A Systematic Literature Review: Are Students Customers, or not?

Bir Sistematik Literatür Çalışması: Öğrenciler Müşteri mi, Değil mi?

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Abstract: There has been a longstanding debate over whether students are customers. Nevertheless, there is still a complexity about who the students are and their role. This theme-based systematic literature review seeks to enrich the discourse on students through a comprehensive and detailed review of 86 papers from 2006-2022. Our review provides a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the relevant debate, establishes an agenda to encourage research, and exhibits favorable outcomes for practitioners. We found that the role of students has been transformed from a passive audience to an active participant in the co-creation of educational service experience in the long term. Consequently, viewing students as co-creators of value would be more appropriate rather than treating them as customers or service users.

Keywords: Higher education, Services marketing, Service-Dominant Logic, Relationship marketing, Value co-creation.

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Öz: Öğrencilerin müşteri olup olmadığı konusunda uzun süredir devam eden bir tartışma bulunmaktadır. Ancak öğrencilerin kim olduğu ve rollerinin ne olduğu konusunda hala bir karmaşıklık söz konusudur. Yapmış olduğumuz temaya dayalı sistematik literatür taraması, 2006-2022 yılları arasında yayınlana 86 makalenin kapsamlı ve ayrıntılı bir incelemesi yoluyla oluşturulmuştur. Araştırmamız ilgili tartışmaya ilişkin kapsamlı ve güncel bir genel bakış sunmakta, bir bilimsel araştırmayı teşvik edecek bir gündem oluşturmakta ve uygulayıcılar için olumlu sonuçlar sunmaktadır. Özellikle uzun vadede eğitim hizmeti deneyiminin birlikte yaratılmasında öğrencilerin rolünün pasif bir izleyiciden aktif bir katılımcıya dönüştüğü söylenebilir. Buna dayanarak, öğrencileri müşteri veya hizmet kullanıcısı olarak görmek yerine, değerin ortak yaratıcıları olarak görmenin daha doğru olacağı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yüksek öğretim, Hizmet Pazarlaması, Hizmet-Baskın Mantık, İlişkisel Pazarlama, Değerin ortak yaratımı.

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1. Introduction

The question of whether students are customers or not has been up for debate for a long time. Viewed from a purely educational perspective, students are not regarded as customers (Hubbell, 2015). Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) traditionally don't think of education as a "service" that should be sold to students, nor do they view students as "products" for the labor market (Mark, 2013). Marcel and Harris (2000) exemplified students' role in university situations where students cannot be accepted as customers. If by "customer" we imply someone patronizing a restaurant or making a purchase of a good or service, then we do not consider students to be customers. Also, they should not be treated as customers if by the customer we simply mean someone who wants to exchange money for a good. Furthermore, they must never be allowed to become customers, if by the customer we mean someone who believes that money can buy education in the same way that a microwave can be bought. Bay and Daniel (2001) connote that the student-as-customer paradigm may lead institutions to prioritize short-term student satisfaction without addressing the long-term demands of a wide variety of stakeholders. In addition, such a paradigm may lead to the loss of academic integrity between academic staff and students in the education process (Lomas, 2007). Nowadays, the majority of HEIs are adopting the marketing-oriented perspective in a competitive environment that is frequently global for them. Accordingly, a substantial literature on the application of marketing principles and strategies from other industries to Higher Education (HE) has been generated (Gibbs, 2002). These efforts could result in a reversal of the traditional thinking about students. Addressing the issue of higher education institutions adopting a customer-centric focus, Maguad (2007) states that the traditional education community has found it difficult to accept the idea that students are customers. On the other hand, today's HEIs recognize the need of providing great customer service to students at every stage of their academic careers (Guilbault, 2018). A customer experience is created wherever money is exchanged. This perspective suggests that higher education should be led by treating students like customers (Carù and Cova, 2003). Students should be regarded as the university's primary customers since they are the ones who are most directly served by the university and its mission (Mark, 2013). Conversely, Cuthbert (2010) asserts that considering students as customers is a natural outcome of taking marketing in higher education seriously. As can be seen, the discussions have mainly clustered on two extreme views. However, multiple perspectives need to be integrated into the higher education sector to achieve the desired results. This leads to reframing the debate regarding the view of who students really are and what their role is. We sought ways to find a more reasonable response instead of instantly acknowledging whether the students are customers or not. Accordingly, we systematically reviewed the literature on the relevant debate to present a set of perspectives through which the role of students has been explored so far. Then, we reached the three themes (Services Marketing, Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), and Relationship Marketing) through the topics derived from common keywords found in the title, abstract, and author keywords. This way is expected to provide us with crucial clues about who the students really are and identify some significant issues that future research should explore, and practitioners should focus on.

Services marketing is the best field of study for educational marketing since education has key characteristics that are unique to a service, such as intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability (Enache, 2011). The fact that HEIs are service providers and that service marketing principles are applied in HE requires considering students as service users (Lomas, 2007). However, it is not enough to consider students as only service users, instead, they might be treated as key contributors to the production of such services. Within the context of HE, SDL adopts a relationship-based approach considering long-term relationships and interaction with students to create long-term value (Al-Alak, 2006). This leads the role of students to be transformed from a passive audience to an active participant in the co-creation of the service experience in the long term. As a result of this systematic review, we justified that it would be more appropriate to view students as co-creators of value rather than treating them as customers or not.

The remaining part of the paper is structured as follows. We first summarise the theoretical debate on whether students should be considered as customers or not. Second, we discuss the description of the methodology employed. Third, we present the general characteristics of the reviewed papers based on various criteria such as publishing trend overtime, country of research, research orientation, and journal-wise distribution. Then, we discuss each of themes separately in the context of HE. Finally, we summarize our conclusions, discuss the potential scope for future research, and draw both theoretical and practical implications.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this study, we try to reveal who students really are by systematically reviewing the papers that focus on the discussion of whether they are customers or not. This long-standing debate takes place at two extremes, and each view specifies the grounds to support its argument. This situation complicates the attitudes and actions of the stakeholders in HE toward students (Guilbault, 2016). As a result of the study, we concluded that it would be beneficial to place the discussion on a more moderate ground rather than continuing two opposing views.

HEIs have many stakeholders and customers such as the government, employers, families, and the public. However, students are the core customers because they are most directly served by the HEIs (Maguad, 2007). According to Mark (2013), students should be thought of as the university's key customers as they are the ones most directly served by its mission. In addition, it is reasonable to conceive of students as clients when in case marketing in HE is taken seriously (Cuthbert, 2010). Carù and Cova (2003) highlight the value of relationships in education, and their research supports the use of relationship marketing in HE. In addition, customer experience is created whenever there is a financial exchange. This viewpoint suggests that HE should be led by treating students as customers. Education should be viewed as an experiential service. Voss and Zomerdijk (2007) describe experiential services as those where the emphasis is on the consumer's experience when interacting with the institution, rather than only the functional benefits resulting from the goods and services offered. This perspective requires treating students as customers. Furthermore, Maguad (2007) differentiates students from the stereotypical definition of a customer. He cites Juran (1988) to define a customer and suggests following the product to determine whom it impacts. He also suggests that the definition of "customer" includes everyone who receives or benefits from the results of someone else's work or who buys goods and services (Maguad, 2007). Moreover, Deming (1986) pointed out that the end customer of a good or service is the key customer of a company. Accordingly, students are customers since they are the ones who benefit from the HEIs' work efforts and use their services. In addition to these, the fact that HEIs attract students through marketing and promotion efforts fosters the idea that a student is a customer (Guilbault, 2016). Furthermore, education is viewed by multiple governments as a product that customers may buy in a free market system (Brennan and Bennington, 2000).

