A CONTRIBUIÇÃO DO MARKETING EXPERIENCIAL PARA OS SERVIÇOS DO ENSINO SUPERIOR[1]

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RESUMO

Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar a percepção das dimensões do marketing experiencial: sensorial, afetiva, cognitiva, comportamental e relacional, e seu impacto na satisfação e recomendação (boca a boca positiva) de estudantes com relação aos serviços do Ensino Superior. Foi desenvolvida uma pesquisa com 243 estudantes do centro-oeste do Brasil, cujos dados foram analisados e compilados por meio de técnicas de modelagem de equações estruturais (SEM/EQS e PLS/WARP). Os resultados mostraram que o marketing experiencial em todas as suas cinco dimensões propostas por Schmitt (1999) influencia a satisfação e a recomendação dos alunos (boca a boca), sendo as experiências cognitivas e afetivas as que têm o impacto mais forte. Do ponto de vista da gestão, os resultados destacam a importância de experiências memoráveis no processo de aprendizagem, com consequências positivas para a satisfação dos alunos que poderão tornar-se disseminadores da marca e endossantes dos serviços de Ensino Superior.

Palavras-chaves: Marketing Experiencial; Satisfação; Boca a boca; Recomendação; Ensino superior; Experiência Sensorial.

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the perception of experiential marketing dimensions: sensorial, affective, cognitive, behavioral and relational, and their impact on satisfaction and recommendation (positive word-of-mouth) of students regarding higher education services. A survey was developed with 243 students in Midwest Brazil and data was analyzed and compiled through structural equation modeling techniques (SEM/EQS and PLS/WARP). The results showed that experiential marketing in all its five dimensions proposed by Schmitt (1999) influences students' satisfaction and recommendation (word-of-mouth), with cognitive and affective experiences having the strongest impact. From a management point of view, the findings highlight the importance of memorable experiences in the learning process, with positive consequences to the satisfaction of students who might become brand disseminators and endorsers of higher education services.

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Keywords: Experiential Marketing; Satisfaction; Word-of-Mouth; Recommendation; Higher Education; Sensorial Experience.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional marketing made room for a new model known as Experiential Marketing, which contributes to consumer engagement, through stimuli, whether emotional, physical, or intellectual. Consumers are not only focused on the functional benefits of products or services, but they want to live experiences that can be unique and capable of reaching their emotions and senses. To satisfy the needs of new consumers, companies need to use strategies focused on experience, associating memorable experiences with their products and services. Yuan and Wu (2008) and Ha and Perks (2005) consider that experiential marketing should induce consumer satisfaction, through emotional values in which the variety of brand experience significantly affects satisfaction as much as the number of positive experiences.

The scenario of experiential marketing in higher education services was selected by the authors for the development of this research. The expansion of private higher education institutions and the growing market for educational services in Brazil have outlined a new higher education standard with the entry of new private players of educational services in open competition for potential student demand. The Brazilian Higher Education market has 2,537 higher education institutions (HEI), of which 88.2% are private and 11.8% are public, offering a total of 37,962 undergraduate courses. From 2008 to 2018 the number of enrollments increased by 44.6% with an average annual growth of 3.8% (INEP, 2019). In 2018 the number of enrollments in higher education at the undergraduate and sequential level reached 8.45 million students and the variation of new students in colleges and universities in this period of 10 years reaches a growth of 49.8% in the private network, and 33.8% in the public network.

In areas such as tourism and hospitality and retailing there has been a considerable amount of research exploring experiential constructs as the ones proposed by Schmitt (sense, feel, think, act and relate). Nevertheless, in the higher education field there is a scarcity of studies on this subject. According to Schmitt (1999), experiential marketing happens in response to stimuli produced in a service

setting, when the customer, transformed into a guest gets in touch with a certain customer journey configuration, where her/his feelings, emotions and fantasies might arouse and produce pleasant memories. A question that guides this research is how the students of a higher education institution perceive Schmitt's experiential constructs and to what extent these constructs impact satisfaction and recommendation.

Based on the considerations above, the objective of this research is to analyze in a higher education institution (HEI) how college students perceive the five dimensions of experiential marketing, defined by Schmitt (1999), and their impact in terms of satisfaction and recommendation of the services.

Experiential Marketing and Schmitt's Dimensions

Experiential marketing has its origin decades ago having the work of Levy (1959, 1963) as an important theoretical start basis. This author argued that when buying a product, in addition to the expected utility and functionality, people also see personal and social significance in the consumption process; the consumer envisions symbolic meanings products usually represent to her/him. This is also in tune with the focus of motivation research, developed in the 1960's (Ditcher, 1960), which main concern was emotional aspects and fantasies products may arouse.

