Conceptualizing Schwartz values in university preference decisions: A pitch

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Abstract: This reversed engineering pitching letter is an outcome of the course RBUS6914 course studied at The University of Queensland. The letter is written using Faff (2015a) template to present the exploratory relationship personal values of the students and their decisions for making a choice for their university study. The letter includes a brief commentary and personal reflection of the pitching process.

Keywords: personal values, student preference, university, higher education, and pitching research.

JEL codes: M 31

1. Introduction

This letter is a discussion of the application of pitch template developed by Faff (2015a) to a marketing research topic. I am currently pursuing a full time PhD at The University of Queensland. I completed research Masters degree in Services marketing in 2012 and started PhD in mid 2013. Initially I was introduced to pitching template through APS workshop session in April 2015 and found it a very fascinating idea to organize my thoughts for my pilot study (study 1) for PhD. However, my research pitch was a result of a reversed engineering process, that is, the research was initially conducted and then the pitching template allowed me to present my ideas in more organized manner. The pitch development process was

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completed in September 2015, after using the pitch template as a test to use for the pilot study; I intend to use the pitch template for completion of my PhD studies. Faff (2015b) argued that pitch template is a 'simple and systematic approach' to organizing research ideas. The template helps researchers to identify the research direction, structuring the ideas and focusing on key areas. The remainder of this pitch letter is organized as follows. Section 2 is a commentary of the completed pitch; section 3 offers personal reflections on the process of completing the pitch and section 4 concludes the letter.

2. Brief commentary on the application of pitch template

The initial template was completed in five (5) business days after consultation with supervisors and doing some key readings. The template was then work-shopped after feedback from other academics and fellow colleagues. I estimate that I spent around 10 – 12 hours working on the pitch template apart from meetings from colleagues and consultation from the supervisors. Table 1 shows the final version of the pitching template titled 'Conceptualizing Schwartz Values in University Preference Decisions'.

Consistent with Faff (2015a, 2015b), I designed my pitch in a non-linear manner as the process of completing the pitch template was primarily as an exercise to convince myself for the usefulness of the template and if I could use it for projects in future. I was half way through my pilot study when I used pitching template to reverse engineer my research idea to a wide group of audience. However, to my surprise, when the pitch was finally developed, I became more interested in my project and I was further interested to talk to people using my pitching template. Therefore, not only has the template convinced me of its usefulness but also, it has become a tool for me to present research ideas in a more coherent and disciplined way. Another, interesting thing that I see about my research pitch is that it is among very few from the marketing discipline research pitches, so it gives me a little sense of achievement to contribute to database of pitches designed using Faff's (2015a) template.

My strategy for completing the pitch was to start with the sections that had 'easy' answers or that were on top of my mind and skipping the sections that needed more contemplation. After the initial stage, I completed all the sections and went back to Faff's (2015a) 'cues'. Initially meeting the requirements of the cues seemed very simple but after careful consideration, I could feel that it is a challenging task, however, this was the most useful part in my personal learning process. Examples of challenges that I faced in completing the pitching template included short listing the 'key papers'. One could question on the selection of key papers if they really provide a good understanding of the topic, methodology and the theoretical

foundation. Similarly, summarizing the motivation in less than 350 words was challenging, as it was more than superficial consideration of the puzzle at hand.

3. Personal reflection on the pitch exercise

Faff (2015a) argued that developing a research proposal can be challenging especially if the researcher wants to develop an embryonic research idea into a formal research proposal. However, Ratiu (2014) argues that despite the fact the pitching exercise can be daunting, it is still manageable; she presented her argument from an early career researcher's perspective. The activity itself is concise and fool proof but sometimes can be frustrating for a researcher to present 'big' ideas just in two-page template limiting the space and word count. Some of the most interesting aspects of the template were to think about external collaborations and the journals to be targeted.

This provided me an opportunity to review my existing literature and to focus on my research. Most of the students tend to target A* journals, however, I intend to publish my ideas first into A and B journals, building up to realistic A* targets with the confidence and learning I gain along the way. This is something that I never thought before starting my PhD research but the pitching exercise made me think about the quality of work and the target journals. The 'Other Issues' section has programmed my mind to think beyond the traditional aspects of a research proposal and always push my boundaries to think what are the other issues that can impact my research directly or indirectly. In my opinion, I would view other considerations and target journal as best practice of research that should 'always' be kept in mind before pitching a research idea for self or to other academics. Overall, I would consider pitching research as a fun and a very useful activity. Figure 1 represents the three key aspects of my research that Faff (2015b) referred as the Mickey Mouse diagram.
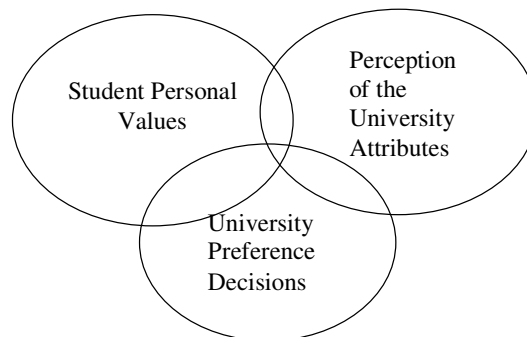

