The Importance of Consumerism in Business Schools

A Comparative Study of Spain and Sweden

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ABSTRACT

Consumerism has been an increasing tendency in our society, especially in developed countries. The sovereignty of the consumer regarding to the supply is a much discussed topic in all industries. Business school industry, as an economic sector with high competition, has also started to give some steps in this direction, looking for what is best for the students in the long term. The intention of this study is to analyze how Consumerism is applied in business schools, comparing two developed countries like Spain and Sweden.

Consumerism has various meanings but we adhere to the following one developed by Kotler: Consumerism demands that companies should do what is best for the consumer; serve their interests, not their desires; even if this is not always what the consumer wants, especially in the short term (Kotler, 1972, p.50).

The theoretical framework is composed by the following sections: First, what has been written about Consumerism is analyzed, in order to understand the meaning and implications of this concept. The second part aims to see what has been written about business schools to gain basic knowledge about the sector and comprehend the context in which a change is asked from the traditional way of working. Peter Lorange’s IMD model is used to illustrate this demand. Thirdly, both topics are linked to find the relevant aspects of Consumerism in this industry. Finally, a theoretical framework model is developed to achieve the aim of this thesis; to study how Consumerism is applied in business schools.

This thesis is an inductive qualitative research, with an interpretative paradigm. The empirical research is based in seven semi-structured interviews with two business schools’ staff members (DBS and USBE) and their students.

Findings are presented following the ten variables that we will define as relevant for the application of the Consumerist tendency in the business school industry. Eight of them refer to Consumers’ Protection and two of them to the knowledge offering (Valuable Knowledge and Preparation). Moreover, they are analyzed in three different implication levels: country, industry and consumer level.

The results show that when it comes to consumers’ protection both countries’ business schools ensure all the basic rights of the students in a greater or lesser extend. Nevertheless, there is still a long way of improvements in the educational model, were a balance must be found between theoretical and practical knowledge. After considering the limitations of our sample, Spanish schools tend to be too practical and Swedish ones too theoretical. To enhance this situation, discrepancy between students and business schools should be minimized and best aspects of both schools strategies’ should be taken into account in order to give a better and more complete service that will satisfy consumers long term needs.

Key words: Consumerism, Business School, Long Term Needs, Consumers’ Protection, Valuable Knowledge and Preparation.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BS Business School
DBS Deusto Business School
USBE Umeå School of Business and Economics
VKP Valuable Knowledge and Preparation
CI Consumers International
IMB International Institute for Management Development (Lorange’s business school)
SFS Swedish National Union of Students / Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer
UmU Umeå University
1) INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter’s objective is to present the theme of the thesis, to make the following research more understandable. It starts with the problem background, where the general terms and the main concepts to be studied are explained, and the reason why we have chosen this specific research area. After, we define the problem, next, we formulate the research question we want to answer, and finally we explain the particular objectives we want to reach. Finally we explain demarcations and perspective and the background of the authors. We consider important to take into account our limitations and our point of view to understand the decisions taken and the obtained final results.

1.1 Problem Background

Nowadays there are more and more students who feel that the outcome of their business school studies is just a paper that proves what they have been doing during the last years. But is this what a graduate is looking for and is it really what he or she needs in the long term? Are the business schools working to fulfill these long term needs?

When carrying out a research on an economic subject specifically in the marketing area, we usually focus on the companies’ point of view, looking for the strategy and tactics they can use to satisfy consumers, and as a consequence, maximize profits.

Alternatively, there is a movement known as Consumerism that questions the way of meeting consumer needs and desires of marketing. This movement defends that economy is too focused on sellers’ rights, leaving the consumers at a disadvantage. It is traditionally believed that consumers have plenty of rights because they are the last ones deciding whether to buy something or not. However, the reality is that consumers are amateurs facing a group of experts in the subject of sales. As Straver suggested, traditionally the balance between sellers’ and buyers’ right has apparently swung in favor of the sellers (Straver, 1978, p.321). Thus, Consumerism seeks to increase the influence, power and rights of consumers in dealing with companies, in the field of economics, society, ecology and politics (García Arrizabalaga, 1997, p.15-17).

Furthermore, this movement does not challenge the existence of the capitalist system and the profit motive. The raison d’être of consumer activism is a failure of business that need a response to legitimate consumer demands. It is not anti business. In other words, Consumerism does not aim to destroy all socio-economic structures that currently exist, but rather to improve them in order to ensure equality and wealth for both consumers and enterprises.

The word Consumerism has more than one meaning in business literature. In fact, its meanings and connotations are so different in different contexts, that there are several scientific articles about the evolution of the meaning (Swangler, 1994, p.347-360). Merriam-Webster dictionary
defines Consumerism in two ways. On the one hand, it is the promotion of consumer’s interests. On the other hand, it is defined as a theory which states that increasing consumption of goods or services is economically desirable (Merriam-Webster, 2012). Therefore, it is clear that there are different perspectives when it comes to this concept. This thesis adheres to the first meaning. One of the pioneers studying this point of view of Consumerism and its main implications was Philip Kotler.

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Consumerism demands that companies should do what is best for the consumer; serve their interests, not their desires; even if this is not always what the consumer wants, especially in the short term. (Kotler, 1972, p.54)

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By doing what is best for consumers, we know that Consumerism’s main demand has been answered and that their interests are being promoted. An example of Consumerist attitudes in which businesses do what is best for consumers are the so called situations of “implied consumer interest”. The mandatory installations of seat belts or the “cooling off” period after a door to door sale are typical examples (Day & Aaker, 1997, p.46).