As important for the experiential aspects of consumption are the works of two other authors: Elizabeth C. Hirschman and Morris B. Holbrook (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). They explored the idea of pleasure embedded in the use of products, configuring what became widely known as hedonic consumption, a behavior connected to multisensory, fantasy and emotions someone might experience with products. The experiential aspect of consumption evokes consumer fantasies, feelings, fun, amusement, arousal, sensory stimulation and enjoyment. In line with that, Pine II and Gilmore (1999) brought up the idea of the experience economy, an economic space in which value is created on a "stage", a place where the experience happens, and the guest (customer) is involved in a memorable event. According to the authors, the experience status has been achieved as an evolving outcome of a natural progression in economic values, where the consumers at the very beginning started having access to commodities,

then to goods, to services, until they reach the experience economy (Pine II and Gilmore, 1999; Santos et al., 2009).

Pine II and Gilmore (1999) emphasize that the battle for competitiveness depends on building experience for customers. The authors also mention that when the customer buy experience, they pay to enjoy a series of memorable events. From the emergence of the experience economy, Schmitt (1999) conceptualizes experiential marketing for the first time, showing that the recognition or intention to purchase a product or service only happens after the customer has an experience with the company, a period in which the perceived value usually increases. Therefore, experiential marketing is not directly related to the quality, functionality, or benefits of the product, but to the emotions and senses that are activated in the consumer (Tarta, 2013).

Schmitt (1999) characterizes experiential marketing as events that arise in response to stimuli and is the result of encounters and the perception of situations in which experiences are induced, making the client feel, move, think, act and relate accordingly to the moment. Experiences can occur with any individual and they happen when there is an engagement, whether emotional, physical, intellectual, or spiritual (Pontes, 2012). Experiential marketing manages to create an innovative experience, outlining exceptional experiences, transforming consumer behavior, in addition to contributing to the profit generation (Liu, 2016).

When companies understand how consumers experience brands, it is possible to create experiences that are essential to differentiate offers in a competitive market (Schmitt, 2011). The perspective presented by Schmitt (1999) has a fundamental role in the construction of memorable experiences. The involvement provided by emotions and senses might contribute to satisfying the customers' needs. Brands that offer the strongest experience to customers during consumption and use would become the favorite ones (Kotler et al., 2017).

Thus, the five dimensions that define the Strategic Experiment Modules (SEMs) proposed by Schmitt (1999) are: sensorial experiences (sense), affective experiences (feel), cognitive experiences (think), behavioral or lifestyle experiences (act) and relational experiences (relate). Table 1 summarizes the dimensions of the Strategic Experiment Modules (SEMs).

Table 1 - Dimensions of Strategic Experiment Modules (SEMs)

Experience Dimensions	Concept
Sensorial Experience (Sense)	This stimulates through the 5 (five) senses: sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. Also, it provides aesthetic pleasure and satisfaction, in addition to allowing companies to use differentiation and added value to their products by motivating consumers to purchase them.
Affective Experience (Feel)	This uses appeal to the consumer's emotions and feelings, activating emotional experiences that range from light feelings of positive, negative, or neutral satisfaction, to more intense emotions. Marketers need to look at what stimuli can trigger these emotions and whether the consumer is willing to get involved.
Cognitive Experience (Think)	This involves the consumer with experiences that challenge the creative aspect, stimulating them to follow the reasoning caused by the company through surprises, provocations, and stimuli of creativity.
Behavioral Experience (Act)	This stimulates physical experience, showing different ways of doing things and changes in lifestyle. These experiences enable the consumer to have a relationship with the company's products and services.
Relational Experience (Relate)	This develops experiences that provide connections with other consumers, encouraging them to participate in a certain context or social group, to build their brand preferences.

Source**:** Adapted from Schmitt (1999**)**

It is worth mentioning that these Schmitt's dimensions (sense, feel, think, act and relate) occur influenced by and as a response to a certain environmental service setting. This is what Bitner (1992) named "servicescape", the environment in which a service is delivered, what might include buildings, grounds and other tangibles elements. Depending on how this service setting is structured and organized by means of ambience, function and design, the guests (customers) might produce responses in emotional, cognitive and physical terms (Mei et al, 2020). In a higher education institution (HEI) the service environment could be the campus buildings with classrooms, libraries, and meeting rooms, - spatial layouts, signs, symbols, artifacts and the people that compose the academic and administrative staff. Also forming the education service setting and increasingly growing in importance are the tools provided by information and communication technologies (ICT), opening space for remote/virtual learning also known as e-servicescape (Dassanayke and Senevirathne, 2018).