On the other hand, HEIs are increasingly accepting the idea that students are their customers on a global scale. However, it is difficult for the traditional educational community to accept the idea that students are customers (Maguad, 2007). It is obvious that accepting this idea has some consequences. Bay and Daniel (2001) state that the student-as-a-customer paradigm may lead institutions to focus on short-term, focused student satisfaction, rather than addressing the long-term needs of a wide variety of stakeholders. In such case, students often have a short-term perspective and aim on achieving high grades easily. Clayson and Haley (2005) addressed some of the implications that are often given as justifications for why students should not be treated as customers. They labeled one of the reasons as a "lack of student accountability," in which students blame for their failures or lack of success. Other reasons include "student as a judge" affecting grading for the course, "adversarial relationships" that might prejudice a dispute's resolution in the student's favor, and "students' demands as customers" that might result in an incorrect allocation of curriculum and resources. In his research, Brady (2013) reported that most faculty members believe that

the student assessment process as customers pushes them to ease the content of courses. In another research, Hassel and Lourey (2005) found that treating students like customers causes grade inflation. From a wider viewpoint, when students act as customers, they feel they have the right to tell the teacher whether they performed well or poorly, and many of them come to the class expecting to be entertained rather than necessarily learning. Furthermore, Albanese (1999) states that students should not be viewed as customers, and a dissenting opinion indicates that HEIs must 'sell out' to them. Overall, the primary objections to treating students as customers have to do with the educational process, and the central concern with these objections is that they lower academic standards (Lomas, 2007).

Given the discussions above, there are mainly two distinct views about the role of students, which requires reframing the debate over who students really are and what roles they have. Therefore, the current study systematically reviewed the prior literature forming around the relevant discussion to seek ways to find more reasonable answers and to present a set of perspectives regarding the research topic. The value of this study lies in revealing and discussing themes that emerged within the context of prior literature and offering a new perspective on students' roles.

3. Research Methodology

Systematic review is becoming increasingly significant in social science research. In this direction, many researchers have recently used the systematic literature review method to identify, evaluate and synthesize the current situation of specific research topics in the relevant literature (Mishra et al., 2021). This technique requires a rigorous methodological analysis including localization, restrictive collection, and eliminating the subjective element (Paul and Criado, 2020). In this way, it might be possible to provide an accurate summary of a specified literature that predicts the overall impact on a study population and thus build an overview with adequate documents on a specific topic (Mishra et al., 2021). This theme-based systematic review adopted the research methodology based on the systematic review approach of Thorpe et al. (2005) and consists of the five steps in Table 1. Researchers utilized this step-by-step guide to foster a spirit of collaborative thinking, relevance, and openness among researchers to avoid costly and pointless duplication of effort and to help link future research to the issues and problems raised by previous research. This helped provide a narrative check on the methodology's robustness and in identifying any possible mistakes in the selection and synthesis of the papers that were thought to comprise the evidence base (Thorpe et al., 2005).

Table 1: Systematic Review Steps

Step I	Defining search and searching relevant keywords in the database
Step II	Searching papers in the database
Step III	Reading and selection of titles and abstracts
Step IV	Reading and selection of full papers
Step V	Analyzing the findings from papers

We searched the relevant literature in Web of Science (WoS) database by using keywords "Students" AND ("as customers" OR "as not customers") and reached 924 papers. WoS is the most widely used database to measure, evaluate, and track scientific research (Zupic and Čater, 2015). The database also enables to reach

a wide range of scientific papers and other materials published in leading scientific journals. Additionally, researchers can get free access to the database due to their university membership (Ozturk, 2021). Moreover, 60 more papers that did not include the search keywords and were accessed from the bibliography of the reviewed articles were identified through the individual journal websites, not covered in the 924 papers. These are judged to be significant in the light of the present research question. The systematic review requires the application of tough exclusion criteria to base the review on best-quality evidence (Paul and Criado, 2020). Accordingly, we confined 984 papers identified in the preliminary research by applying the following criteria for exclusion.

The exclusion criteria are:

1. Non-journal articles,

2. Languages other than English,

3. Other study fields except Business, Management and Educational Research,

4. Papers not forming around the debate over whether students are customers, or not.

Our initial search yielded a total of 984 papers. However, 199 papers of which document types are conference proceedings, book chapters, books, and other publications were excluded other than the high-quality papers ensured by the peer-review process undertaken by academic journals. Additionally, we eliminated 32 papers written in various other languages than English. We limited the study fields to Business, Management, and Educational Research to ensure that selection criteria met the objectives of the study subject. Then, we did not include 327 papers within other study fields in the review process. We read the titles and abstracts of all remaining papers and evaluated their relevance to the subject of study. The majority of them in which the keywords "students" AND ("as customers" OR "as not customers") were not concerned with the debate over whether students should be treated as customers or not customers. Also, most of the papers took the students as research sample rather than focusing on the relevant discussion. As such, 340 papers were excluded from the review. Thus, the final population consisted of 86 peer-reviewed journal articles considered to provide core contributions to the fields of research on the study subject. All the process is displayed on Figure 1 designed based on Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (http://prisma-statement.org/).

Figure 1: Flowchart of Identification and Selection Criteria
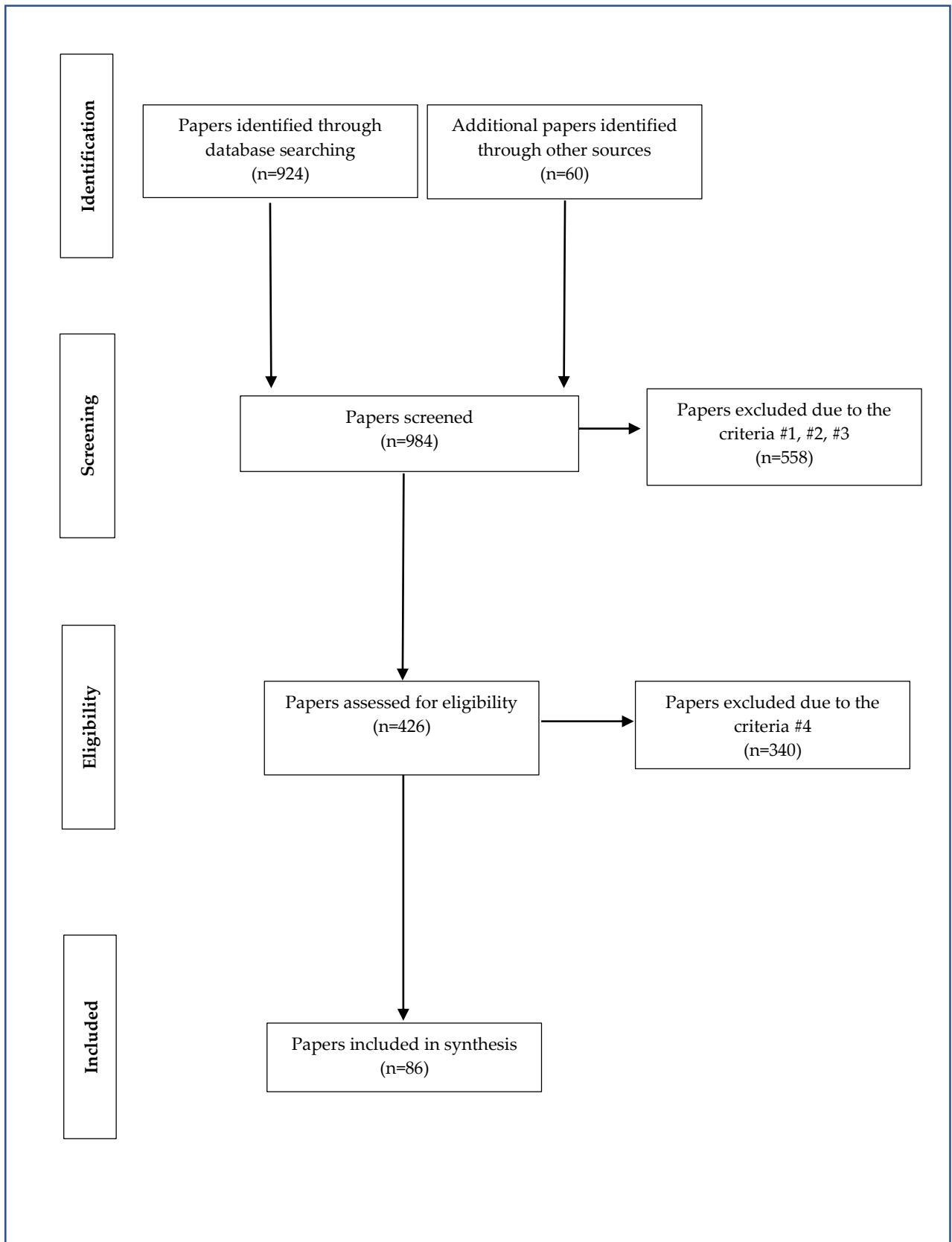
4. General Characteristic of the Papers

