

Role of Product-mix in Marketing of Business Schools (A Study of Indian and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Context)

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Abstract. The present paper discusses the innovative and market driven product-mix of various courses /programs in marketing of education institute in general and management institutes (B-Schools) in particular. Designing the contemporary curricula distinguish 'A' grade institutes from other institutes. Product- mix offered by the educational institutes plays a significant role to attract the talent pool. The product- mix in educational institutes consists of a number of specializations, electives, contemporary syllabus, duration of the program, Management Development Program, Executive Development Program for practicing managers and quality certification of the courses. The Market oriented product- mix of the educational institute attracts more students and participants from the industries and also empowers the institute and enables it to charge higher fees and create differentiation in the mind of students. The present paper highlights the importance of product -mix for the educational institutes to market its courses and other educational program to generate additional income column and to make institute/university competitive.

Keywords: National Board of Accreditation, National Assessment and Accreditation Council, The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

1. Introduction

The product in the education service market is the entire package offered to the student in terms of the topics to be covered, the extent of coverage, number of classes, the duration of the course, the attention given to each students etc., This would help the institute attract students and also to charge high fees. Therefore, offering the right product assumes a lot of significance. The ranking of B-Schools also depends upon the types of courses/specialization and duration of the course plays an important and significant role.

2. Specialized Courses

Product in management education includes the most important component 'specializations offered by the management institutes'. The various specializations offered by different management institutes are as under:

- Marketing / Finance / HR/ Production / System and E- Commerce Management

So far as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is concerned the number of specialization includes Marketing / Finance / HRM / IT and petroleum and gas. The sector specific MBA or Business Management Programmes are few in number.

In India ranking of B-Schools play an important role. To know the importance of number of specialization offered by different categories of B-Schools a survey was conducted of 150 B-Schools of A category, B Category and C Category of self-financed and grant-in aid B-Schools across the nations reveals the following result.

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2.1. Product- ‘Specializations’

The response received from various management institutes in respect of the component specialization has been reported in Table -1

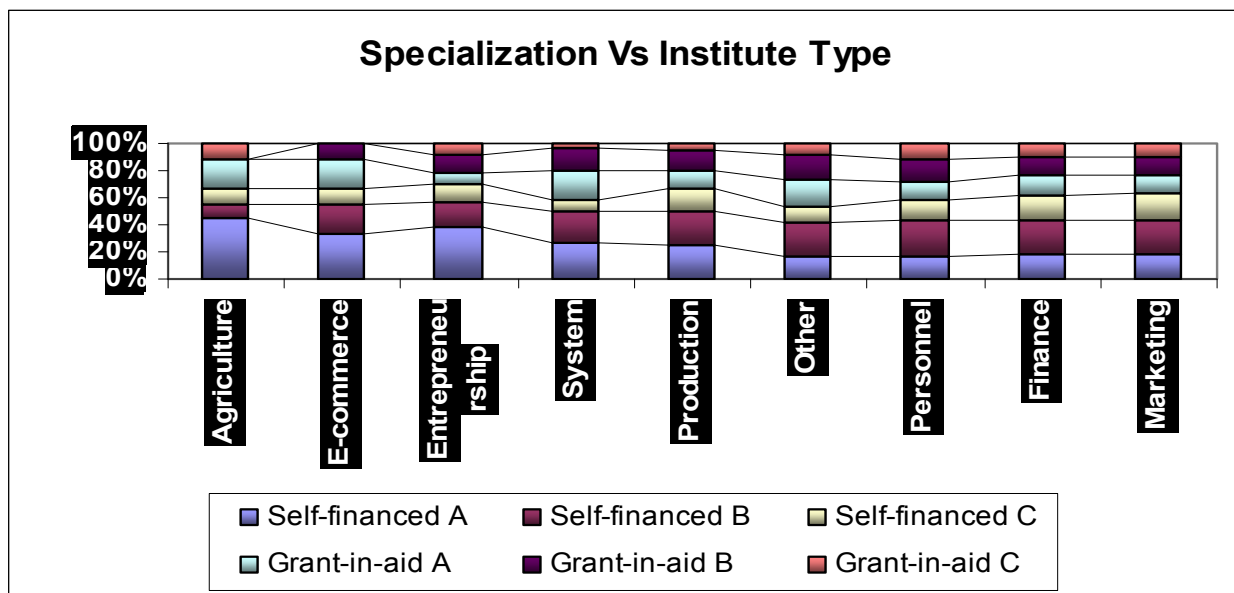
Table 1: Specialization offered by the institutes V/S Type / Category of Institute

SPECIALIZATIONS OFFERED	SELF-FINANCED INSTITUTIONS			GRANT-IN-AID			Total
	A	B	C	A	B	C	
Agriculture	4	1	1	2	0	1	9
E-commerce	3	2	1	2	1	0	9
Entrepreneurship	9	4	3	2	3	2	23
System	9	8	3	7	6	1	34
Production	11	11	7	6	7	2	44
Other	12	17	8	14	12	6	69
Personnel	17	26	16	13	16	12	100
Finance	23	31	23	18	18	12	125
Marketing	25	36	28	18	21	13	141
Total	113	136	90	82	84	49	554

It can be observed from the Table 1 that the highest number of institutions 141 (95%) offers “Marketing” as one of the specialization followed by 125 (84%) institutions offer “Finance” specialization, irrespective of self financed and grant- in-aid. It can also be noted that from the total number of institutions only 6% of the institutions offer “Agriculture” and “E-commerce” specializations.