Experience, Satisfaction and Recommendation

Defined by Anderson et al. (1994), satisfaction is a general assessment that consumers carry out considering the total experience in consumption and purchase over time. Chang et al. (2013) also conceptualize satisfaction by relating it to the experience of consumers, emphasizing that the positive experience associated with

the consumption of a product or service stimulates satisfaction. Also, satisfaction is a subjective emotion of the individual, a psychological state resulting from previous feelings related to a consumption experience. A satisfied customer probably tends to carry out a repurchase and even recommend the company (Willys, 2018).

The concept of satisfaction is also understood as a set of consumer experiences derived from expectations and feelings previously lived through (Soares and Costa, 2018). Westbrook (1980) argues that satisfaction, in addition to being linked to cognitive issues, also contains elements that involve affection or feeling that connect consumers subjectively. Satisfaction is positively impacted by the experiences and emotions lived by the client (Pacheco and Gonçalves, 2015).

As much relevant as satisfaction is the concept of recommendation popularly known as word-of-mouth, defined as a natural and sincere process by which customers look for advice from other consumers who talk about products, services, and brands (WOMMA, 2007). It is an interpersonal communication considered as one of the most important marketing tools (Keller, 2007), a mechanism for transmitting information from person to person (Hosseini and Roslin, 2014). Recommendations from other customers have high credibility for the consumer and are regarded as a powerful sales agent. Perceiving the high potential of word-of-mouth (WOM), several companies have encouraged existing customers to create positive and persuasive comments about their products and services (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2006).

Konuk (2019) points out that the positive WOM contributes to the recognition of a brand, creating an opportunity to increase the companies' market share. The author concluded in his study that satisfied customers are more likely to re-purchase from a company and recommend it to others. Also, other scholars have reinforced the positive relationship of satisfaction with WOM, such as Schuster et al. (2016), Vieira et al. (2009), and Oliver (1980).

In summary, the connection between Schmitt's experiential dimensions, satisfaction and recommendation has been extensively researched in some areas like hospitality and tourism (Garcia et al., 2017; Li and Lee, 2016; Liu, 2016; Pratminingsih et al., 2018; Razi and Lajevardi, 2016; Walls, 2013; Yeh et al., 2019; Yuan and Wu, 2008), and retailing and e-commerce (Ihtiyar et al., 2019; Oliveira and Huertas, 2018; Wu and Tseng, 2015; Yacob et al, 2016). However, it is rare to find an investigation approaching these constructs (experience, satisfaction and

recommendation) in the college education level. This way, there is a dearth of research assessing the impact of Schmitt's experiential dimensions on customer satisfaction and recommendation in the higher education service setting, and this academic scarcity justifies the current investigation. Additionally, it is noteworthy to highlight that besides being involved in core educational activities, the student can also be considered a customer if she/he is the main subject of an entire service infrastructure (Dassanyke and Senevirathne, 2018).

Considering the arguments above, the hypotheses are proposed considering Schmitt's experiences dimensions and its relationship with satisfaction and recommendation:

Hypothesis 1 (H1) - Experiential marketing positively affects the consumers' satisfaction from educational services at a higher level – unfolded as follows:

H1a - Sensory experiences positively affect the consumers' satisfaction from educational services at a higher level.

H1b - Affective experiences positively affect the consumers' satisfaction from educational services at a higher level.

H1c - Cognitive experiences positively affect the consumers' satisfaction from educational services at a higher level.

H1d - Behavioral experiences positively affect the consumers' satisfaction from educational services at a higher level.

H1e - Relational experiences positively affect the consumers' satisfaction from educational services at a higher level.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) - Satisfaction positively affects the consumers' recommendation behavior (positive WOM) from educational services at a higher level.

