

STUDY CONCERNING THE AUTOMOTIVE PART AND ACCESSORY BUYERS' PREFERENCES, CARRIED OUT IN THE FIRST SIMULATED ENTERPRISE IN THE ARGE COUNTY: IS STUDENT UPIT ACCES4CARS SRL

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Abstract: *A practice firm is a virtual company that runs like a real business silhouetting a real firm's business procedures, products and services. A practice firm resembles a real company in its form, organisation and function. Each practice firm trades with other practice firms, following commercial business procedures in the practice firm's worldwide economic environment. A practice firm is a simulated company set up by trainees, with the assistance of a facilitator, to undertake commercial activities and it provides the trainees with hands-on business skills and enhances their knowledge and experience of business practices. The paper aims at presenting the simulation of actual process of a company in a simulated enterprise, with the purpose of helping participants acquire real skills. It also aims at knowing the buyer behaviour of potential Acces4Cars customers, and in this respect, a questionnaire is prepared, including 10 representative questions, applied to a sample of 100 people.*

Key words: *virtual company, Acces4Cars, simulated enterprise*

INTRODUCTION

The simulated enterprise is an interactive learning method that aims at developing entrepreneurship, by the interdisciplinary integration and application of the knowledge that provides the conditions for the practical deepening of the skills acquired by students in their professional training.

A **practice firm** is a virtual company that runs like a real business silhouetting a real firm's business procedures, products and services. A practice firm resembles a real company in its form, organisation and function. Each practice firm trades with other practice firms, following commercial business procedures in the practice firm's worldwide economic environment. A practice firm is a simulated company set up by trainees, with the assistance of a facilitator, to undertake commercial activities and it provides the trainees with hands-on business skills and enhances their knowledge and experience of business practices. [4].

It is a space where companies can be established, a business idea or the benefits of a product can be tested, without paying anything however, on the contrary, by gaining a lot of experience, and learning how to make money. An exercise of imagination, by which a potential reality can be tested, a dive in the business world, with the safety net attached. And even if it sounds like a computer game, and even if it takes place virtually, its implications are as real as possible.

The simulated enterprise functions like any trading company, structured on departments, a mirror image of the real partner company. Students go through all the stages from the establishment of the enterprise to its operationalization, being coordinated by professors, tutors and representatives of the real partner companies. Guided by them, students will go through several jobs (job rotation), thus obtaining a complete image of the entire working process in a company. Moreover, by working in different departments, students have the opportunity to discover their affinities for a certain job, thus benefiting

from job counselling. As in the case of a real company, the simulated company has a “continuity”, the “business” being taken over by other groups of students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this didactic method is to develop students' business skills, by simulating processes and activities that take place in a real company and its relationships with other companies and institutions (www.roct.ro)

The simulated enterprise StudecUPIT Acces4Cars SRL is the first enterprise in the virtual environment established in the Arge County, created on 2 October 2012, within the project: **Increasing the competitiveness of students who are future economists, with the purpose of facilitating their transition from school to the active life. Contract ID: POSDRU /109/2.1/G/81477.** The scope is retail and wholesale trade of automotive parts and accessories, NACE code 4532, 4531.

The simulated company has the capacity of 26 students, who simulate real processes, specific to the jobs they have in the organizational chart.

The IS StudecUPIT Acces4Cars SRL concept is to provide its customers with automotive parts and accessories, with the guaranty of a higher quality and in a positive evolution of the supply.

The mission of IS StudecUPIT Acces4Cars SRL consists of the fact that the simulated company wants to penetrate the market of automotive parts and accessories quickly, in order to support its virtual customers who want goods at the best quality-price ratio, thus contributing to the conclusion of commercial transactions with simulated enterprises in the country and abroad.

Values: The most important values governing the activity of the enterprise are: **enthusiasm, work, discipline, respect and responsibility.** These values provide the basis for a unique organizational culture and support the identity of the simulated enterprise.

