

Customer experience management in the higher education context: Why focusing on the relationship level is important for student retention and customer loyalty

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Abstract

Online education is expanding and while it presents numerous advantages for students, the dropout rates in the online setting are higher than traditional education particularly for adult learners, leading to a need to understand challenges faced by adult learners in this context. Amongst identified challenges, the lack of connection between learners and providers and feeling of isolation are highlighted, leading to the question of what influences these relationship bonds? This study examines how Customer Experience Management could be utilised to understand how online education challenges influence relationships and hence loyalty/retention. It explores, via 15 interviews, challenges faced by mature adult online students that have dropped out from an Australian online MBA. A CEM model is then applied to examine how the emerging issues contribute in influencing the relationship bonds between customer/brand. The approach is novel and plays a role in facilitating future retention efforts.

Keywords: *Retention; CEM; Online-learning*

Track: Relationship Marketing