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Service Differentiation as a Competitive Advantage: Insights from Manufacturing Firms in the Western Balkans

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Abstract

This study explores the strategic role of service differentiation in creating competitive advantage among manufacturing companies in the Western Balkans. Through a comprehensive literature review, this study examines the extent to which manufacturing firms in this region have adopted service-oriented strategies to distinguish themselves in a competitive market. Drawing on both theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, this study reveals a growing trend among manufacturers towards integrating service-based offerings—ranging from after-sales support to complete service solutions—as a means to enhance customer value and foster loyalty. This shift enables manufacturers to not only differentiate their product offerings but also to open new revenue streams and build more resilient business models. The findings suggest that service differentiation is particularly crucial in the Western Balkans, where manufacturing firms face intense competition, both locally and from global players. This study highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing service differentiation strategies, including the need for cultural change within organizations, the development of new capabilities, and the importance of aligning service offerings with customer needs and expectations. The evidence from the Western Balkans indicates that those firms which successfully navigate these challenges can achieve significant competitive advantages, underscoring the strategic value of service differentiation in the manufacturing sector.

Keywords: Competitive advantage, Service differentiation, Manufacturing companies, Western Balkans, Customer value

Entrepreneurship as a Driver for Economic Development: Insights from the Western Balkans

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Abstract

Economic development in the Western Balkans has been a subject of keen interest and extensive study, given the region's transition from conflict-affected economies to aspiring EU members. This study synthesizes findings from a comprehensive literature review focusing on the important role of entrepreneurship in driving economic development within these countries. The methodology involves a critical analysis of empirical studies, policy reports, and theoretical frameworks related to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The literature reveals a consensus on the positive impact of entrepreneurship on economic development, highlighting it as a critical engine for job creation, innovation, and competitiveness. Several studies underscore the significance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as the backbone of the region's economic growth, contributing significantly to GDP and employment. However, the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Western Balkans faces unique challenges, including regulatory hurdles, limited access to finance, and a lack of supportive infrastructure for startup growth. Evidence suggests that governmental policies and international aid have played crucial roles in fostering a conducive environment for entrepreneurship. Initiatives aimed at improving the business climate, such as regulatory reforms, financial support mechanisms, and entrepreneurship education, are identified as key drivers of economic development. Furthermore, the literature points to the increasing importance of technology and innovation in enabling entrepreneurs in the Western Balkans to compete on a global scale. This study concludes that while significant progress has been made, sustained efforts are required to overcome existing barriers and fully harness the potential of entrepreneurship for economic development in the Western Balkans. Future research directions include examining the impact of digital transformation on the entrepreneurial landscape and the role of cross-border collaborations in promoting regional integration and development.

Keywords: Economic Development, Entrepreneurship, Western Balkans, SMEs, Regulatory reforms, Innovation

The Impact of Customer Loyalty Programs on Businesses Growth in the Tourism Sector. Case of 3-Star Hotels in Durres.

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of customer loyalty programs on business growth within the tourism sector, with a specific focus on 3-star hotels in Durres. The research aims to explore the extent to which loyalty programs affect customer behaviour, satisfaction, and overall business performance. A quantitative analysis of customer data has been conducted. The quantitative analysis involves the collection of data on customer retention behaviours, advocacy behaviours, purchasing behaviours. This data is used to identify trends and correlations between loyalty programs and the above variables. The survey for this study has been applied to 400 tourist that has been accommodated in different hotels of 3 and 4 stars in Durres, from May to September 2023. The findings of this study suggest that customer loyalty programs have a significant impact on business growth in the tourism industry. Participants in loyalty programs are more likely to book repeat stays, spend more on additional services, and provide positive reviews and recommendations. The findings can inform hotel managers and marketers on how to design and implement effective loyalty programs to attract and retain customers.

Keywords: loyalty programs, customer retention behaviours, advocacy behaviours, purchasing behaviours.

The innovation of the biology curriculum in the health and environmental education of pupils-students, as well as the role of the teacher to increase the level of learning of pupils/students

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Abstract

The biology curriculum occupies an important place in the AML curriculum, because with the program that treats and equips the student with important knowledge about the living world, biological processes, environmental education, as well as health education. Biology, as a natural science in the concepts it deals with, offers a wide range for life, creating the opportunity for pupils/students to get lasting knowledge, to understand and analyze the challenges and opportunities of today's world. And that is precisely the purpose of the biology curriculum. I must carry out and provide effective teaching, to increase the rate of acquisition of biological concepts, to be as practical and current as possible, in order for the new generation to face the challenges of the time. Regarding the environmental issue which today is one of the global and society-wide problems, it occupies an important place in the biology curriculum, where the environment is treated, the importance for its preservation, as well as the factors that damage the environment are studied, such as: reduction of forests: global warming: pollution of the soil, air, of water: damage to the ozone layer: the reduction of the green surface and the increase in the mass of buildings without criteria. thus realizing the environmental education of the population through the education of pupils/students in the environment inside and outside the school.

Environmental education is realized through learning in three plans: Learning about the environment: Learning in the environment: Learning about the environment.

Biology in the program that deals with different subjects and topics, it also carries out the health education of pupils/students, it does this with the help of issues, concepts and very important topics where the most important ones can be identified: STDs, HIV, AIDS, ., Viral and infectious diseases. For these diseases, biology studies the causes, signs of diseases, consequences, as well as prevention measures.

Biology studies important concepts that are related to health such as: Diet: poor eyesight: lifestyle: obesity. Diseases that appear, the consequences, as well as preventive measures. Biology in its field also includes issues that are related to the most advanced technologies today such as: Genetic engineering: cloning: production of stem cells: technological advances in gene sequencing, to enable the identification of molecular markers of diseases. All these concepts will help students to understand scientific advances, developing critical thinking skills, realizing the ethical reflection of the moral problems of modern society.