The proposed model follows the theoretical relationships shown in the literature. A synthesis from the hypotheses previously defined is illustrated below (Figure 1):

Figure 1 - Proposed model and research hypotheses
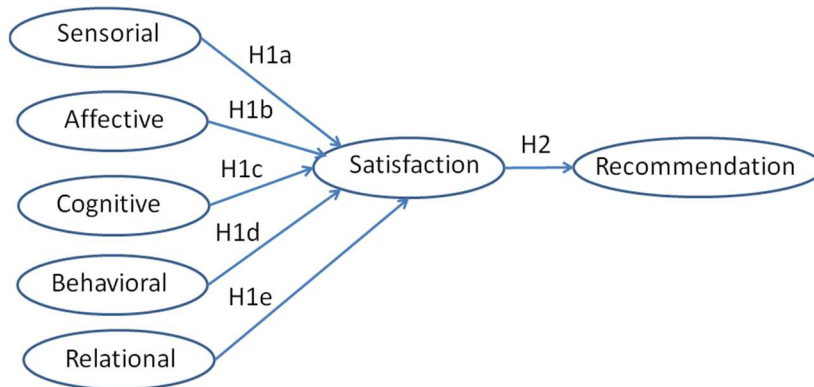
Source: Authors (2019)

METHOD

To perform the hypotheses tests, quantitative-descriptive research was conducted through a survey with 243 students of a higher education institution at Rio Verde city in Midwest Brazil. For data analysis, Structural Equation Modeling was used, based on Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Path Analysis (Hair Jr. et al., 2014). Additionally, a Partial Least Square technique (WARP) was applied to verify the consistency of the proposed model.

Previously tested scales in literature were used to measure the concepts of the proposed model. The construct scales of the experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999) dimensions were adapted from Walls (2013) and Lin et al. (2009). It is worth mentioning that the experiential scale reflects and is a response to the stimuli of a service setting composed of physical elements (interior and exterior architecture, decoration, furniture, ambience, temperature, lighting, noise level), educational framework (the core educational program) and the social network formed by colleagues, faculty and administrative staff. The satisfaction scales were adapted from the study of Wangenheim and Bayon (2007) and Rosenbaum (2009), while the variables used in the recommendation construct (positive WOM) were developed by Zeitham et al. (1996) and adapted by Rosenbaum (2009).

The studies named above dealt with the constructs in a different context from the one used by this research, higher education, requiring scale adjustments. The five-point Likert scale was used to measure the constructs, varying from "totally

disagree" (1) to "totally agree" (5), according to the interviewee's degree of agreement regarding each question. This scale is widely used to measure attitudes that are related to individuals' behavior when it comes to something they are exposed to (Martins and Theóphilo, 2016).

Two pretest stages were developed and applied by researchers. After the first stage, a new version was prepared considering the difficulties pointed out by interviewees and a new survey was applied by the researchers for undergraduate students. During the pretest phases, some details were changed in the writing of the statements based on the considerations mentioned by the participants. Data collection took place from May 20 to June 10, 2019, through a survey questionnaire at the campus of the higher education institution mentioned above.

RESULTS

Students were selected for convenience due to the ease of access to the chosen courses (Lewin, 2015). The final sample consists of 243 students from the following undergraduate courses: Management, Marketing, Accounting, Law, Graphic Design, and Interior Design. All courses are offered by the same higher education institution at Rio Verde city in Midwest Brazil . The sample had balance in terms of gender, consisting of 122 men (50.2%) and 121 women (49.8%). Regarding age, the group with the highest number of respondents was between 18 and 24 years old (64.2%). About marital status, 200 (82.3%) respondents are single and 29 (11.9%) declared to be married.

In terms of family income, it was observed that the majority of respondents (42%) was concentrated in the range between R$ 1,001.00 to R$ 3,000.00 (lower income in Brazilian standards), 35.4% in the interval of R$ 3,001.00 to R$ 6,000.00 (lower middle class), 8.2% are in the range from R$ 6,001.00 to R$ 10,000.00 (middle class), and only 16 (6.6%) have a family income of over R$ 10,000.00 (upper-middle class). It is important to say that the family income is related to a month period. As for the course, the sample is mostly represented by the Law course: 81 respondents (33.3%), followed by the Accounting course 67 (27.6%) while Marketing was the one with the lowest representation, only 12 (4.9%) of research participants. This result is in line with the reality of the HEI since among the courses that comprise the sample,

Law course there are the most enrolled students, and Marketing is the one with the fewest students.

To analyze the results, an evaluation was conducted regarding the measurement and structural models aiming to assess the model credibility. According to Hair Jr. et al. (2009), the results must be analyzed and interpreted in three phases, being described as (1) analysis and validity of the measurement model, (2) evaluation of the structural model, and finally, (3) interpretation and discussion of the results. Table 2 presents the constructs of Schmitt's (1999) experience model with mean, standard deviation, and principal component factor loadings calculated for all observable variables.