Therefore, Consumerism searches for an appropriate relation among consumer, society and enterprise. Furthermore, the movement searches for the consumer interest; for what is best for them.

We are aware that business schools have not always been seen as businesses or companies, but lately, this tendency has changed. Compelled by financial constraints and by the market logic (emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness, quality and competition), they (higher education institutions) are placed in a new inter-institutional competition where attracting students is one of the most structuring components. It is in this context that the consumer or client notion emerges, replacing notions that are embedded in traditional public administration, such as that of user or citizen (Cardoso et al, 2011, p.271). Following Crainer and Dearlove’s example, we adopt a business approach regarding business schools (Crainer & Dearlove, 1999, p.50). As a consequence, business schools are businesses and students are consumers.

In this context in which business schools are businesses and students are consumers of their services, the application of Consumerism can be studied. Consumerist attitudes are common in other sectors like automotive, pharmacy or credit industry (Henning, 1981, p.4) and we want to know to if the same pattern happens in business schools.

From the perspective of the economic theory’s point of view of Consumerism, this relationship between Consumerism and business schools has already been studied. Articles like Rajani Naidoo and Ian Jamieson’s “Empowering participants or corroding learning?” (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p.267-281) or M. Delucchi and Smith’s “A postmodern explanation of student Consumerism in higher education” (Delucchi & Smith, 1997, p.322-327) and it is answering article “Relevance and Responsibility” by JW Shepperd (Shepperd, 1997, p.333-335) have deeply analyzed Consumerism’s role in higher education institutions. It is very interesting to see
that one of the most common outcomes of the relation between Consumerism and higher education institutions like business schools is that Consumerism operates within a regulatory policy framework, which is based on the notion that competition between higher education institutions for limited resources will produce a more effective, efficient and equitable higher education system (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p.270). Even though works of this nature have related Consumerism and business schools and have created very relevant knowledge, we are not interested in analyzing Consumerism from that point of view. Rather than focusing on the economic theory perspective of the term, which defines it as an economic order, we want to understand if Consumerism, understood as the demand of doing what is best for consumers, is applied in business schools.

Sweden and Spain have very different educational models, and having access to both of them brings us the opportunity to create valuable knowledge by comparing them.

Do Swedish and Spanish business schools apply Consumerism? If they do, to which extent? Businesses have very different approaches when it comes to the consumerist movement in each of those countries, with different consumers’ protection levels even if the European Commission promotes the interests of the European consumers (European Union, 2011, published in the official journal DOCE nº C92, 25-04-1975).

1.2 Knowledge Gap

As we have mentioned before, so far the existing research relating business schools and Consumerism is mainly focused on the economic order’s point of view of the concept. Even though only a few studies have been written on this topic, as Naidoo and Jamieson suggest (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p.269), fewer has been written from the point of view of the Consumerism as a movement that demands businesses to do what is best for consumers.

Ali M. Quazi’s recent works are examples of these papers that define Consumerism as we do. Quazi has studied its application in different areas in several articles but he has been focused either in sectors that do not include business schools one or has analyzed it in a general way (Quazi, 2002, p.36-50) (Quazi, 1998, p.85-95). Even if these works and others like “A guide to Consumerism” (Day & Aaker, 1997, p.44-48) have contributed recently to our general topic, we have not found almost any previous literature studying the application of Consumerism from the standpoint of the second meaning in business schools industry, and none studying it in Europe. We have identified a knowledge gap here, a gap that gives us the opportunity to study the other point of view of this concept in this field.

In addition to this, the topic gains relevance when the responsibility of business schools and higher education organizations is identified. As New Labour argued in the context in which these education organizations are businesses and students are consumers, the responsibility of higher education is to contribute to a country’s competitive edge in the global marketplace by producing, transferring and disseminating economically productive knowledge (Blackstone 1999, cited in Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p.268). Under these circumstances, doing what is best for the students becomes crucial.
Having access to two different schools in two different countries gives us the opportunity not only to study to which extent Consumerism is applied in them, but also to investigate how it is applied in such different contexts. The application of Consumerism by the companies means that the best is done for their customers, and by applying this study to business schools we expect to discover if what is best for students is being done. By asking both school representatives and students we also expect to find what differences exist between what each of these groups consider to be best for students.

1.3 Problem Formulation

We want to analyze how Consumerism is applied in business schools in Sweden and Spain by disclosing if they protect and do what is best for their customers, not only by satisfying their short term demands, but their real needs in the long term.

1.4 Research Questions

To analyze this problem formulation, the research question should be formulated in terms of “how” and not in terms of “what”. Consumerism is a subjective and complicated topic; therefore knowing what consumers need is not enough; instead, we need to focus on how we should act on consumers’ behalf.

Based on the previously developed background, our research question is the following one:

How is Consumerism applied in Spanish and Swedish business schools and to which extent?