Figure 1. Mickey Mouse diagram characterizing novelty of research idea

Table 1. Completed 2-page pitch template on higher education choice

Pitcher's Name	Asma Asrar Qureshi	For Category:	Marketing	Date Completed:	13th September 2015

(A) Working Title	Conceptualizing Schwartz Values in University Preference
(B) Basic Research Question	How do the student personal values determine their preference or the choice for a university? More specifically, how the Schwartz theory of values determines the variation of preferences among the student for university choice?
(C) Key paper(s)	Hemsley-Brown, J. & Oplatka, I. (2015) University choice: what do we know, what don't we know and what do we still need to find out?, International Journal of Educational Management, 29(3), 254-274 Krystallis, A., Vassallo, M., & Chryssohoidis, G. (2012) The usefulness of Schwartz's 'Values Theory' in understanding consumer behaviour towards differentiated products, Journal of Marketing Management, 28(11-12), 1438-1463. Lee, J. A., Soutar, G., & Louviere, J. (2008) The best–worst scaling approach: an alternative to Schwartz's values survey. Journal of personality assessment, 90(4), 335-347. Schwartz, S. H. (2012) An overview of the Schwartz theory of basic values. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1), 11.
(D) Motivation/Puzzle	The process of decision-making in higher education sector that is university selection is a complex process. Various factors influence student decision-making and the choice process. University choice is one of the important areas where Australian policy makers are strongly interested to explore the factors and determinants of the high school leavers for their university preference. Stage and Hossler (1988) stated that the 'institutional policy makers are concerned with what they can do to attract high school graduates to their campuses'. Soutar and Turner (2002) discussed that the student applicants will trade-off between various attributes of the university that are most preferred by them and make a 'choice' accordingly. Each student may be considering different selection attributes for making a university choice.
THREE	
(E) Idea?	Understanding student personal values in the choice of a university is almost non-existent considering its topical nature. • Why do some students consider some attributes more important than others • How is the variation in choices explained in the universities from a values' perspective • What drives student preference in selecting different universities • Why do students differ prioritizing selection criteria and preferences?

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(F) Data?	The research project is divided into three studies and the data will be collected from state high schools in Queensland using convenience sampling method; A pilot study will be conducted in one of the schools in Queensland. A survey designed using Best-Worst task will be distributed to high school students of year 11 and year 12. Three Best-Worst tasks will be designed using Balanced Incomplete Block Designs (BIBDs) to measure Personal Values, Study Areas preferences and the preferences for universities for Queensland (Lee, Soutar and Louviere, 2008). The survey will also measure the attributes of the universities and post high school decisions of high school students via open-ended questions.				
(G) Tools?	Study 1: The results of the Best-Worst survey will be analyzed using the arithmetic technique; further a conditional Logit model (Likelihood Approach) will be applied to validate the results from arithmetic technique. Data will be factor analyzed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to identify structures in data (Pallant, 2011) to produce visual 2-factor solution.				
TWO					
(H) What's New?	Figure 1: Mickey Mouse Diagram				
(I) So What?	The contemporary research has been focusing 'only' on the decision making process and has been ignoring the component of 'choice' that provides a better understanding of the factors that influence student choices. Therefore, integrating personal values in student-consumer behavior provides a unique perspective for the marketers and academics.				
ONE					
(J) Contribution?	The research provides a critical review of literature relevant to choice behavior by identifying most important selection attributes in the higher education context. It provides an opportunity for academics and practitioners to move beyond the descriptive profiling of prospective students. Provide a relationship between personal values and consumer preference in the context of higher education that has not been studied using methods that are unique to discipline. Further, it allows the higher education institutions to segment the students based on their personal values and attract the students accordingly.				
(K) Other Considerations					
(K1) Collaborations	Department of Education, Queensland				
(K2) External advice	Not Required				
(K3) Target journal	Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, Studies in Higher Education, Journal of Research in Personality, Psychology and Marketing				
(K4) Research risk	Low Risk				
(K5) Scope	Well Balanced				
(K8) ethical clearance	UQ Business School, UQ Central Ethics Committee, Department of Education and Training				

4. Conclusion

This letter outlines my basic pitch for marketing and consumer behavior research based project on investigating the relationship between personal values of student consumers and their relationship with the university choice. The pitch has been used to discuss the research proposal to present to cohort of students at RBUS6914 module of research process and to senior management of the university as the project is applied in nature. To this end, the purpose of the pitch template was to produce a concrete plan and I believe that I have successfully achieved the purpose of the pitching project.

I have created two professional research presentations based on the ideas listed in the pitching template. I would confess that sometimes, it was hard to find answers to cues in Faff's (2015a) template but then the template forced me to think in a programmed way and 'find' out the answers according to the pitch template. For the remaining part of my PhD, and two empirical studies, the pitching template will be my guiding tool to develop research ideas and research proposals. In the end, I would like to conclude that research process itself is a journey and not an end in itself, therefore using innovative tools such as a pitching template will further improve the skills of early career researchers.

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