The detailed analysis of the different category of institutes ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ for both self-financed and grant-in-aid institutes are shown in Fig -1

Figure 1: Specialization offered by Institutes V/S Category/type of Institutes



In light of the above facts, following findings have been deduced

Majority of ‘A’ grade institutions do offer specializations in upcoming sectors like “International Business”, E-Commerce”, “Entrepreneurship” in addition to four functional specializations i.e. “Marketing”, Finance”, “Production” and “Human Resource Development”. This is an indication of innovation in product-mix and proactive attitude help B-Schools to grab the upcoming sectors’ requirements.

Since the number of applications is also depend upon the number of specializations offered by the institute. Institute can also impart employability by offering/modifying specializations in the upcoming sectors.

Indian economy is an agrarian economy and there is lot of potential in this sector however there are very few institutes in India which are offering specialization in agriculture.

The share of self-financed institutes in offering IT related specializations i.e. (E-Commerce and System) is 66% and 69% respectively.

Out of 23 institutes which offer Entrepreneurship specialization the contribution of grant-in aid institutes is only 30%. It seems that the grant-in-aid institutes are not putting enough efforts for developing the entrepreneurship spirits for the country.

The comparative study between the grant-in-aid and self-financed institutes reveals an interesting facts that by and large the self-financed institutes offers more number of specializations to grab the upcoming and contemporary need of the industry or country at large.

There are other aspects of product-mix – duration of the course, quality certifications etc need to be considered for designing the product-mix for marketing of B-Schools.

2.2. Duration of the Course

So far as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is concern all universities offers MBA programme but the majority of them are of 2 years. **Yanbu Industrial College** has already signed an MOU with **Indiana Police University**, USA for offering 11 mouths Executive MBA Programme. Jubail Industrial College also offers MBA programme in association with the Troy University of USA.

The following table gives an idea of duration/type of MBA programmes offered by the number of institutes in India in terms of percentage.

Table 2: BOUQUET OF COURSES in India

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTES	
Evening MBA	14%
Executive MBA	12%
Distance Learning	14%
E-learning	6%
Global Courses	8%

Source – A.Thothatari Raman “*The Way to go*” – Business India, October 24 to November 6, 2005 pp-86.

Besides different specializations and short-term duration of the programs the courses/programs should be certified / approved by the national and international body.

2.3. Quality Certification for India (National Level)

2.3.1. National Board of Accreditation (NBA)

In India the NBA of AICTE has the statutory responsibility for accrediting all MBA/PGDM programs, approved by AICTE.

2.4. Quality Certification for Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (National Level)

2.4.1. National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment

The National Commission for Assessment and Academic Accreditation (NCAAA) aims at upgrading the quality of private and governmental higher education to ensure clarity and transparency, and to provide codified standards for academic performance.

2.5. Quality Certification (International Level)

2.5.1. ASBSP

ACBSP provides mission-based accreditation and quality assurance services to Associate, Baccalaureate, and Graduate degree business schools and programme throughout the U.S. and the world

2.5.2. European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS)

EQUIS is an international system of strategic audit and accreditation designed by European Foundation for Management development (EFMD) for the assessment of institutions in widely different national contexts.

In the higher education in Saudi Arabia, there are more than 47 colleges offer business management programmes. So far as ACBSP accreditation is concerned only 2 colleges have the ACBSP accreditation i.e Yanbu Industrial College and Jubail Industrial College.

Table 3: ACBSP Accredited Colleges in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and India

Total Number of Colleges offers Business Management Programme		Approved by ACBSP			
India	KSA	KSA		India	
More than 2500	More than 47	2	4.74%	1	0.004%

The above findings also reveal that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's business schools are trying to get the international certifications where as majority of business schools in India confine their certification at the national levels only.

So far as the specialization is concerned majority of KSA's business schools offers specialization in four functional areas. There are very few university which offers specialization as per the need and wants of the industries in KSA.

3. Concluding Remarks

Offering a variety of specializations or electives is considered in education sector as a "Product Innovation. Showing agility by offering different specializations is a reflection of sensing the pattern of opportunity and grabbing it at the right time, gives an early mover advantage to B-Schools. Product mix (Number of Specialization, Electives, Management Development Program (MDP), Executive Development Program (EDP), etc helps to capture the growing need of the market and develops the new stream of generating revenues and resources. However, care needs to be taken in designing the course-ware. Relevant course-ware back-up by industries support is a must to create employability for the students. Since products in the education have a wider meaning and also include "quality certification and duration" as well. Quality certification gives an added confidence in the mind of the students, faculty as well as to the corporate houses. The third aspect related to product is the duration. With the advent of globalization majority of B-Schools offers PGDM of one-year duration. It is, therefore, necessary for B-Schools to offer the specializations which are addressing the need of the market coupled with quality certification and appropriate duration.

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