To quantify and assess the scientific outputs of the selected studies, it is important to categorize bibliometric items such as publication years, country origins, adopted research methods, and journals (Ruggeri et al., 2019). Accordingly, we look for answers to the following questions to demonstrate the general characteristics of the selected papers:

• What is the number of articles per year?

• How do the publications disperse across countries?

• Which research orientation is adopted in the research?

• How is the distribution of the articles per journal?

4.1. Publishing Trend Overtime and Geographical Dispersion of Papers

The research methodology required to put a year restriction spanning 20 years between 2002 and 2022. However, papers from 2002 to 2005 were excluded because of the exclusion criteria employed in the screening and eligibility processes. In other words, some of these studies were written in a language other than English and are not journal articles, others were not formed around the relevant discussion that constitutes the study subject. Thus, we conducted our review through 86 papers between the years 2006-2022. Figure 2 depicts the evolution of the number of selected papers by years. Publication numbers do not have a linear increase or decrease over the years, with a peak 2015, 2020 and 2021. Additionally, in 2022, the number of papers in the previous 12 years has been reached with 5 papers and some of them have been exceeded although there is still some time to complete the year. This finding indicates that the study subject has drawn attention for the last three years and it generates a growing research area.

Figure 2: Publishing Trend Overtime
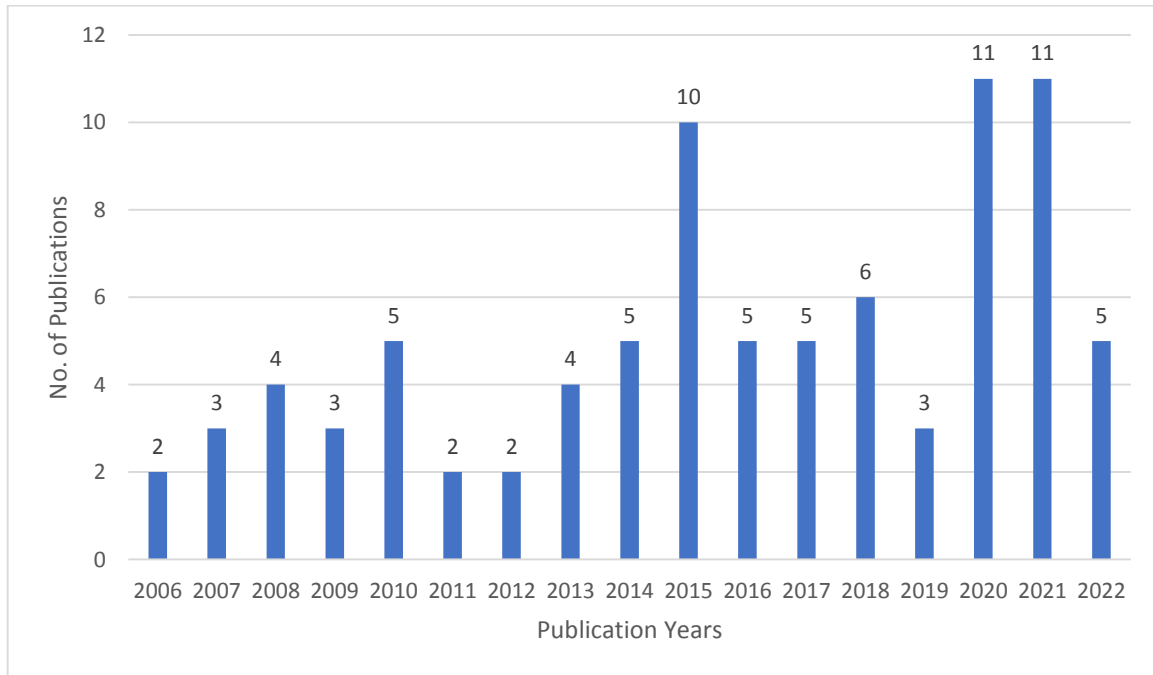
Geographical classification of the literature is important to see the intensity of the relevant research across the globe (Fatma and Rahman, 2015). When the distribution of the papers according to the countries is analyzed, it is observed that 86 papers spread over a wide geographical area with a total of 31 countries. Figure 3 displays the number of selected papers by countries. Accordingly, England plays a leading role in the research based on the relevant subject with a total of 22 (25,6%) publications, respectively followed by the USA with 15 (15,1%) publications and Australia with 6 (7%) publications. The number of papers in the remaining countries is quite close to each other, with from 1 to 3 publications. Of the 86 publications, the most numerous are in western countries with 60 (70%) publications. Among these, European countries are well represented, with a total number of 15 (15,1%) publications, of which 8 belong to the countries in North Europe. Additionally, they are followed by Far East countries with 10 (11,6%) publications.

Figure 3: Number of Selected Papers by Countries
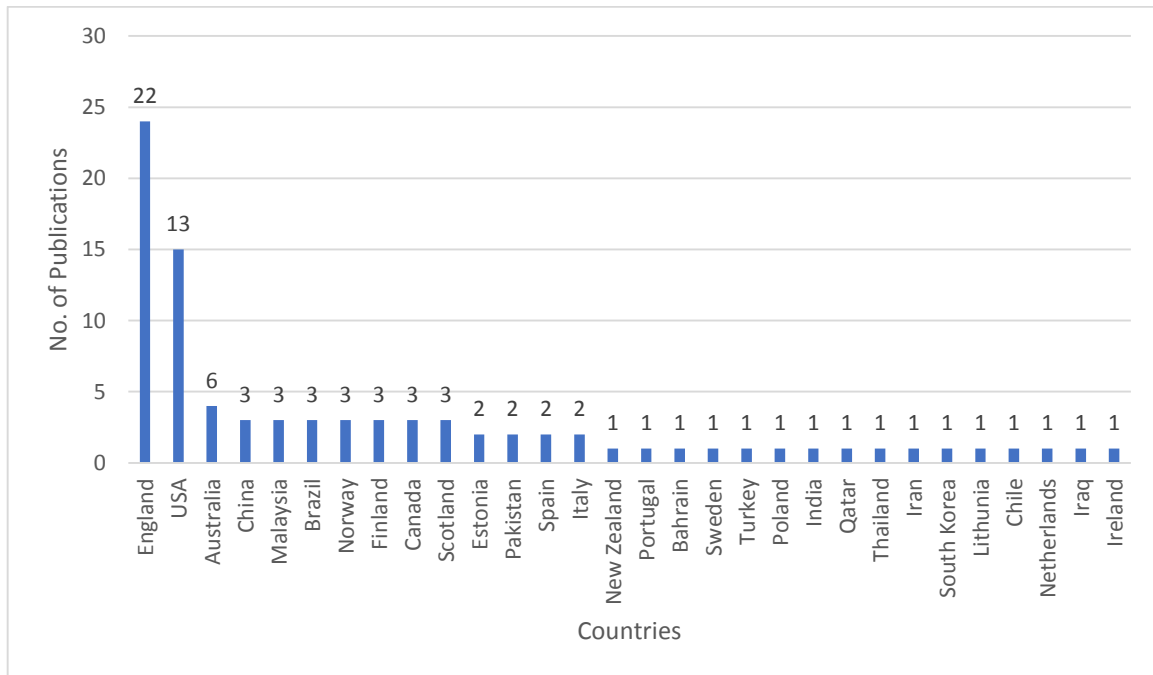
4.2. Research Orientation and Journals-Wise Distribution

