

Chapter 13

The University in a Retail Context: An Illustration of Value Co-Creation Through the Social Business Model Canvas

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ABSTRACT

On-campus retailing is a spread practice, but academia has almost underestimated its potential. Nevertheless, not every type of retail activity adds value to customers and society. When the proposed value is society-driven and sensitive to consumers' wellbeing, customers' engagement increases. One business model, through which it is possible to exploit the benefits of on-campus retailing by adding social value, is the Yunus Social Business. This is a case-based study aiming to describe, through the Social Business Model Canvas, the founding of an organic shop within a university that is supplied by administrative staff of the university that are at the same time also local farmers. Further, the shop aims to resell organic food to university staff and students. The case study is theoretically enriched by traditional Porterian frameworks and new service frameworks such as the service-dominant logic by emphasizing the role of value proposition, value co-creation, and value-in-context.

INTRODUCTION

Retailing is known to be an important driver for economies throughout the history. This touch point of businesses to the consumers evolved in time according to plenty dimensions: locations, layout, management etc. It is not coincidence that, John Wanamaker who is known as one of pioneers of marketing application was retailer (Tucker, 2011). Retailing is very crucial for cash generation for businesses, also with its nature opens great opportunities for marketing activities.

It can be said that the influence of university campuses in our lives had the same trend in the history. By the beginning of 20th century the premises of universities got more important. Apparently, this was affected by industrialization and as its consequence by the increasing appreciation toward obtaining degree. In modern times students spend notably much time at campuses. University premises satisfy multiple human needs that go beyond learning. Universities may provide plenty of other services to students, going beyond standard students' cafeterias. Furthermore, if we analyze the time spent by students on campus and their needs, then, on-campus retailing deserves to be considered. Interestingly, academic literature is almost indifferent on the topic. To have this blindfolded vision to the phenomenon which is just there, next to academicians, is quite surprising. On-campus retailing seems to be more than an issue of solving basic needs of students but has larger impact.

Considering the university in a retail context may cause a focus shift from education to commerce. Nevertheless, the university should not be seen as a bureaucratic machine that deals only with classroom schedules, teaching activity, exam papers, research, accreditation reports, etc. Universities are multi-stakeholder environments and populated by several types of actors manifesting various interests. These supra-systems have different expectations from the university as a viable system, and the viability depends on satisfying stakeholders' expectations. Universities, like other organizations (traditional businesses, NGOs, social businesses, etc.) have the surviving need. To ensure the survivor, the university must behave like a business system, aiming the customer satisfaction. Thus, the main question here is: who are the customers of a university and what are their needs? The answer looks quite automatic if to consider the student as the main beneficiary of the provided services. But what are the provided services in terms of value proposition? Normally, in a university campus, students are expecting to build a university life made up of several dimensions (and not just books and classrooms). So, they have an ecosystem of needs, and consequently the university campus must be designed as a service ecosystem. In this way, the learning process may benefit as well. For instance, just by building consonant relationships between a university campus and local businesses, opens the door to many opportunities for students, like business incubation, career fairs, internships, and so on. As a result, the learning process benefits as well. However, students to be more engaged, they need many facilities inside the university campus, especially in cases of campuses located outside the city center. To satisfy basic students' needs related with gastronomy, exercise and fitness, leisure and entertainment, etc., the university must build an on-campus retailing ecosystem.

Besides the powerfulness of on-campus retailing, business ethics and corporate social responsibility must take a place for bringing some larger social impact in the life of students and staff. Unfortunately, the social factor of on-campus retailing it is totally neglected by academia. The university as a retail context may offer new employment opportunities and create positive examples by applying social business norms, as the university premises are significantly sanitized in terms of ethics. Here given factor makes us to think that business established within university can serve better and more ethically to the

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