The reliability of the constructs based on the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is considered good, all above 0.7: sensorial experiences, 0.836; affective experiences, 0.892; cognitive experiences, 0.758; behavioral experiences, 0.763; and relational experiences, 0.764. These coefficients attested for convergent validity. Literature states that their values must be greater than 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair Jr. et al., 2009; Malhotra, 2019).

The factor loadings of all constructs, obtained from a principal component analysis, are within an adequate range of values, with the smallest of them accounting 0.584, related to sensorial experiences, considered acceptable by the standards of Hair Jr. et al. (2009) for being above 0.50.

Table 2 - Types of Experiences

Construct Variables Experiences (Schmitt, 1999)	Means / Likert 1-5		
Experiences - sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioral, relational	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor Loading
Sensorial Experiences (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.836)	-	-	-
1 The exterior architectural design of the educational institution is attractive.	3.66	1.010	0.756
2 The educational institution's internal architectural design is attractive	3.44	1.064	0.819
3 The interior decoration and furniture of the educational institution are attractive.	3.42	1.074	0.824
4 The design of the educational institution incorporates the natural resources around it.	3.67	0.899	0.591
5 The interior temperature of the educational institution is comfortable	4.03	0.842	0.675
6 The lighting in the teaching institution's rooms and internal spaces are adequate.	4.26	0.796	0.729
7 The noise level in the educational institution is adequate.	3.60	1.107	0.584
Affective Experiences (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.892)	-	-	-
8 My experience at the educational institution makes me feel pleasure	3.56	0.974	0.865
9 My experience at the educational institution arouses positive	3.85	0.880	0.860

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading
feelings			
10 My experience at the educational institution makes me feel comfortable	3.82	0.848	0.884
11 My experience at the educational institution is pleasant	3.97	0.795	0.876
Cognitive Experiences (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.758)	-	-	-
12 My experience at the educational institution arouses my curiosity	3.83	0.877	0.857
13 My experience at the educational institution makes me feel that I will be better prepared for the job market	3.70	1.096	0.839
14 I feel I belong in the educational institution	3.46	1.049	0.778
Behavioral Experiences (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.763)	-	-	-
15 I feel like sharing with my friends the experiences I have at the educational institution	3.87	0.865	0.806
16 The activities that are offered at the educational institution make me want to participate.	3.53	1.017	0.801
17 My experience at the educational institution makes me want to change my lifestyle	3.72	0.994	0.684
18 My experience at the educational institution makes me take pictures to share on my social networks.	3.05	1.230	0.784
Relational Experiences (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.704)	-	-	-
19 Participating in activities promoted by the educational institution allows me to exchange experiences with those who have a common interest with mine.	3.82	0.851	0.746
20 My experience at the educational institution brings me closer to family and friends	3.24	1.053	0.821
21 Coming to the educational institution, I can improve my social life with friends	3.53	0.928	0.811

Source: Research results (2019)

Table 3 presents a single factor that corresponds to the construct satisfaction, to which the exploratory factor analysis was performed identifying reliability of 0.861 measured by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient which is considered good. The factor loadings of this construct are considered good, the smallest being 0.817.

Table 3 - Satisfaction

Satisfaction Construct Variables	Means / Likert 1-5		
Satisfaction (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.861)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading
22 I am satisfied with my experiences at the educational institution.	3.69	0.881	0.819
23 My educational institution meets my expectations.	3.59	1.010	0.855
24 My relationship with the educational institution is extremely good.	3.86	0.725	0.817
25 Overall, I am very satisfied with the service I receive from my educational institution.	3.72	0.929	0.882

Source: Research results (2019)

The values of the recommendation construct are shown in Table 4, which is also represented by a single factor, with the reliability of 0.918, measured by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The factor loading of this construct had the lowest rate of 0.902 also quite acceptable.

Table 4 - Recommendation

Variables of the Recommendation Construct ("word-of-mouth") Means / Likert 1-5

Recommendation - ("Word of mouth") (Cronbach's alpha = 0.918)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loading
26 I would recommend my educational institution to others.	4.17	0.924	0.902
27 I say positive things about the educational institution to other people.	4.09	0.909	0.943
28 I would provide my family, friends, and neighbors with positive information about the educational institution.	4.10	0.852	0.940

Source: Research results (2019)

Discriminant validity is attested by Fornell-Larker criterion (Vinzi et al., 2010) as shown in the correlation-square matrix (Table 5), in which the highest Pearson correlation-square between constructs (0.452) is smaller than the smallest average variance extracted (AVE) of the constructs (0.514 – Sensorial Experience).