Our review depicts the domination of the empirical papers with 58 (67,4%) publications, of which 28 (32,6%) adopted quantitative approach. The remaining 23 (26,7%) papers adopted qualitative approach as 7 (8,1%) papers were conducted by employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. Among 86 papers, the number of conceptual ones with 28 (32,6%) is quite remarkable. This indicates that our study subject is suitable for discussion over the concepts. In addition, the number of quantitative and conceptual papers is equal, and the number of papers adopting a qualitative approach is very close to theirs. However, the number of papers using mixed methods is very few. The relevant debate may be furthered by attempting to understand the study sample using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Figure 4 illustrates the research orientations of the papers used in our review.

Figure 4: Research Orientation
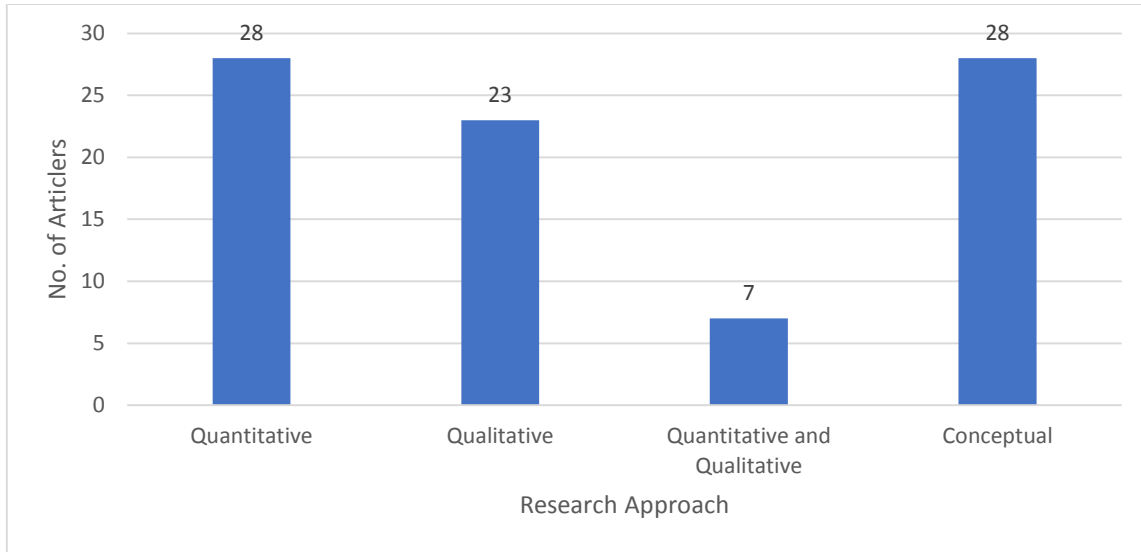
We classified the journals to observe where papers focusing on the relevant debate were published. Accordingly, the papers were found to be published in 47 reputed peer-reviewed journals across a range of years. Among this reputed journals, Journal of Marketing for Higher Education is the dominant outlet with 14 papers, followed by International Journal of Educational Management with 7 papers and Studies in Higher Education with 6 papers. Three papers each were published in 3 journals, two papers each in 9 journals and one paper each in the remaining journals. Table 1 depicts the journal-wise distribution of papers in various time periods. Papers on the relevant subject have been published in a wide range of journals. This abundance is encouraging for academicians concerned about identifying and choosing a channel for their manuscripts associated with the relevant subject.

Table 2: Journals-Wise Distribution of Papers

Journals	No. of Papers	References
Journal of Marketing for Higher Education	14	Ng and Forbes (2009), Saunders (2015), Koris et al. (2015), Fleischman et al. (2015), Robinson and Celuch (2016), Guilbault (2016), Dollinger et al. (2018), Nguyen et al. (2019), Hashim et al. (2020), Smorvik and Vespestad (2020), Sharif and Lemine (2021), Syed et al. (2021), Goi et al. (2022), Tarı Kasnakoğlu and Mercan (2022)
International Journal of Educational Management	7	Svenson and Wood (2007), Watjatrakul (2014), Koris and Nokelainen (2015), Carter and Yeo (2016), Gallarza et al. (2019), Calma and Dickson-Deane (2020), Raza et al. (2021)
Studies in Higher Education	6	McCulloch (2009), Woodall et al. (2014), Bunce et al. (2017), Nixon et al. (2018), Cavallone et al. (2021), Darwin (2021)

Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management	3	Xiao and Wilkins (2013), Dziewanowska (2017), Thien and Jamil (2020)
Independent Journal of Management & Production	3	da Silva et al. (2020), da Silva et al. (2020), da Silva (2021)
Higher Education	3	Tavares and Cardoso (2013), Budd (2017), Jabbar et al. (2018)
International Journal of Consumer Studies	2	Fiates et al. (2008), Khatri and Duggal (2022)
Quality in Higher Education	2	Lomas (2007), Little and Williams (2010)
Teaching in Higher Education	2	Molesworth et al. (2009), Raaper (2019)
Education and Training	2	Finney and Finney (2010), Millican (2014)
Social Work Education	2	Gates et al. (2015), Todd et al. (2017)
Higher Education Research & Development	2	O'Toole and Prince (2015), Naylor et al. (2021)
Journal of Further and Higher Education	2	Hart and Coates (2010), Hulme et al. (2014)
Active Learning in Higher Education	2	Harrison and Risler (2015), Bunce and Bennett (2021)
International Journal of Lifelong Education	2	Tomlinson (2015), Siivonen and Filander (2020)
Tertiary Education and Management	1	Vuori (2013)
Journal of Marketing Management	1	Naidoo et al. (2011)
Quality Assurance in Education	1	Eagle and Brennan (2007)
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	1	Guilbault (2016)
Innovations in Education and Teaching International	1	Carey (2013)
Journal of Service Management	1	Diaz-Mendez and Gummesson (2012)
Review of Higher Education	1	Saunders (2014)
Australian Educational Researcher	1	Pitman (2016)
Journal of Education Policy	1	Page (2020)
Journal of Marketing Education	1	Taylor et al. (2011)
Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism	1	Xu et al. (2018)
Innovative Higher Education	1	Singleton-Jackson et al. (2010)
Interactive Technology and Smart Education	1	Ranjbarfard and Sureshjani (2018)
Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	1	Wong (2012)
Asia-Pacific Education Researcher	1	Qi et al. (2022)
Decision Sciences-Journal of Innovative Education	1	Stodnick and Rogers (2008)
European Journal of Contemporary Education	1	Kaminskiene et al. (2020)
Higher Education Quarterly	1	Brooks (2021)
Journal of Management & Organization	1	Martin (2008)
Journal of Strategic Marketing	1	Torkzadeh et al. (2021)
London Review of Education	1	Temple et al. (2016)
International Journal of Engineering Business Management	1	Leem (2021)
Australian Universities Review	1	Song-Turner (2008)
Educational Philosophy and Theory	1	Forrest (2020)
European Journal of Marketing	1	Tregear et al. (2010)
Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies	1	Porfilio and Yu (2006)
Journal of Financial Services Marketing	1	Pass (2006)
Marketing Intelligence & Planning	1	Seifert and Kwon (2020)
Open Learning	1	Moerkerke (2015)
Service Science	1	Botti et al. (2017)

| Total Quality Management and Business Excellence | 1 | Shah et al. (2022) |
| International Journal of Management Education | 1 | Brady (2013) |