1.5 Objectives

To be able to answer the research question, we need to know what exactly Consumerism means, how it has been developed and its implications. Thus, our first objective is meant to explain this topic:

1) Describe Consumerist movement and its development

Once Consumerism is comprehended generically, it is important to investigate the sector in which we are focused on: business schools. As a consequence, we are able to apply the knowledge obtained in the previous objective about Consumerism in this specific industry. Therefore, our second objective aims the following:

2) Describe what business schools do and do not do to prepare their students for the future challenges they are going to face.
Having gained understanding of the two main areas of our study, we need to see how Consumerism affects each of the relevant groups inside business schools. Furthermore, we want to analyze the different reactions in two countries as different as Spain and Sweden in order to have a broader view of the application of Consumerism. Hence, our third objective is the following one:

3) Analyze the reaction of the three main consumerist levels in the business schools sector, comparing Spanish and Swedish situations:
   a) Countries
   b) Business schools
   c) Students

Finally, we are in a constantly changing environment to which business schools will need to adapt. Thus, it is important to think of the challenges they will face, as it is reflected in the last objective:

4) Define future challenges to be faced by business schools in terms of Consumerism.

The first two objectives are solved in the third chapter of this thesis *Theoretical Framework*. The third and fourth objectives are clarified with the empirical research, being answered in the seventh chapter, *Conclusions*.

### 1.6 Demarcations and Perspective

The information for the empirical research in this thesis has been gathered from two business schools and seven people. Thus, its findings cannot be generalized to the whole business school industry. Our aim is to get an idea about the awareness and application of Consumerism in this area, using some examples that will help us to better understand the situation.

Regarding the perspective, we are aware that our opinion as researchers may influence the results since we are consumers of both business schools and we belong to one of the consumer profiles to be analyzed. We both come from Deusto Business School and we are currently exchange students in Umeå School of Business and Economics, thereby our experiences regarding both institutions can affect our interpretations.

Besides, even if the interviewees are working or are consumers of a particular organization, our intention is not to make a comparison between members of each organization, but to see the positive and negative aspects of both companies in order to see the possible improvements for the sector in general. We do not intend to give a “winner award” to any of the institutions, just find problems that any business school can have.
1.7 Author’s background

Both authors, Blanca Boix and Iñigo Lizarza, have studied four and a half years in Deusto Business School. Blanca specialized in marketing and Iñigo specialized in management. In 2012, both of them have studied USBE’s one year masters program of Business Development and Internationalization. Even though they specialized in different subjects, both share the same basic principles when it comes to business studies since they have studied in the same business schools and studied the same subjects for their first three and a half years in DBS, until they specialized.

They became interested in Consumerism mainly because the subject is strongly related to marketing and it involves an important amount of managerial implications because of its application in real business situations. Besides, as both authors were experiencing an international study program and realized that both countries were radically different in terms of education, we wanted to know if they were doing what they thought was best for the consumer.
2) THEORETICAL METHODOLOGY

The second chapter, named Theoretical Methodology, analyzes the assumptions and framework that will be used to study and answer the results of the thesis. Firstly, we explain the research philosophy, in which the epistemological and ontological standpoints are taken into account, as well as the chosen paradigm. Secondly, we consider the research approach, followed by the research strategy. Finally, we explain and justify the taken decisions in terms of research design.

2.1 Research Philosophy

2.1.1 Epistemology

An epistemological issue concerns the question of what is or/and should be considered as acceptable knowledge. The most important question regarding epistemology is if the social world can be studied using natural sciences related methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.16).

Positivism is a doctrine that establishes that the methods of the natural sciences can be used to study social reality. It is mainly based on the principles of Phenomenalism, Deductivism, Inductivism and objective and value free researchers. It also takes into account the distinction between scientific and normative statements. Our thesis will not follow the positivist doctrine since we will not use natural sciences’ methods to study social reality.

Interpretivism, on the contrary, questions the applicability of scientific models in a social world. It defends that there is a difference between the people and the objects of the natural sciences. According to this doctrine there is also a difference between social science and natural science, since they require a different logic (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.17). This thesis follows an interpretive doctrine, since we are more concerned with understanding how Consumerism is applied in business schools rather than just explaining what it is. For doing so, it is necessary to make a distinction between social and natural sciences, since a social science approach is more appropriate when a deep understanding of a social matter is required like in this case. By studying Consumerism’s application in three levels we expect to gain understanding involving issues such as causal relations too.

2.1.2 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature or social entities. The main question that should be asked when selecting an ontological approach should be whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered as social constructions built up by social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.22).
As for ontology, two main positions exist. On the one hand, Objectivism establishes that social phenomena and their meanings exist independent of social actors, which means that social phenomena are external and beyond our reach of influence. On the other hand, Constructionism, also known as Constructivism, implies that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. This means that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction, but also that they are in a constant state of revision.

We understand that the application of Consumerism in business schools is in a constant state of change because of the decisions that people working in the educational area are changing continuously. We understand the reality that we analyze as a construct, as a specific version rather than a definitive one. Therefore, we take a Constructivist position in this thesis.

2.1.3 Paradigm

A paradigm is a cluster of beliefs and dictates what scientists should study in a particular discipline, how research should be done, how results should be interpreted (Bryman 1988, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.25). According to Burrell and Morgan (Burrell & Morgan 1979, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.26), each paradigm contains assumptions that can be represented as either:

- **Objectivist**: there is an external standpoint from which it is possible to view the organization.

- **Subjectivist**: an organization is a socially constructed product.