In order to achieve the main goal of equipping pupils/students with the knowledge, skills and competences in terms of environmental and health education, it is required to carry out continuous professional training of teachers, with the aim of raising their professional level, increasing commitment and enthusiasm, to be innovative, to be able to adapt their teaching strategies to new technologies, as well as updating the latest information in the field of biology.

Purpose: Using this study as a case study, to highlight the role of biology in equipping pupils/students with the knowledge, skills, competencies and concepts in terms of environmental and health education. As well as the role of the teacher, in increasing the rate of acquisition of concepts in these two fields.

Methodology: For the realization of this study, a descriptive and analytical methodology was used. Research methods were used (study and analysis of the most contemporary literature). Interview and survey method. Analysis method. The study was carried out in the gymnasiums of the city of Shkodra.

Results: The study shows that biology with its program plays an important role in the environmental and health education of pupils/students. The concepts it deals with in different topics such as: Environment: Nutrition: STDs, etc. create the opportunity for environmental and health education. The study showed that students show a high interest in these concepts, at the same time it turned out that the information that biology deals with these concepts is not enough to meet the needs of students. More concretely, the real results of the study will be dealt with in the section of results and discussions, drawn from the study of secondary schools in the city of Shkodra.

Conclusions: The concepts, issues, topics that are treated in the biology curriculum that are related to environmental and health education, constitute an innovation for equipping pupils/students with these concepts that are very necessary. It appears as an immediate task in dealing with these concepts, it is given importance both in terms of the extension of information, the expansion of this information, as well as the qualitative improvement of teaching by teachers through their continuous training.

Keywords: Curriculum, environment, health, innovation, teaching, pollution.

Learning through technology, an innovation in the teaching and learning of the biology curriculum

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Abstract

Technology is already an important factor in the process of teaching biology, significantly increasing the level of student learning, as well as increasing the degree of perfection in the implementation of methods by the teacher, in full alternation in the use of different applications of technology.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance and necessity of using technology in the teaching and learning of biology, where today it is becoming an important and necessary tool for the purpose of perfecting teaching, as well as increasing the level of student learning in the subject of biology.

The effects of the use of technology has already proved that it is productive in the teaching and learning process of students. Studies have shown that overestimation, bad management or bad use in many cases has negatively affected the teaching and learning process. Precisely to see the role of technology in teaching and learning, we carried out a study that was extended to several high schools in the city of Tirana, to see practically how efficient the use of technology is in the process of teaching biology.

The study was based on a well-organized and planned topic that touches on these issues:

The access that the school provides to students and teachers in the use of ICT.

To what extent is ICT used by biology teachers in the teaching process.

What is the interest of the students, and their desire with this learning model: What ICT application platforms are used by the teachers: What is the level of technology use by the teacher, as well as the degree of their qualification.

From the analysis of the data extracted from the study, it results that the use of ICT, in the teaching of biology, is already necessary and effective. From the research of the problem, we came to the conclusion that the use of technology has the following advantages: Increases students' interest in the subject of biology: Increases the rate of acquisition of biological concepts: Makes the teaching process much easier for the teacher: Increases the efficiency of information transfer: It is realized a quick distribution of information: Time saving is achieved: Student engagement and motivation increases. In this way, we come to the conclusion that the use of technology in teaching/learning will remain the norm and not the exception in the future.

Purpose: With the help of this study, to reach the conclusion that what is the access of teachers and students that the school gives to the use of ICT, in the teaching/learning process, as well as what is the degree of effectiveness that ICT plays in the process of students' learning, compared to traditional methods, as well as the difficulties that teachers and students face in the implementation of ICT.

Methodology: For the realization of this study, research methods were used, based on the most contemporary literature, as well as on quantitative (quantitative) methods. The population of this study was taken from several high schools in the city of Tirana, where the study focused on students and teachers of these high schools. Questionnaires and interviews conducted with teachers and students were used as measuring instruments.

Results: The results of this study were derived based on two components. Evidence in the field in school environments regarding the location of the technology tools that these schools have and the degree of their use. As well as from the analysis of the results of the answers that were collected from the questionnaires and interviews.

Conclusions: The final conclusion is that the use of technology in the teaching/learning process plays a positive role both in the process of using innovative methods by teachers and in the process of the students' learning level.

Keywords: ICT, platform, teaching, learning, COVID, communication.

Digital Advancements in Literacy: Assessing the Effects of Technology on Reading Comprehension and Fluency

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of technology has significantly influenced educational methodologies, particularly in enhancing reading comprehension and fluency. This study investigates the impact of technology-based interventions on improving these critical literacy skills. This study conducts a systematic analysis of various technological tools, including e-books, reading software, and interactive applications, and their implementation in diverse educational settings. Findings from the study reveal a notable improvement in both reading comprehension and fluency among participants who engaged with technology-enhanced learning resources compared to those who relied on traditional reading materials. Qualitative data further highlighted the motivational benefits of technological tools, which fostered a more engaging and personalized learning experience. The contribution of this research lies in its comprehensive evaluation of technology's role in literacy development. By illustrating the positive outcomes of integrating digital tools in reading instruction, this study provides empirical evidence to support the adoption of technology-based interventions in educational curricula. Additionally, it offers insights into the pedagogical strategies that can maximize the effectiveness of technology in enhancing reading skills, thereby serving as a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, Fluency Improvement, Educational Technology, Digital Learning Tools, Literacy Development