5. Synthesis and Findings

In word-based analyses, the researcher evaluates the frequency and co-occurrence of particular words in a body of textual data to identify keywords, repeated ideas, or configuration of words with respect to other words in the text (Guest et al., 2011). Accordingly, we reviewed all abstracts, titles, and author keywords of 86 papers. Then, we identified common keywords most frequently repeated to reveal the main topics indicating the research themes (Services Marketing, Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), Relationship Marketing). To do this, we selected the repetitive keywords that have similar research fields and clustered them. The keywords in each cluster together form a meaningful whole. Therefore, we assigned to clusters the topics best representing it. To illustrate, the keywords such as customer service (Brooks, 2021; Raza et al., 2021), educational services (Gates et al., 2015; da Silva, 2020; Page, 2020), service climate (Martin, 2008), and service-oriented organizations (Lomas, 2007, Harrison and Risler, 2015, Naylor et al., 2021) show that education should be treated as a service. This gives us a logical pathway to assign "education as service" as a topic. However, some keywords may not have a very close relationship with topics. In order to prevent this and extract a more integrating and relational idea from the data (Richards, 2005), we have specified a theme best representing each topic. Table 3 lists all the references, keywords, topics, and themes that we derived from the reviewed papers. Accordingly, we concluded that papers, including the long-standing debate over whether students should be treated as customers or not, have been formed around the three themes guiding us in identifying who the students really are.

Table 3: Themes Formed Around the Debate over "Whether Students Are Customers"

References	Keywords	Topics	Themes
Brooks (2021), Raza et al. (2021)	Customer service	Education as service	Services Marketing
Lomas (2007), Harrison and Risler (2015), Naylor et al. (2021)	Service-oriented organizations		
Gates et al. (2015), da Silva (2020), Page (2020)	Educational services		
Song-Turner (2008), Robinson and Celuch (2016)	Higher education service		
Martin (2008)	Service climate		
Eagle and Brennan (2007), Gallarza et al. (2019)	Life quality in university	Educational quality	
Porfilio and Yu (2006), Molesworth et al. (2009), Xu et al. (2018)	Teaching quality		
Stodnick and Rogers (2008), Naidoo (2011)	Classroom service quality		
Siivonen and Filander (2020)	Quality assurance	Quality consideration in education	
Little and Williams (2010)	Quality enhancement		
Finney and Finney (2010), Temple et al. (2016), Thien and Jamil (2020), Sharif and Lemine (2021)	Perceived quality of education		

Wong (2012), Todd et al. (2017), Qi et al. (2022)	Student (learner) participation	Involvement of students	Service-Dominant Logic (SDL)
Taylor et al. (2011), Millican (2014), Tarı Kasnakoğlu and Mercan (2022)	Student engagement		
Dziewanowska (2017), Raaper (2019)	Student feedbacks		
Tavares and Cardoso (2013), Saunders (2014), Tomlinson (2015), Syed et al. (2021)	Student decision making		
Leem (2021)	Personalized communication		
Fleischman et al. (2015)	Generative dialogue		
Botti et al. (2017)	Negotiation		
Kaminskiene et al. (2020)	Collaborative work	Co-creation process	
O'Toole and Prince (2015), Nguyen et al. (2019)	Collaborative learning		
Singleton-Jackson et al. (2010), Da Silva (2021), Goi et al. (2022)	Co-creation experience		
McCulloch (2009), Koris and Nokelainen (2015), Ranjbarfard and Sureshjani (2018), Dollinger et al. (2019)	Co-production		
Shah et al. (2022)	Co-destruction		
Carey (2013)	Co-creation of learning		
Cavallone et al. (2021)	Co-creation partnership		
Moerkerke (2015)	Co-construct personalized experience		
Smorvik and Vespestad (2020)	Mutual resource exchange		
Guilbault (2016)	Mutual value	Co-created value	
Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson (2012)	Value-in-use		
da Silva et al. (2020)	Added value		
Khatri and Duggal (2022)	Student well-being	Lifelong satisfaction	Relationship Marketing
Pass (2006), Budd (2017), Torkzadeh et al. (2021)	Learner satisfaction		
Hashim et al. (2020)	Promotion of lifelong learning		
Hart and Coates (2010), Seifert and Kwon (2020)	Student retention	Maintenance of relationships	
Watjatrakul (2014), Xia and Wilkins (2015)	Intended retention		
Calma and Dickson-Deane (2020)	Alumni		
Darwin (2021)	Long-term relationship	Creation of long-term value	
Koris et al. (2015)	Customer-brand relationship		
Carter and Yeo (2016)	Brand trust		

Svensson and Wood (2007), Ng and Forbes (2009)	Student relationships		
Vouori (2013), Woodall et al. (2014)	Student long-term value		

The common keywords in the reviewed articles helped us form clusters to reveal the specific themes around the relevant debate. However, it is inevitable that themes are related to each other. In other words, some studies under a particular theme are closely related to other themes. This indicates that the relevant discussion should not be at two extremes. Accordingly, we also make use of the studies in separate clusters while synthesizing each theme.

5.1.Services Marketing in Higher Education

Marketing is not new in the HE sectors. There are many studies emphasizing the increasingly significant role of marketing toward the stakeholders of HE (Gallarza et al., 2019; da Silva, 2020). The sector has become more dynamic and complex especially in recent times as many market forces influence the educational environment. In other words, the rapidly changing environment, and the increasing pressure from the public and some social groups force the universities to find new ways or to develop existing ways to cope with the challenges of their markets. Thus, they have become more marketing-oriented (Dollinger et al., 2018).

In the reviewed papers, education is often treated as a pure service and educational marketing was studied under the head of services marketing. Education has the main characteristics of intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability that are unique to a service and thus, services marketing is the best suitable study field for educational marketing (Enache, 2011). Similarly, Stodnick and Rogers (2008) cited HE as a key example of a service having intangible outputs such as knowledge, skills, mental development, and graduate outcomes. Some of the reviewed papers are directly related to the notion of quality regarding the service given in HE (Porfilio and Yu, 2006; Eagle and Brennan, 2007; Stodnick and Rogers, 2008; Molesworth et al., 2009; Finney and Finney, 2010; Little and Williams, 2010; Naidoo, 2011; Temple et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2018; Gallarza et al., 2019; Siivonen and Filander, 2020; Thien and Jamil, 2020; Sharif and Lemine, 2021). Also, these studies demonstrate that universities use instruments and tools, especially 7Ps developed for service markets.