Table 5 – Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larker Criterion
(Correlation between constructs)^2 compared to Average Variance Extracted

	Sensorial exp.	Affective exp.	Cognitive exp.	Behavioral exp.	Relational exp.	Satisfaction	Recommendation
Average Variance Extr.	0.514	0.760	0.681	0.593	0.630	0.712	0.862
Sensorial experiences	1.000	0.303	0.186	0.132	0.118	0.246	0.147
Affective experiences	0.303	1.000	0.452	0.280	0.211	0.440	0.347
Cognitive experiences	0.186	0.452	1.000	0.361	0.243	0.419	0.412
Behavioral experiences	0.132	0.280	0.361	1.000	0.381	0.334	0.269
Relational experiences	0.118	0.211	0.243	0.381	1.000	0.314	0.176
Satisfaction	0.246	0.440	0.419	0.334	0.314	1.000	0.500
Recommendation	0.147	0.347	0.412	0.269	0.176	0.500	1.000

Source: Research results (2019)**.** All correlations (Pearson) are significant for alpha = 1%

The validation of the structural model is based on the Structural Modelling Equation through the Maximum Likelihood (ML - Maximum Likelihood), a method to verify the constructs adjustments and the quality of these adjustments through the index recommended by the literature for the Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis Index or Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Bollen's Incremental Fit Index (IFI). These indices must have values greater than 0.90 (Hair Jr. et al., 2009; Bentler and Chou, 1987). In the proposed model, the indexes found are something lower than the standards: NFI (0.684), NNFI (0.711), CFI (0.738), and IFI (0.740).

Regarding the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Hair Jr.

et al. (2009) explained that this index represents how the model best fits a population and not just a sample and its ideal value is between 0.03 and 0.08; the proposed model revealed an index of 0.115, also outside the recommended range.

Table 6 - General Measures of Adequacy - Structural Equation Modelling - EQS

	Index
Chi-Square (Satorra-Bentler) - 343 Degrees Of Freedom	1434.678
Probability for Chi-Square Statistics	0.000
Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index – NFI	0.684
Bentler-Bonett Nonnormed Fit Index – NNFI	0.711
Comparative Fit Index - CFI	0.738
Bollen Fit Index - IFI	0.740
Root Mean sq. Error of app.(RMSEA)	0.115

Source: Research results (2019)

Considering that in the structural equation modeling (Table 6), some figures were not rigorously within the required standards, such as: Comparative Fit Index (0.738), Bentler-Bonett Nonnormed Fit Index (0.711), and Bollen Fit Index (0.740) that should be 0.9 or above, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (0.115), which value is not in the recommended range of 0.05 to 0.08, another technique was used to check for the adequacy of the proposed model to the data: Partial Least Squares (PLS). The PLS comes from a family of regression methods designed by Herman Wold having in mind the social sciences and its need for flexibility (Dijkstra, 2010). One of the most important characteristics that makes the technique proper for social sciences is its data normality distribution relaxation, usual in traditional structural equation modeling such as Lisrel and EQS (Vinzi et al., 2010).

Table 7 – Model Fit and Quality Indices – Partial Least Squares / WARP

Model Fit	Values	Intervals / Range
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.279	P<0.001 - recommended: P <= 0.05
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.555	P<0.001 - recommended: P <= 0.05
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.550	P<0.001 - recommended: P <= 0.05
Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.990	acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	2.218	acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.614	small >= 0.1, medium >= 0.25, large >= 0.36
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	acceptable if >= 0.7, ideally = 1
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	acceptable if >= 0.9, ideally = 1
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	acceptable if >= 0.7

Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000	acceptable if >= 0.7

Source: Research results (2019)

As the twenty-eight indicators of the proposed model do not have a normal distribution by means of Jarque Bera and Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Lilliefors) tests, the authors of this paper decided to run the data using PLS algorithm with results shown in Tables 7 and 8. According to Kock (2020), the assessment of the model fit with the data should use several criteria. Specifically, Table 7 presents ten indices of adequacy that should be considered in the model evaluation. It is possible to see that every index is showing figures accordingly: Average path coefficient (APC), Average R-squared (ARS) and Average adjusted R-squared (AARS) have significant values at 5% statistical significance level ($p =< 0,05$); Average block VIF (AVIF) and Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF) are under 3.3; Tenenhaus GoF (GoF) is in the larger range (>= 0.36), Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR), R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR), Statistical suppression ratio (SSR) and Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR), all have the ideal value of 1. Therefore, the PLS results show a good adjustment of the model to the data.