Each paradigm also makes assumptions about the function and the purpose of the scientific research in investigating the world of business as either:

- **Regulatory**: the purpose of business research is to describe what goes in organizations, to suggest minor changes but not to make any judgement of it.

- **Radical**: the purpose of management and business research is to make judgements about the way that organizations ought to be and to make suggestions about how this could be achieved.

The following table, provided by Burrell & Morgan shows which paradigm represents each combination of assumptions:
Theoretical Methodology

2.2 Research Approach

According to Thomas Biedenbach, PhD of Umeå University, the research approach determines whether the logic moves from general to particular or vice versa (Biedenbach, 2012, p.4).

This thesis follows an inductive logic, from particular to general. This means that theory is developed from the observations of empirical reality and data is collected to build general theories. In other words, the research infers the implications of the research findings to create a theory. We try to analyze the application of Consumerism by observing the opinions and reactions of the actors participating and not testing any previous theories. Thus, at the beginning of the thesis, before starting with the empirical analysis, we do not make assumptions about how and to which extent each business school applies Consumerism because we do not have any solid theory that support that.

2.3 Research Strategy

Research strategies can be qualitative or quantitative. According to Bryman and Bell, a quantitative approach, emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data that entails a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research. Furthermore, it incorporates practices and norms of the natural scientific model and of positivism in particular, embodies a view of social reality as external, objective reality.
In contrast, qualitative research usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. This methodology predominantly follows an inductive approach to the relation between theory and research, rejects the practices and norms of the natural scientific model and of positivism, and embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation.

The following table by Bryman & Bell shows the fundamental differences between both approaches and the usual orientations that each one takes:

**Table 1. Fundamental differences between approaches**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal orientation – role of theory to research</th>
<th>Quantitative research strategy</th>
<th>Qualitative research strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemological orientation</strong></td>
<td>Deductive, Theory testing</td>
<td>Inductive, Theory building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontological orientation</strong></td>
<td>Natural science model, In particular positivism</td>
<td>Interpretivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objectivism</td>
<td>Constructivism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.28*

This thesis follows a qualitative strategy, because in our case it is more important to analyze the behaviours and opinions in form of words and pictures rather than gathering large quantities of numeric data. A qualitative study is naturalistic; it wants to understand the action when it is observed in the context in which it is happening. Same occurs to us; we want to comprehend how the Consumerist movement is seen in the business school industry context in order to see if it is applied and to which extent. Moreover, the qualitative researchers give the same importance to the process as to the outcomes. The answer given by the respondents is as crucial as the reaction when asking them, or the tone and expressions used to give the response (Bogdan & Bilken, 2002, p.50).

**Table 2. Resume of the Chapters 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS</th>
<th>PHILOSOPHY</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Ontology</th>
<th>Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPROACH</strong></td>
<td>Inductive</td>
<td>Interpretative</td>
<td>Constructivist</td>
<td>Interpretative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRATEGY</strong></td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Own creation*
2.4 Research Design

There are many alternatives when it comes to the research design. Nevertheless, some of them are not appropriate at all for our study, as it happens to the experimental study, which consists of analyzing one specific variable’s attitude by its manipulation. We carry out a qualitative study in which we simply want to observe the existing framework without changing anything in the analyzed variables, so this type of research is not valid (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.44).

Therefore, the following alternatives can be chosen: cross sectional study, longitudinal study and case study. The first alternative, also known as social survey design, is the observation of the population or a representative sample of it, without manipulating the variables that are going to be studied. This could be a good option if we were willing to analyze a big sample, but we study some concrete cases deeply, so this alternative is not suitable. Same problem exists with the longitudinal study, which is similar to the previous one but repeating the observation during a certain period of time (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 55-61).

Thus, the most appropriate option is the case study, which analyzes a single case (case study) or a few of them (comparative case study) in a deep, intensive and detailed way. According to Bryman & Bell in Business Research Methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 62-63) a case can be a single organization, a single location, a person or a single event. The case study method can be used under almost any circumstances but is important to know that when the research strategy is qualitative, the cases tend to be under an inductive approach whereas when the research strategy is quantitative, the opposite tends to happen. Inside this kind of studies there are two types of approaches: cross-national and cross-cultural. We have chosen to develop a cross national comparative case study because this kind is the one that fits best with our research. We aimed to carry out comparison between two countries inside the European Union context; a comparison between the Spanish and Swedish business school situation in terms of Consumerism. For that, we want to see the different standpoints from the three main levels involved: country, industry and consumer. The following figure shows the relation between them:

The following diagram shows that in order to analyze the consumer level, industry level has to be analyzed first. In addition, in order to analyze the industry level country level has to be analyzed. The conditions of one level affect the next one.
This model is based on Garcia Arrizabalaga’s theory about the implications of Consumerism. He defends that this movement requires being analyzed using three levels. The first one is the country level. Firstly, we analyze the general legal framework and consumers organizations in the chosen countries in order to see the possibilities, regulation, control and education provided. Secondly, we are interested in the industry level, where we go one step further and analyze specifically how the business schools apply Consumerism in their industry to understand the level of implication and concern they have about this subject. Finally, we analyze the consumer level, to see the opinion of the main consumers of business schools: the students. The awareness about the particular and collective actions will give us a picture of Consumerism from their point of view (García Arrizabalaga, 1997, p. 28-37).