Product; in the educational context, there has been a longstanding debate as to what the product is (Sharif and Lemine, 2021). Based on our review, we ensure that educational product is much more than what is being sold. In fact, it includes a wide range of offerings such as programs and courses (Robinson and Celuch, 2016), curriculum (Millican, 2014), qualified teaching (Xu et al, 2018), social environment (Smorvik and Vespestad, 2020), moral values (Guilbault, 2016), certificates (da Silva et al., 2020), and graduation (Calma and Dickson-Deane, 2020). It is more beyond a simple set of tangible characteristics since it provides a bundle of benefits satisfying students' needs and wants (Dann, 2008). Therefore, HEIs should fully know what the product really means prior to developing marketing strategies carefully communicated throughout the given institution.

Price means charging for educational services. This element mostly is dominated by what is being charged for the degree or tuition fees required to enroll at the institution. In our review, papers mostly include the admission and term fees (Page, 2020), university affiliation fee (Porfilio and Yu, 2006), exam fees (Lomas, 2007), and fee concessions and exemptions (Song-Turner, 2008) and emphasize the critical role pricing element in the daily operation of HEIs.

Place is the location where the educational product is available to those who are users, including distribution channels. The delivery system of an institution might be divided into three dimensions. The first is the location of the relevant institution including facilities and accessibility. The second is scheduling

the service delivery that will appeal to students. The last one is the mode of delivery including technology and instructional forms to be used in the delivery of educational services (Kotler and Fox, 1995). In our review, the place is mostly dealt with within the context of service delivery (Eagle and Brennan, 2007; Stodnick and Rogers, 2008; Gallarza et al., 2019). Based on the relevant papers, place strategy is quite important for HEIs to enhance service quality perceptions.

Promotion includes all the tools HEIs use to provide the market with information about their offerings. In the reviewed papers, these tools are mostly publicity (Leem, 2021), advertising (Tregear et al., 2010), public relations (Naylor et al., 2021), and sales promotional efforts (Hashim et al., 2020). Enache (2011) states that an institution has many other channels which should be engaged with information and thus promotion strategy should focus on finding the best way to reach its recipients.

People include all the staff of an HEI who interact with the students. In our reviewed papers, these are consisted of administrative (Porfilio and Yu, 2006; Lomas, 2007) and academic staff (Brady, 2013). The administrative staff plays an important role in managing all educational processes and dealing with the demands of the students. Lin (1999), on the other hand, argues that selecting the right people for academic positions at an HEI is more important than all other things. The academic staff is at the front line. They have the power to directly affect the perception of students and the image of the institution. However, academic staff at the front line and administrative staff at the backstage complement each other and affect student perceptions of service quality together (Lomas, 2007).

Process encompasses all the bureaucratic and administrative functions of an HEI from registration of students to their graduation. In the reviewed papers, the process of educational service is seen to be composed of student engagement (Taylor et al., 2011; Millican; 2014; Tarı Kasnakoğlu and Mercan, 2022), teaching (Nguyen et al., 2009), assessment (Little and Williams, 2010) and graduation (Calma and Dickson-Deane, 2020). A well-managed process affects the quality of the educational product having the characteristics of inseparability and variability and, thus the perception of educational service quality in general (Dann, 2008).

Physical evidence plays a crucial role as proof of the product offerings as the educational product has the characteristic of intangibility. For example, a grad student is given a diploma as proof of knowledge. In the reviewed papers, the physical evidence in HEIs is mostly functionality (Ranjbarfard and Sureshjani, 2018) and ambient conditions (Naidoo et al., 2011) of the classrooms and university facilities (Eagle and Brennan, 2007; Gallarza et al., 2019). The strategy related to the physical evidence is responsible for a tangible meaning for the educational offerings. Especially in the enrolment phase, buildings and campus facilities reflect the quality of the service to be delivered (Smorvik and Vespestad, 2020).

In the papers we reviewed, we deduced that education is a pure service and should be evaluated within the scope of educational marketing and therefore services marketing. From these papers, we inferred that it is necessary to focus on increasing the quality of service to attract new students and increase the satisfaction of existing students. HEIs must provide all means through which students get the best learning experience and have a protagonist role in their learning process (Naidoo, 2011). This provides them with factors such as student engagement (Tarı Kasnakoğlu and Mercan, 2022), collaborative learning (Nguyen et al., 2019), and generative dialogue (Fleischman et al., 2015) that will enable the education process to be done better by the parties. Although the presence of marketing in the HE sector requires a customer-centric perspective (Mark, 2013), the created value should not be reduced to a single center. The integration of the marketing mix (7Ps), which is frequently used especially in service marketing, into the education sector shows that the educational output or the value created is not one-sided. For example, HEIs increase classroom quality through smart boards and projections, quality tools and equipment, the generation of suitable ambiance for the lectures, or life quality on the campus through rich libraries, coffee shops, and bicycle paths for engaging students in the value creation process. Therefore, this effort transforms students from passive service users to active actors in the educational process. To support this view, Ng and Forbes (2009) state that education is co-created by its own nature. Also, SDL, another research theme, requires the

role of customers to be transformed from a passive audience to an active participant in co-creation of the service experience (Lusch et al., 2007).

5.2. Service-Dominant Logic in Higher Education

The Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2004), is a mindset initiating a new way for synthesizing and explaining an alternative way of exchange and value creation among parties. As reached from our review, the core aspect of SDL is the co-creation of value. Vargo and Lusch (2008) describe the customer as the co-creator of value. In other words, when an organization offers a value proposition, the customer and organization create value together. SDL was developed primarily within the scope of marketing. However, it is applicable to other areas. HE is an appropriate area to be analyzed through SDL lens (Díaz-Méndez et al., 2019).

It is valuable and logical to adapt the lens of SDL to HE (Carey, 2013). Especially the co-creation approach arising within SDL framework is an opportunity for HEIs to address the complexity and dynamics of their service offerings (Goi et al., 2022). In this sense, Dziewanowska (2017) considers four of the 11 premises of the SDL (Vargo and Lusch, 2016) as being particularly related to the HE: FP (4)- operant resources (i.e., skills and knowledge) are main sources of the benefit; FP (6)- value is co-created by the attendance of various actors, always involving the beneficiary; FP (7)- actors cannot deliver value, but take part in the creation and offering of the value offerings; and FP (9)- research integrators are all social and economic actors.

HEIs cannot create an isolated value, but only provide value offerings subjectively experienced by students through value-in-use (Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012). This occurs only by the functioning of both operant (i.e., competencies, skills, and knowledge) and operand resources (i.e., buildings, classrooms, and laboratories) of each actor participating in the process. SDL adopts a resource-based perspective in which both organizations and customers have different types of tangible and intangible resources to be integrated for co-creation of value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Within HE, academic staff and students are the key actors in the value co-creation process, and they integrate the resources by interacting repeatedly.

SDL perspective requires the role of customers to be transformed from a passive audience to an active participant in co-creation of the service experience (Lusch et al., 2007). Education as a pure service is also co-created by its own nature (Ng and Forbes, 2009). The reviewed papers recognized the significance of the active contributions of students to their learning process (McCulloch, 2009; Taylor et al., 2011; Wong, 2012; Carey, 2013; Millican, 2014; Koris and Nokelainen, 2015; O'Toole and Prince, 2015; Todd et al., 2017; Ranjbarfard and Sureshjani, 2018; Dollinger et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019; Tarı Kasnakoğlu and Mercan, 2022; Qi et al., 2022). In these studies, it is emphasised that the value achieved by students depends not only on the quality of the academic staff's resources, but also on the student's own resources (i.e. competences and skills). McCulloch (2009) states that students as co-producers take full responsibility for the learning and use other resources to support their effort and get more successful outcomes. Without students' active participation and engagement, it is impossible to attain the desired outcomes of learning (Dollinger et al., 2019).