Table 8 has a structural path coefficients comparison of the two techniques, SEM/EQS and PLS/WARP with the respective level of statistical significance ("p" values) and coefficients of determination (r-squares). It is evident the consistency between the coefficients in the two techniques, with PLS figures somewhat smaller than SEM's. It is worth mentioning that in PLS, the path "Behavioral Experience – Satisfaction" was not significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 8 – Structural Figures: PLS – WARP *versus* SEM - EQS

		Sensor.	Affect.	Cognit.	Behavior.	Relation.	Satisfac.	Recom.
		H1a	H1b	H1c	H1d	H1e		
Path coefficients	Satisfaction =	0.140	0.299	0.251	0.092	0.176	H2	
PLS - WARP	Recomm. =						0.714	
Path coefficients	Satisfaction =	0.130	0.427	0.467	0.232	0.272		
SEM - EQS	Recomm. =						0.710	
P values	Satisfaction	0.013	<0.001	<0.001	**0.074**	0.002		
PLS - WARP	Recomm.						<0.001	
P values	Satisfaction	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01		
SEM - EQS	Recomm.						<0.01	
R2	PLS -						0.601	0.510

coefficients -	WARP		
R2 coefficients -	SEM - EQS	0.546	0.504

Source: Research results (2019)

As depicted in Table 8, from the five dimensions (experiences influencing satisfaction) that formed hypothesis H1, four have statistically significant coefficients at 1% level, in both techniques PLS/WARP and SEM/EQS (Sensorial: 0.140/0.130; Affective: 0.299/0.427; Cognitive: 0.251/0.467; Relational: 0.176/0.272, PLS/SEM respectively). As mentioned before, the exception was "Behavioral Experience" which coefficient (0.092) was not confirmed at a 5% level (p=0.074) in the PLS results; for SEM/EQS results, the coefficient 0.232 was significant (p<0.01). Consequently, it is fair to accept that these Schmitt's dimensions can explain the variance of the construct satisfaction with reasonable power: coefficients of determination (r-square) of 0.601 (PLS/WARP) and 0.546 (SEM/EQS), confirming hypothesis H1 (H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d, H1e). This result is in line with other studies developed by Lin et al. (2009), Alkilani et al. (2013), Wu and Tseng (2015), Li and Lee (2016), Muhammad (2016) and Oliveira and Huertas (2018), all observing that experiential marketing has a positive influence on satisfaction.

Analyzing the five dimensions specifically, it is possible to see particular aspects of each one impacting satisfaction. The H1a hypothesis which is related to sensorial experiences was confirmed and showed a regression coefficient of 0.140 (PLS/WARP) and 0.130 (SEM/EQS), interpreted as moderate to lower positive effect on satisfaction. This might indicate a lack of strategies by the studied higher education institution that is not dedicating efforts to create experiences in terms of senses. This result is not in line with the studies by Lin et al. (2009), Alkilani et al. (2013), Razi and Lajevardi (2016), where sensorial experiences were one of the dimensions that had the greatest influence on satisfaction. In their research, the authors approached experiential marketing in hotels, social networks, and restaurants respectively (against higher education in this research), and the industries' differences might explain the gap since in the former segments the senses are widely used by consumers.

Hypothesis H1b presented as regression coefficients 0.427 (SEM/EQS) and 0.299 (PLS/WARP) supporting a significant (p=< 0.01) and positive impact on satisfaction by affective experiences. This construct is formed by variables related

mainly to positive feelings, comfort, and pleasure. This result is reinforced by the works of Mano and Oliver (1993), Pine II and Gilmore (1998), and Fonseca (2017) in which they have considered feelings directly affecting satisfaction.

The H1c hypothesis determines a stronger relationship between cognitive experiences and satisfaction and had significant regression coefficients of 0.467 (SEM/EQS) and 0.251 (PLS/WARP). These experiences involve creativity and thinking, encouraging consumers to think about their old assumptions and expectations, providing paradigm shifts. This result corroborates the findings of Yuan and Wu (2008) and Indrawati and Fatharani (2016), who pointed out in their studies cognitive experiences have an intense impact on satisfaction. The authors mentioned interviewed consumers of tourism and e-commerce services.