Thus, we consider that the most suitable research is a comparative case study, more specifically a cross-national approach. This type of research goes deep into one or few specific cases looking for different aspects and standpoints; in our case the different opinions and reactions regarding Consumerism in three levels. We combine different methods to maximize the collection of data for each level. The chosen methods and a further explanation about the levels are developed in the fourth chapter, Practical Methodology.

Note: In the fourth chapter, Practical Methodology, some aspects that are not defined in this chapter are developed as they are more related to the empirical research than to the theoretical framework.
3) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The aim of this chapter is mainly to answer the first two objectives defined before; obtain the necessary knowledge to understand deeply what Consumerism means and how business schools sector works, and create a theory to see the influence of Consumerism in the industry.

We start introducing what it has been written about Consumerism in the section 3.1 What has been written about Consumerism, in order to comprehend its influence in society nowadays. Afterwards, we focus on what is known about the industry of business education in the section 3.2 What has been written about business schools, specially focusing on Peter Lorange’s business school model. After analyzing both areas, we continue with 3.3 Link between Consumerism and Business Schools, in which we try to relate both issues. Finally, we develop a theory around the subject in the section 3.4 Theoretical Framework Model.

Before starting with the study, we would like to stress that there is little written about the perspective of Consumerism that we analyze, especially when it comes to relevant updated articles related to business schools. Most of the important information is from the 1970’s, when the third movement gave the final push to consolidate Consumerism as a real long term idea to take into account.

3.1 What has been written about Consumerism

When writing about Consumerism, it is important to analyze both the past and the present to see how the power and influence of this movement has developed. Thus, we start investigating the origin of Consumerism, to continue with the meaning and dimensions covering today. After that, we take a moment to consider the differences between Consumerism and Marketing, in order to better understand the importance of this way of acting. To conclude, we sum up all the information in the main key points about the subject.

3.1.1 Origin of Consumerism

It is commonly believed that the Consumerist movement started in the USA due to the wealthiness of the country, the wide offer of consumer goods and the mentality of the consumers, who were focused in “superior” consumption models because their basic needs were covered (García Arrizabalaga, 1997, p.8). Consumerism was born as a consequence of three consumer movements: the first one in the early 1900’s, the second one later in the mid 1930’s and the third movement in the 1970’s; the originator of what we understand as Consumerism nowadays. The first movement was fueled by such factors as rising prices or ethical drug scandals. The second movement was fanned by an upturn in consumer prices, the sulfanilamide scandal and the Detroit housewives strike. The third movement emerged because of the struggle
between standard and practical business practices and consumers’ long-run interests (Kotler, 1972, p.48). This last movement provides the framework in which this thesis is developed.

There are different factors that originated Consumerism; for example inflation, marketing excesses, recession; but it is not clear which one triggered the consumer dissatisfaction that generated this movement. However, there are many records of the first actions and protests, those that were taken against marketing actions that exaggerated the features of certain products, labeling, planned obsolescence and product safety (Straver, 1978, p.319).

### 3.1.2 Meaning and Dimensions

However, in order to understand what the Consumerism means as a whole, it is necessary to understand that it has several dimensions and what consequences it has had. One of the first consequences of the consumers’ movements was the so called Bill of Consumer Rights. In March 15, 1962 United States president John F. Kennedy stated in a special message to the Congress that consumers were the only important group in the economy who were not effectively organized, whose voices were not heard. He also said that the federal Government had a special obligation to be alert to the consumer’s needs and to advance the consumer’s interests. This event was a milestone in Consumerist history because, as Day and Aaker mention, Consumerism was not really established until a variety of commentators identified it with the very visible concerns triggered indirectly by Rachel Carson, and directly by Ralph Nader’s auto safety investigations and President Kennedy’s efforts to establish the rights of consumers (Day & Aaker, 1997, p.45).

Four basic rights were listed in that first document:

- **The right to safety**: to be protected against the marketing of goods which are hazardous to health or life.
- **The right to be informed**: to be protected against fraudulent, deceitful, or grossly misleading information, advertising, labeling, or other practices, and to be given the facts he needs to make an informed choice.
- **The right to choose**: to be assured, wherever possible, access to a variety of products and services at competitive prices; and in those industries in which competition is not workable and Government regulation is substituted, an assurance of satisfactory quality and service at fair prices.
- **The right to be heard**: to be assured that consumer interests will receive full and sympathetic consideration in the formulation of Government policy, and fair and expeditious treatment in its administrative tribunals (Peters, 2012).

Under this notion, consumers must be in a position to determine for themselves what they consider a life of quality; they must be free to select safe, quality products based on free choice in front of full information (Straver, 1978, p.321)

Some years later, in 1985, the United Nations expanded the previous rights to eight basic rights adding four more:
Theoretical Framework

- **The right to satisfaction of basic needs**: To have access to basic, essential goods and services: adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, public utilities, water and sanitation.
- **The right to redress**: To receive a fair settlement of just claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.
- **The right to consumer education**: To acquire knowledge and skills needed to make informed, confident choices about goods and services, while being aware of basic consumer rights and responsibilities and how to act on them.
- **The right to a healthy environment**: To live and work in an environment which is non-threatening to the well-being of present and future generations (Harland, 1987, p.250).