Based on the SDL perspective, HEIs must provide all means through which students get the best learning experience and have a protagonist role in their learning process. Scott (2006) argues that one of the significant missions of an HEI is to provide a service to society. This service begins in the class by co-creating value with students. From the lens of SDL, the academic staff becomes facilitators of learning and students take an active role in obtaining all learning outcomes that are directly or indirectly beneficial for society. The process of value co-creation occurs inside and outside the classroom and across all actors involved. Based on these discussions, the SDL perspective suggests treating students as co-creators of value. Table 4 depicts the key components of value co-creation within the SDL perspective and some of their reflections in HE.

Table 4: Key Components of Value Co-Creation and Reflections in HE

Key Components	Reflections in HE
Value creator	Many actors interact with one another to co-create value in HE treated as a service system. Students, academic and administrative staff, the research community, and society are the key actors.
Process of value creation	Academic staff are value facilitators and students are co-creators. The staff facilitate value and students use it as an input for the co-creation of value.
Purpose of value	Providing a learning experience resulting in developing the employability skills and competences of a student.
Resources used	Education is conducted through a variety of resources, both operant (skills, knowledge, competences, teaching methods, communication capabilities, etc.) and operand (classrooms, teaching materials, laboratories, etc.).
Role of firms	All the staff in HE act as value facilitators to co-create value.
Role of customers	Students play an active role in the co-creation of value. They might be treated as co-creators or co-producers of the learning process.

Source: (Diaz-Mendez et al., 2019)

From the reviewed papers, we inferred that SDL is an appropriate approach to simplify the complex educational service system within which multiple actors interact to co-create value. In this system, it is possible to treat students as co-creators of value. Thus, educational service might easily be transferred to a specified context conducted through the premises of SDL. According to Cavallone et al. (2021), HEIs may create long-term relationships with the students by adopting the lens of SDL followed to co-create value. Therefore, SDL not only provides a simple understanding of the educational service system, but also helps to establish a long-term relationship between the parties.

5.3. Relationship Marketing in Higher Education

Considering all the global challenges, HEIs began to rethink the role of marketing. Based on the reviewed papers, it is seen that a greater emphasis is given to the determination of an institution's stakeholders and their corresponding needs and wants in order to build, develop and maintain positive relationships (Hart and Coates, 2010; Vouori, 2013; Woodall et al., 2014; Koris et al., 2015; Carter and Yeo, 2016; Hashim et al., 2020; Darwin, 2021; Seifert and Kwon 2020). Accordingly, relationship marketing is gaining importance within the scope of HE as it is being regarded as having the potential to positively affect the activities of a given institution.

Traditionally, relationship marketing has been seen to be especially relevant to service and industrial markets. However, it is quite common to confront with the relational aspects of marketing in all types of organizations. Al-Alak (2006) offers the following definition of relationship marketing in relation to the HE: - It is a bundle of marketing activities attracting, motivating, and enhancing the relationships with existing and potential students as well as with all other stakeholders such as students' parents, relatives, and friends for the benefit of all sides concerned. Relationship marketing differs from traditional marketing which is mostly based on short-term transactions in some ways. Accordingly, Grönroos (1994) offers six

dimensions to build long-term relationships with customers and other key stakeholders. Table 5 displays the six dimensions of Relationship Marketing and some reflections in HE.

Table 5: Dimensions of Relationship Marketing and Some Reflections in HE

Dimensions	Reflections in HE
1. It looks for ways to create new value for customers and then share it with them.	HE institutions developed an online training and exam system that provides ease of remote participation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, students continued to be a part of the learning process.
2. It acknowledges the role of customers in defining the value they desire to acquire.	Students play an active role in shaping the learning process from which they will derive value.
3. Organizations, which adopts it, design and align processes, technology, communication in support of customer value.	By providing such opportunities as computer labs, scholarship, life easiness in the campus, HE institutions act as value facilitators to create value.
4. It includes the continuous collaborative efforts between sellers and buyers.	Value derived from the learning process in the class is co-created by the collaborative and interactive actions between students and academic staff.
5. It seeks for ways to establish a chain of relationships between the organization and its key stakeholder to create the value that customers desire.	HE institutions make project-based agreements with private companies. This both contributes to the learning process and provides students with the opportunity to find a job during the job search process.
6. It acknowledges the value of customers' purchasing lifetimes.	HE institutions both expands its donor portfolio and contributes to the lifelong learning process for graduates through its alumni programs.

Source: The authors' own drawings based on the dimensions offered by Grönroos (1994).

McCulloch (2009) states that the "student as customer" metaphor implies the increased relationships between the student, academic staff, administrative staff, and all other key stakeholders. Based on the SDL framework, this does not mean that the educational experience is built on the product-based output of exchange among parties. Rather, the given metaphor stresses the significance of fostering a two-way dialogue-based (Fleischman et al., 2015) and interactive (Guilbault, 2016) relationship between students and all interested stakeholders. In other words, they should inherently and inseparably be involved in long-term value extraction (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). Therefore, the adoption of the SDL lens will be helpful for establishing long-term relationships since it enables the transformation from a transactional-based (short-term) relationship to a relationship-based (long-term) relationship. It is important for HEIs to adopt a relationship marketing approach in order to sustain the value created with students over a long period of time. This is because, in the future, students become funders, employers in the labor markets, and the families of potential students. Therefore, the co-creation of educational service experience seems vital for establishing, maintaining, and developing long-term relationships. All these mean that treating students as customers simply purchasing products for a fee, or not as customers, is not sufficient for HEIs that have adopted both the SDL lens and relationship perspective to build long-term relationships with students in the HE sector.

6. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Based on the understanding that students are co-creators of the value, this study makes multifold theoretical and practical contributions. On the theoretical front, the study provides a thorough systematic review of 86 identified papers to show how the relevant debate has been dealt with so far and presents a route for future research. Accordingly, we present the theoretical contributions of this study separately for each theme. Firstly, in the reviewed papers, education was often treated as a pure service, and educational marketing was studied under the head of services marketing. Some of the papers are directly related to the notion of quality in HE sector and explain the quality mostly based on services marketing mix. In addition, the papers emphasize the importance of service quality in HEIs. However, they overlook how students and other key stakeholders perceive the quality. We recommend that future research do not lean toward explaining the education area upon the services marketing mix. As the given mix of components is insufficient to adequately explain the quality from the perspectives of both HEI and stakeholders, we further advise the researchers to consider other dynamics of service quality offered by Zeithaml and Parasuraman (2004). Secondly, there is no universal agreement that a student is a customer in HE. Accordingly, some research indicates academic rigor vanishes if students are viewed as customers (Albanese, 1999; Bay and Daniel, 2001; Mark, 2013). On the other hand, it could be a sign of a lack of customer orientation if students are not seen as customers (Pitman, 2016). Based on the marketing-oriented perspective, HEIs view education as a collaborative process for creating value, with students serving as co-creators, not customers (O'Toole and Prince, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2019; Kamiskiene et al., 2020; Cavallone et al., 2021). Considering students as the participants in the value co-creation process leads to adopting SDL perspective in HE (Wong, 2012; Todd et al., 2017; Qi et al., 2022). SDL, introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2004), offers an approach to integrating and elucidating a different method of value generation and exchange between parties. Accordingly, HEIs can't create an isolated value, but only provide value offerings subjectively experienced by students through value-in-use (Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012). In the reviewed papers, HEIs are considered as mere facilitators and students as value co-creators. However, the value that emerged from the co-creation process was only analyzed from the viewpoint of the students, and there was no analysis of the value expectation of the other side. Furthermore, despite the knowledge that the value will be jointly created by several actors (Carey, 2013; Koris and Nokelainen, 2015; Ranjbarfard and Sureshjani, 2018; Goi et al., 2022), a clear conceptualization of who these actors are is lacking. Accordingly, we first suggest researchers establish a link between the value co-creation process and the predicted advantages that might generate value for both institutions and students. Then, we advise them to consider the various other actors—including banks, government organizations, competitors, and enterprises in the labor market—and how they might be engaged in the process of co-creating value. Finally, HEIs have recently given relationship marketing greater importance due to global challenges (Vuori, 2013; Koris et al., 2015; Darwin, 2021). In HE, retention of current students enrolled is just as crucial as recruiting new ones (Seifert and Kwon, 2020). Similarly, our reviewed papers mainly stress the determination of an institution's stakeholders and their corresponding needs and wants to build, develop, and maintain positive relationships. Also, these papers present a route for HEIs to apply the relationship marketing principles in the HE context. Relationship marketing has historically been seen to be particularly pertinent to the industrial and service sectors. Nevertheless, dealing with the relationship parts of marketing is quite common in all kinds of institutions (Darwin, 2021). Moreover, Al-Alak (2006) treats relationship marketing as a bundle of marketing activities attracting, motivating, and strengthening ties with current and prospective students as well as other stakeholders like parents, friends, and family for the mutual benefit of all parties. However, there is a lack as to what the role of HEIs is in building long-term relationships. Accordingly, we recommend researchers examine the role of HEIs in creating, fostering, and maintaining relationships in the pursuit of mutual value.