When it comes to hypothesis H1d, the regression coefficients (0.092 PLS/WARP and 0.232 SEM/EQS) were not consistent with each other: SEM confirms statistical significance ($p = <0.01$) and PLS does not ($p = 0.074$). Anyway, the construct represented behavioral experiences that were related to the individual's lifestyle and behavior, considering the physical aspects, motor actions, body signals, as well as the behavioral changes and unplanned actions. They had a positive effect on satisfaction in a moderate to lower intensity. The studies of Indrawati and Fatharani (2016) and Li and Lee (2016) have reinforced the results identifying behavioral experiences with a significant impact on satisfaction.

The H1e hypothesis that describes the influence of relational experiences on satisfaction was confirmed ($p = < 0.01$) with medium impact, with regression coefficients of 0.272 (SEM/EQS) and 0.176 (PLS/WARP). This result is in line with Lin et al. (2009), that researched in the hotel sector and confirm that relational experiences can positively impact satisfaction.

Finally, hypothesis H2 investigates the influence of satisfaction on the recommendation. The relation was confirmed with a high positive effect, with regression coefficients of 0.710 (SEM/EQS) and 0.714 (PLS/WARP) and coefficients of determination of 0.504 (SEM/EQS) and 0.510 (PLS/WARP), i.e., satisfaction explains about 50% of the variance of the dependent variable recommendation. This result is quite consistent with the studies of Marzo-Navarro et al. (2005) and Veas-González et al. (2019), They analyzed the relationship between satisfaction and recommendation in higher education institutions in Spain and Chile respectively,

concluding that these variables are directly related. On the other hand, Alves and Raposo (2006) in their research with students from a university in Portugal pointed out that satisfaction partially explains recommendation, and this relationship was considered indirect. Other scholars, such as: Mhlanga and Siyongwana (2018), and Konuk (2019) also indicate positive results from the influence of satisfaction on the recommendation in restaurant and hotel services.

In short, the proposed model testing Schmitt's experiential dimensions impacting satisfaction and satisfaction by its turn influencing recommendation, confirmed these relationships through both statistical techniques: Structural Equation Modelling (EQS) and Partial Least Squares (WARP).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The objective of this study was to analyze if the experiential dimensions proposed by Schmitt (1999), - sensorial, affective, cognitive, behavioral and relational - could explain satisfaction and recommendation in a higher education institution. To achieve this goal, a model involving the five experiential dimensions and the constructs satisfaction and recommendation was proposed and hypothesized. To check the viability of the model, a survey was conducted with 243 institution's students at Rio Verde city in Midwest Brazil . The model was assessed statistically by a traditional Structural Equation Modelling (EQS) and also by a more flexible technique, Partial Least Squares (WARP), with results confirming almost all the hypotheses proposed: the five experiential dimensions influenced satisfaction and recommendation (WOM) cumulatively.

Findings in the literature demonstrate that when dealing with this topic, the sectors of entertainment, tourism, and leisure are studied by most authors, while there is a lack of studies in the higher education sector. No studies testing all five dimensions of Schmitt (1999) in the educational sector were found in Brazilian literature.

The survey presented results that may be useful for institutions in the higher educational sector which are transforming the way they manage their businesses. These transformations, specifically in higher education, have required organizations to get closer to their current audience and future students, suggesting to adequate

environment to provide relevant learning experience.

Consumers are changing the way they consume products and services. Attention to attributes and functional issues has made way to experiences lived when purchasing products. When looking for a higher education institution, they hope for living experiences that enable the breaking of paradigms, stimulate creativity, and contribute to their personal and professional evolution. Therefore, these educational institutions need to realize that when providing experiences to students, they should invest in a proper service setting, in which a stimulating stage combination of physical, technical and social configuration could make them feel, move, think, act and relate about what they are experimenting. From that on, higher levels of satisfaction and recommendation would be consequences, making students the great disseminators of their own institutions.

An important limitation of this study was the fact that non-probabilistic sampling was used, which limits the extrapolation of the results to the higher education sector population. The period used to conduct the questionnaire also had an impact on the number of respondents, as the application occurred during final examinations. Another limitation is the lack of similar research in Brazil, which makes it difficult to compare the results obtained with previous research.

As a proposal for future studies, it is suggested that the model used in this research should be conducted to analyze side-by-side private and public higher educational institutions. Another proposal is to carry out research comparing courses, to find out if the impact of the experiences is different for students from different areas. In addition to these proposals, it is also suggested that future studies should explore the loyalty construct, for which recommendation is an important dimension.

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