These rights, specially the original ones that J.F. Kennedy proposed, make possible for consumers to defend themselves from different abuses from the companies. This was followed by the establishment, with the assistance of Consumers Union, of the Consumer Federation of America in 1968 and the simultaneous pioneering projects of Ralph Nader (Mierzwinski, 2010, p.581). Related to this, we later explain how Consumerism affects the balance between the power of buyers and sellers in the next paragraphs in order to get to the specific issue that we want to analyze with this thesis, the Consumerism as companies doing what is best for the consumer.

Even if a great deal has been achieved since the 1970’s, many things written during that decade still have to be taken into account when speaking about Consumerism. Saying that business does not understand consumers (Blankenship, 1971, p.45) was a very widely used cliché those days, but even if we do not think that this is completely correct today, there can still be some truth in those words.

The worldwide famous marketing guru Philip Kotler gave this broad definition to explain what it is meant by Consumerism:

> Consumerism is a social movement seeking to augment the rights and power of buyers in relation to sellers (Kotler, 1972, p.49)

Consumerism as doing what is best for the consumer, which is the cornerstone of this thesis, was a consequence developed from this statement by Philip Kotler himself. This is the key demand of the consumers towards the sellers of goods and services.

Thanks to the consumerist movement, many institutions, laws and organizations have emerged to make sure that the balance of power is not on the business side anymore. Similarly, other authors have also written that Consumerism is a social movement that has the objective to change the relationship between consumers and businesses, in order to give more power to the former (Lowy & Souto, 1987, p.44). Different and more radical definitions have been given to the term too. For example, Alain Piot stated that Consumerism is the defense mechanism that the consumers have when dealing with sellers (Piot, 1988, p.53). However, even if there are differences between authors when it comes to how far Consumerism goes, three main elements are usually analyzed when trying to understand Consumerism, as Cravens and Hills mention in
their work “Consumerism, the eternal triangle: Business, Government and Consumers” (Cravens & Hills, 1973, p.233). These are the same levels that García Arrizabalaga uses in his Consumerism implication theory: country, industry and consumer (Garcia Arrizabalaga, 1997, p.28). Some authors like Straver, (Straver, 1977, p.95) developed deep models to define the framework in which Consumerism operates and which variables affect and are affected by it, using these three basic elements and adding macroeconomic variables and market structures. However, it is a model that was more addressed to analyze Consumerism taking into account more traditional businesses than business schools.

The first elements that appear in almost every Consumerism-oriented article or work are the government and the laws, also including measures that have been taken to ensure consumer protection. For example, Tom M. Hopkins starts his analysis of Consumerism by mentioning the agitation at the local-state-federal levels and the movements that government forces have made to answer to it (Hopkins, 1964, p.97).

It is a government’s responsibility to provide an environment in which Consumerist attitudes can be developed. Some are more protective and seek to protect consumers via legal enhancement (Straver, 1977, p.93) and others rely more on independent organizations. But as Mann and Thornton wrote, the responsibility for information generation has been perceived as lying jointly with the government and consumer organisations (Mann & Thorton, 1978, p.254).

Historically, when analyzing Consumerism in a country, the life cycle methodology has been used. There are four stages:

1) Crusading
2) Popular movement
3) Organization/managerial
4) Bureaucratic

In western countries, Consumerism has been institutionalized (Quazi, 2002, p.38). Hence, European Union countries are in the last stage of this life cycle. Concerning our thesis, the following figure shows that Sweden was already in this stage by 1977.

Figure 3. The International Movement Life Cycle
Source: Straver, 1977, p.111
This life cycle is very useful when comparing underdeveloped countries and developed ones, but when comparing two countries that are in the fourth stage, which have already institutionalized Consumerism, differences in this institutionalization should be analyzed.

The analysis of the attitude of countries’ governments towards Consumerism is essential since they have a direct influence on to which extent Consumerism can be applied in a country. This is why all important models explaining which parties are involved in Consumerism include Governments and legal regulations. The following figure, developed by Straver, is the one of the earliest and most representative designs:

![Diagram of Consumerism Parties](source)

**Figure 4. Parties involved in the Consumerism**  
*Source: Straver, 1977, p. 95*

The above figure shows political and legal variables are part of the environment in which Consumerism exists (note also that the three boxes of the bottom represent the businesses and that the consumer is also taken into account in the center of the figure). The influence that a certain country’s government can have in Consumerism is specially important to analyze in some cases. For instance, the importance of the role of the government is unique in the Swedish consumerist movement. The government finances consumer information and education, freely using the mass media (Straver, 1977, p.103). Besides, the implication of the government in consumer protection is directly related to the existence and role that consumer organizations take in a country. It is expected that in countries like Sweden, in which government has an active role in consumer education, that there will be less space for independent consumer organizations since more of their demands will be answered by existing laws.

Furthermore, businesses play an active role in Consumerism. Businessmen have historically considered Consumerism as a threat to their activities, however, that perception is now changing
as consumers are more organized and better protected than in the past. Businesses are starting to consider Consumerism as positive a favorable force for businesses rather than a threat (Quazi, 2002, p.47). Depending on the self-regulation level showed by businesses, consumer demands towards them will increase or decrease.

Finally, Consumerism is considered by many as a movement that has focused not only on augmenting the rights of buyers, but also on achieving a consumption model that takes into account social interests. Some authors have analyzed deeply these matters explaining the existing links between Consumerism and social welfare. For instance, Matthew Hilton, from Cornell University wrote that Consumer movement became a leading spokesbody for civil organizations all over the world (Hilton, 2009, p.17).