On the practical front, this study exhibits the favorable outcomes HEIs can derive. HEIs, which are more marketing-oriented, can determine what kind of route it should embark on through themes as global competition in the HE increases. Because education is a pure service, service marketing principles can be

applied in the HE. Additionally, we can state that cooperation with students is required to fulfill their needs and wants. In this case, HEIs with SDL lenses will be most likely to perform better. Thus, it is possible to build lasting relationships with existing students and attract new ones. Also, in order for graduate students to keep engaging with value creation, relationship marketing principles also need to be adopted in HE. Furthermore, both learner satisfaction and student retention can be increased when the academic staff recognizes that the student is a part of the learning process within the practices in the class. By recognizing the context of education in terms of service providing, academics, administrations of higher education, and authorities need to be aware of students as customers (Díaz-Méndez et al., 2019). Asking about the expectations and satisfaction of customers about products and services is never enough to create better market offers. This is no different in education. Co-creative spirit of service design needs a significant amount of service provider effort. So, accepting students as customers does not mean students can decide about the curriculum, course structures, or medium of communication, but they can contribute. When students become part of this process every decision would have the advantage of having a student perspective in it.

Accepting students as customers is also related to the continuity of life. After graduation, students take part in their careers as representatives of higher education institutions or as outputs of human resources that emerged from those institutions. At this point, customer retention and positive word-of-mouth communication will be valuable for higher education institutions. From this point of view, higher education institutions should have effective alumni communication by establishing graduate monitoring units.

For academicians, students as customers also make a valuable contribution. Combining teaching and research for an academic could be a tough task to deliver. Students may have more insights into some marketing and consumption contexts. To be up-to-date and innovative in teaching and finding significant research questions on marketing-related issues, students may provide wider ground to act. With the help of students as co-creators of value, academic staff can have another contribution that is related technics and methods to deliver the lectures. Student presentations, discussions, and case studies can effectively increase student inclusion and with the help of this students may ask for more value as customers.

Continuous feedback from students should cover a wider range of issues, not just satisfaction issues, and should ensure that students are involved in decision-making processes. It would be appropriate to involve students in decisions and processes in a more inclusive way by using social media accounts. For example, students can create canteen menus, suggest materials or technologies used in the course, and use the productions that may emerge as a result of the suggestions in the promotion strategy of the university. The point to be noted from all these practical implications is that the boundaries of the co-creation process must be well drawn. Just as the co-creation processes of for-profit enterprises do not cover all the decisions of the company, the creation of higher education services in a co-creative manner does not foresee a situation where all the decisions are made by the students. However, the unique structure and nature of higher education services may reveal student participation in a different dimension.

7. Conclusion

Despite the extensive coverage of papers, we might have overlooked some papers. Nevertheless, we are confident that this systematic review is both comprehensive and fairly representative of the relevant subject. We started to review the papers by revealing their general characteristics. What publication trend they have, how they disperse by country, which research orientation they adopt, and how they spread across journals are important to both quantify and assess the scientific outputs of the selected papers (Ruggeri et al., 2019). With respect to the publication trend between 2006-2022, we concluded that the study subject has attracted interest for the past three years, and it has led to a growing field of study. Considering the geographical dispersion of the publications, it is clear that Western countries are much more productive. This review includes the domination of the empirical papers adopting both quantitative and

qualitative approaches. However, there are very few studies that employ mixed methods. Lastly, the papers were found to be published in 47 reputed peer-reviewed journals across a range of years. With 14 papers, Journal of Marketing for Higher Education is the dominant outlet. Thus, the review provides a summarized account of the current state of the given debate in the last two decades through the papers in a variety of journals spread over a wide geographical area, adopting different methodological approaches.

Some in the traditional education community do not readily accept the notion that students are customers (Maguad, 2007). On the other hand, the reviewed papers treat students as customers, service users, or participants in value co-creation. One of the interesting results of this study is that some reviewed papers indicate that students view themselves as customers (Ng and Forbes, 2009; Guilbault, 2016). One of the reviewed papers, Koris and Nokelainen (2015) validated a student-customer orientation questionnaire (SCOQ) allowing HEIs to determine the aspects of educational experience in which students expect HEIs to be student-customer oriented. The findings of this study show that students want to be regarded as customers in terms of classroom studies, student feedback, and interactive communication. This perspective on students suggests a significant shift from the way we typically think of students. The findings of the review revealed a substantial change in the efforts of HEIs from being wholly focused on education to being marketing oriented. Additionally, the results indicate that adopting this approach offers some benefits for HEIs. Being marketing-oriented helps HEIs compete by establishing and retaining superior value through the efficient use of the educational marketing mix (services marketing), continually connecting customer needs and wants to organizational strengths (relationship marketing) and taking the customer's perspective into account (SDL) (Guilbault, 2016).

HEIs do not only provide education for their students. They also prepare their students for the future and the job market. This mission of HEIs extends beyond the production of human resources to the job market. Accordingly, HEIs aim to equip their students with several competencies. These include the elements that transform, enrich, deepen, and differentiate them beyond issues such as being directly necessary for the job market or making it easier for students to find a job. At this point, HEIs, by using co-creative nature of service providing, need to create a relationship with their students and lead them to better, for example, better internship experiences, in-campus activities, or international student exchanges.

We hope this study paves the path for more research on students as co-creators of value. However, the present study, like many other studies, has some limitations. The research only included papers that were scanned in WoS. Researchers can also employ other databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Jstor to expand the scope of the review by eliminating the duplicated papers. The study is also limited by the first three exclusion criteria that we employed in the screening process. Future research might also include other sources like proceeding papers, book chapters, and editorial material; papers in other languages than English; and papers studied in other research fields such as communication, sociology, and social psychology. Additionally, we consider only HE in this review. Researchers can include other educational levels such as primary and secondary education. This way also enables them to compare the perspectives toward the role of students among multiple educational levels.

We recommend both researchers and practitioners to consider how to best treat students as value co-creators without losing academic integrity instead of continuing to debate whether they are customers, or not. It must be acknowledged that the student, the employers, and other stakeholders can all be considered as co-creators of value. The intricacy of the role of students in HE may result from the fact that it is studied from multiple angles across various fields. The relevant debate might be reframed and the implications of students as co-creators of value might be examined by marketing researchers using recent developments in the discipline.

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