For the identification and thorough investigation of the buyers of automotive parts and accessories, I selected as main instrument of the marketing research, the market study that aims at providing the enterprise IS. Studec UPIT Acces4Cars S.R.L. Pite ti with sufficient data, for the substantiation of the own decisions of action, decisions meant to provide an optimal sizing - din from all points of view, according to the requirements of the environment.

The main objective aimed by preparing this research is to know and analyse the buying behaviour of the potential customers of Acces4Cars. In this respect, I prepared a questionnaire including 10 representative and relevant questions in order to have an overview of the topic approached.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Mention should be made of the fact that this questionnaire was applied to a sample of 100 persons, and the conclusions following the interpretation of the results are as follows:

The first question sought to find out, from the very beginning, which are the categories of products purchased by the interviewees most frequently. Thus, 27% chose cosmetics, 21% interior/exterior accessories, 20% electric products, while the remaining 32% said that automotive parts are the most important category of products.

The next question (no. 2), asked respondents to make a top 3 products frequently purchased, within the above-mentioned category. The interpretation of the opinion lead to the results below:

➤ In the first category, namely cosmetics, the products mentioned were: windshield washer fluid, car air freshener, car shampoo, car wax, silicone spray, winter and maintenance solutions, cleaning wipes etc.

➤ In the second category, namely interior/exterior accessories, the highlighted products were: car seat or steering wheel covers, mats, side skirts, wipers, wheel rims, spoiler, sun shades, window curtains, etc.

➤ In the third category, electrical products, we found products such as: lamps, ignition plugs, cables, projectors, headlights, brake lights, signals, alarms, etc.

➤ In the last category, i.e. automotive parts, they mentioned: planetary gears, connecting rods, blocks, pins, brake pads, brake hoses, brake discs, oil, air or fuel filters, water pumps, etc.

When asked where they use to buy these products frequently, the interviewees mentioned several alternatives. Thus, 31% of the respondents chose supermarkets, most of them, i.e. 50% chose car part shops, 12% prefer auto services, 5% online shops, and the difference of 2% wanted to mention another source for the purchase of the products, i.e. gas stations.

Seeking to find out the selection criteria influencing the decision to purchase the desired product, 59% of the respondents answered that quality is the most important when purchasing any product; 31% of the interviewees claim that the price is the most important, 7% buy products depending on how they are promoted, and only 3% believe that the brand is a priority.

When we asked them to what extent the suggestions of the trader influences their decision to buy, we noticed that the respondents' answers are variable. Thus, 8% of the customers were not influenced, 10% felt their influence to a very low extent, 15% to a low extent, 30% to a medium extent, 31% to a high extent, and 6% to a very high extent.

"Which are the information means related to the car part companies?" is the question where the results were as follows: 33% get information through mass-media, 36% prefer as sources of information catalogues, specialised brochures or magazines, 25% find out the news through the internet and only 6% prefer information provided by friends, service shops.

Using the principle: "your opinion is truly important", in the end of the list of questions, we allowed respondents the freedom to mention the main products and services they would like to find in our shop. Following the analysis we easily found out that most respondents seek appropriate advice from professionals. They also want that after-sales support services, and technical inspections be implemented at the office of the shop, or to have the guarantee that the products they buy are of high quality.

We are mentioning that this questionnaire was used for a 57% male and 43% female population, with ages (below 20 years – 3%, 20 – 30 years – 55%, 31 – 40 years – 24%, 41 – 50 years – 14% and above 50 years – 4%) and with the following different incomes: below 700 RON – 27%, 700 – 1000 RON – 20%, 1001 – 2000 RON – 27%, 2001 – 3000 – 16% and more than 3000 – 10%).

CONCLUSIONS

The simulated enterprise is an interactive learning method that aims at developing entrepreneurship, by the interdisciplinary integration and application of the knowledge that provides the conditions for the practical deepening of the skills acquired by students in their professional training.

The simulated enterprise functions like any trading company, structured on departments, a mirror image of the real partner company.

Working in different departments, students have the opportunity to discover their affinities for a certain job, thus benefiting from job counselling.

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