The existence of organizations like Consumers International, the most important one worldwide nowadays, prove that Consumerism is a citizen movement that make economic, social, ecological and political demands to the existing goods and services offer. Thanks to the consumer movements, consumers today routinely ponder the ethical implications of their spending for workers, the environment, and the national or local economy. (McGovern & Glickman, 2012, p.152) We investigate further what this organization claims later on.

Therefore, Consumerism is a broad term with more than one meaning that is related to the defense of consumers’ rights, achieving social consumption models and doing what is best for consumers as Kotler developed:

_Consumerism demands that companies should do what is best for the consumer; serve their interests, not their desires; even if this is not always that the consumer wants, especially in the short term._

_(Kotler, 1972, p.54)_

As we mentioned in point 1.1 we adhere to this last dimension of Consumerism to measure its application. We understand that doing what is best for the consumers is a way of understanding Consumerism that contains all the previously stated different meanings.

### 3.1.3. Consumerism and Marketing

Nowadays we cannot imagine a company that does not develop a marketing strategy when introducing and managing their offer in the market. The same approach happens with business schools. As companies, they have to take some marketing decisions in order to answer consumers’ needs appropriately. Nevertheless, Consumerism questions the way that the traditional marketing satisfies these necessities and wills.

To achieve a better understanding of how Consumerism affects the way in which people consumes services and products that are provided by businesses, we analyze the relation between marketing and Consumerism.

Marketing, as the American Marketing Association (AMA) defines it, is “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings
that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.” (American Marketing Association, 2012). From a different standpoint, Kotler, Armstrong, Wong and Saunders prefer to explain it as “the homework that managers undertake to assess needs, measure their extent and intensity and determine whether a profitable opportunity exists. Marketing continues throughout the product’s life, trying to find new customers and keep current customers by improving product appeal and performance, learning from product sales results and managing repeat performance.” (Kotler et al., 2008, p.7).

After reading these two definitions we can conclude that marketing is focused on giving value to consumers; in other words, looking for what they want, fulfilling their desires and requirements. However, many modern marketing strategies have led the customers to want what they do not need, or even worse, to want products and services that are bad for them in the long-run.

Related to this negative sight of marketing, Flipo describes marketing as a “scary economical or political war that sustains the social system; it is the ruthless combat to conquer the market, everyday’s fight with competition, and also the refinement of the techniques to “capture clients” (Flipo, 1981, p.38). This idea is also supported by Dunn Et Al’s study of consumer perception about the current and ideal marketing system, where results showed that it must be implemented more generally than nowadays (Verhage et al., 1990, p.300). Moreover Arndt, Crane and Tallhaug state that “marketing is tainted since the priority is in particular consumers’ short term wills, instead of in the long run social needs.” (Arndt et al., 1997, p.17). These opinions show that marketing sometimes forgets about morality to maximize short term results.

The previously mentioned criticism directly affected the development of the Consumerist movement. It would not exist if the marketing concept would not fail or, what it is more likely, if its concepts have not been applied completely by management (Sheth & Mammana., 1974, p.64). Buskirk and Rote believed the same, who spoke about the prostitution of marketing concept (Buskirk & Rothe, 1979, p.62).

“The aim of marketing is to make selling unnecessary” upheld Peter Drucker (Gunter & Drucker, 2009, p.17). However, many enterprises do not apply this philosophy when developing their strategy, “manipulating clients” priorities and wills. Many firms are focused on satisfying consumers momentarily, forgetting that this may damage their long-term interests. As an example for that situation, think about fast food industry: consumers want tasty products and they are provided all kinds of very tasty unhealthy products that satisfy them in the short-run but that damage them in the long-run.

Related to the topics of the previous paragraphs, Philip Kotler claimed that the real challenge for business is to develop products and marketing practices that combine short- and long-run consumer values (Kotler, 1972, p.50). Meaning that both short and long-run requirements have to be met by taking the actions that will provide consumers with what is best for them, not only with what they want in a specific moment or situation. That is exactly what we mean when trying to understand if business schools apply Consumerism, we want to know if they meet the real requirements of their customers, if they provide what is best for them. The previous idea can be explained by the matrix that relates long and short term satisfaction:
Theoretical Framework

Figure 5. Product and Service Classification depending on the level of Satisfaction
Source: Kotler, Amstrong, Wong & Saunders, 2008, p. 87

The figure above shows that the combination between the satisfaction of short term and long term needs give us the kind of products and services that would be desirable for the consumers. In other words, companies have to change their way of working and minimize the difference between theory and practice because the concepts of marketing, Consumerism, consumer’s life quality and society welfare cannot be treated independently (Garcia Arrizabalaga, 1997, p.26). Consumerism is more an opportunity than a threat for companies. An improvement in the way marketing is developed would erase the discontent of the consumers and the consumer activism (Garcia Arrizabalaga, 1997, p.96).

This same idea can be applied to business schools. The main customers of this sector, students, have demonstrated several times their dissatisfaction with the current system. There are many authors that state that students are not being prepared to meet their future challenges and that their education should change. The study made by DeShields, Kara and Kaynak about student satisfaction and retention in higher education recommends that “the changing nature of the higher education marketplace encourages college administrators to apply the customer-oriented principles that are used in profit-making institutions” (DeShields et al., 2005, p.130). Moreover, the research of Pfeffer and Fong goes one step further and put into question the value and usability of a degree in business, arguing that many successful businessmen did not have any and some that had it bankrupted their companies (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p.82). Thus, these opinions show that higher education is still lacking long run consumer orientation.

