion

Table 1
Gender

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|--|--------|-----------|---------|
| | Male | 90 | 75.6 |
| | Female | 29 | 24.4 |
| | Total | 119 | 100.0 |

It is essential to ascertain the predominant gender of customers utilizing educational consulting services. The data indicates a higher percentage of male customers (75.6%) compared to female customers (24.4%).

Table 2
Age

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|--|----------|-----------|---------|
| | 18-25 | 38 | 31.9 |
| | 25-30 | 34 | 28.6 |
| | 30-35 | 16 | 13.4 |
| | Above 35 | 31 | 26.1 |
| | Total | 119 | 100.0 |

The maximum respondents have fall under 18-25 years' category and it is closely followed by 25-3 age group category. The higher age categories represent many individuals in India are taking guidance from the consultants for the studies related to their career progress.

Table 3
Respondent Type

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|--|---------|-----------|---------|
| | Student | 90 | 75.6 |
| | Parent | 29 | 24.4 |
| | Total | 119 | 100.0 |

From table 3, it is understandable that most respondents in the study are students (75.6%) and few are parents (24.4%). The, outcome of the study is influenced by this disproportionate distribution of the respondent type.

Table 4
Education Goal

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|--|----------------------|-----------|---------|
| | Academic advancement | 30 | 25.2 |
| | Career development | 28 | 23.5 |
| | Skill development | 34 | 28.6 |
| | Entrepreneurship | 27 | 22.7 |
| | Total | 119 | 100.0 |

The majority of the respondents consider the Skill development (28.6 percent) as their primary goal in seeking educational services. This is followed by academic advancement (25.2 percent).

Table 5
Clarity & Effectiveness of Communication

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|-----------|---------|
| | Very low | 4 | 3.4 |
| | Low | 3 | 2.5 |
| | Neutral | 38 | 31.9 |
| | High | 52 | 43.7 |
| | Very high | 22 | 18.5 |
| | Total | 119 | 100.0 |

18.5 percent of the respondents felt clarity and effectiveness of educational consultants are very high, 43.7 percent of the respondent's felt clarity and effectiveness of educational consultants are high. Only 5.9 percent of the respondents felt the clarity and effectiveness of communication by educational consultants are either low or very low.

Table 6
Overall Satisfaction towards Educational Consultancy services

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|--|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| | Highly dissatisfied | 5 | 4.2 |
| | Dissatisfied | 9 | 7.6 |
| | Neutral | 29 | 24.4 |
| | Satisfied | 48 | 40.3 |
| | Highly satisfied | 28 | 23.5 |
| | Total | 119 | 100.0 |

The table 6 reflects that only 63.8 percent of the respondents are happy with the overall services offered by the educational consultants. Thus, there is a lot of scope for educational consultants to improve their performances.

Table 7
Proactive HR Strategies

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-------|-----------|---------|
| | Yes | 78 | 65.5 |
| | No | 41 | 34.5 |
| | Total | 119 | 100.0 |

Table 7 indicates that 65.5 percent of the respondents felt the educational consultancies are adopting proactive HR strategies, while the other felt not so.

Hypothesis Testing: The following hypothesis has been developed and tested to find whether there exists any significant difference between the 'Gender' group and 'Meeting the expectation in securing the seat'.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference in the response between 'Gender' and 'Meeting the expectation in securing the seat'.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant difference in the response between 'Gender' and 'Meeting the expectation in securing the seat'.

Table 8
Chi-square Test

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 10.555 ^a | 4 | .032 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 12.232 | 4 | .016 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 2.231 | 1 | .135 |
| N of Valid Cases | 119 | | |

a. 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .73.

The Pearson Chi-Square value is 0.032, which is less than 5 percent significant level, thus warranting the rejection of null hypothesis. Thus, it is proven that there is a significant difference between the 'Gender' and 'Meeting the expectation in securing the seat'.

II.CONCLUSION

There is a higher proportion of male consumers (75.6%) of educational consultancy services than female consumers (24.4%). The most common way that people learn about educational consultants is through social media or word of mouth. Trustworthiness, honesty, and ethical practices were found to be the important factors in their deciding the educational consultancy. The most educational consultants have a proactive HR strategy in dealing with their clients. 63.8 percent of the respondents only were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the services of educational consultants.

Given the higher proportion of male consumers, educational consultancy services should explore strategies to attract and serve a more balanced gender demographic. Tailoring marketing efforts to address the specific needs and preferences of female consumers may be beneficial. Since social media and word of mouth are the most common sources of information, educational consultancy services should invest in a robust online presence and encourage satisfied clients to share their positive experiences with others. This can help reach a wider audience and build trust. Educational consultancy services should prioritize trustworthiness, honesty, and ethical practices, as these factors are crucial for consumers. Establishing and adhering to a strong code of ethics can help build and maintain a positive reputation. While 63.8 percent of respondents are satisfied or extremely satisfied, the consultancy services should focus on improving overall satisfaction rates. This can be achieved through better communication, more transparent processes, and addressing any concerns or issues promptly. To enhance satisfaction levels, educational consultants should actively seek feedback from clients and use this information to make continuous improvements. Regularly soliciting input and

implementing necessary changes will help in providing more effective services. To attract a more diverse clientele, educational consultancy services should diversify their marketing strategies, considering the preferences and needs of various demographic groups. This may involve targeted advertising and outreach. Given the importance of social media and word of mouth, consultants should maintain an engaging online presence. This includes regularly updating social media profiles, sharing success stories, and actively participating in online communities related to education. Educational consultants should demonstrate transparency in their processes, fees, and services. Establish clear and fair pricing structures, and be accountable for the results and advice provided to clients. Consultants should continuously invest in professional development and training to stay up-to-date with changing educational landscapes and best practices. Building and maintaining strong client relationships should be a priority. Consultants can achieve this by regularly communicating with clients, addressing their concerns, and going the extra mile to meet their needs.

III. REFERENCES

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