In conclusion, as Consumerism defends, it appears that marketing in business schools have to change in order to really satisfy the long term needs of students and prepare them to face future challenges.
3.1.4 Key Points of Consumerism

Since the beginning of the last century customer’s power and rights has been discussed and developed. After the third Consumerist movement four basic rights were proclaimed, later becoming eight. Nowadays Consumers International, the main consumerist voice worldwide, defends that every consumer should have eight basic rights that provide security and capability to choose freely what they really want and need in the short and long term:

1. The right to satisfaction of basic needs
2. The right to safety
3. The right to be informed
4. The right to choose
5. The right to be heard
6. The right to redress
7. The right to consumer education
8. The right to a healthy environment

Consumerism is a social movement seeking to augment the rights and power of buyers in relation to sellers which demands that businesses should do what is best for consumers. This concept questions the way in which marketing is currently used and demands a change of focus from consumers’ short-term desires to long-term real needs.

There are three main levels or elements that appear when analyzing Consumerism: countries and their governments, businesses and consumers.

3.2 What has been written about business schools

Unlike Consumerism, the business school sector has been deeply analyzed in the last decade. In order to be able to see how Consumerism can be applied, we need to comprehend the industry we study. Firstly, we introduce the sector; secondly see the main critics to the traditional model of business schools, mainly focusing on Peter Lorange; and finally we conclude resuming the key points of this section.

3.2.1 Introduction to business schools

Business schools, also known as colleges of business or business and administration, are university level institutions that teach administration, accounting, entrepreneurship, finance, economics, information systems, marketing, organizational behaviour, strategy and human resource management.

Today, they are one of the most successful university study choices all around the world and there is little doubt that business education is big (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p.78). The complex
economic system and the globalization have generated the need of people trained in this knowledge field.

The business school sector is rapidly changing and the organizations have to change too if they want to keep being competitive. Even the most well-known organizations should adapt to the changing environment because prospective students are starting to consider attending to less-revered institutions which can give a better perspective on emerging markets than more prestigious competitors (Coleman, 2012, p.51).

3.2.2 Criticism to business schools Traditional Model

This thesis links Consumerism to business schools in two different countries. In order to get better understanding of how these institutions provide what is best for their services’ consumers, we analyze what relevant works have been previously written, and what opinions exist in this area.

The educational model of business schools has received a big amount of criticism through the years. In the 1950’s business schools were described as a collection of trade schools lacking strong scientific foundation (Zimmerman, 2001, p.44). To solve this situation, business schools took “on the traditions and ways of mainstream academia”, as Pfeffer & Fong cite Crainer & Dearlove (Crainer & Dearlove, 1999, cited in Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p.79); this meant that quantitative and statistical methods began to be more common. This new approach brought new problems into existence. As Porter and Mckibbin (Porter & McKibbin, 1988, cited in Lorange, 2008, p.27) claimed, business schools were seen as too focused on analytics, with insufficient emphasis on problem finding as contrasted with problem solving and implementation. Nowadays, criticism is more related to facts like the following: of the four CEOs people most often named when asked who had accomplished great things, no one had a business school degree and two (Gates of Microsoft and Galvil of Motorola) didn’t even finish college (Minzberg, 2001, p.244). Modern criticism is more related to the usefulness of the acquired knowledge.

When looking at these problems with a consumerist perspective, we can see that, as Behrman & Levin (Behrman & Levin, 1984, p.140) stated, schools give students insufficient preparation for a long-term point of view. In addition to this, Peter Lorange, a well known author of 18 books and more than 120 articles in global strategic management, defends the idea that business schools face the challenge of creating a critical link between real-life issues and research-based management insights (Lorange, 2008, p.35). He also often suggested that business schools are not concerned enough on real application of what they teach, and that they do not focus on the challenges that companies deal with everyday.

The following can be inferred from the previous statements; business schools do not meet students’ long term requirements. Peter Lorange also states that most MBA programs make too much emphasis on maximizing short-term economic success for their students. Too focused on “scientific” research, business schools are hiring professors with limited real-world experience and graduating students who are ill equipped to wrangle with complex, unquantifiable issues - in other words, the stuff of management. Some of the research produced is excellent, but because so
little of it is grounded in actual business practices, the focus of graduate business education has become increasingly circumscribed - and less and less relevant to practitioners (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005, p.98).

After detecting those and other problems in the offer of business schools around the world and especially in western countries, Lorange developed a whole new approach called the IMD way, which its cornerstone is value creation:

He states that in order to maximize academic value, business schools must adopt an interactive, two way learning approach where propositional knowledge meets prescriptive knowledge. By using this approach an already good preparation can be even better. Sometimes business schools are intellectually shallow (Gordon & Howell, 1959, cited in Lorange, 2008, p.37), and have not been able to provide what is best for students because they have been focused only on propositional knowledge.

Other authors like Seltzer and Bentley, have adopted a similar position regarding the need of both kinds of knowledge. They state that the dominant educational paradigm still focuses on what students know, rather than how they use that knowledge (Seltzer & Bentley, 1999, p.4). They defend that in the actual context students need both knowledge and skills and that education must be restructured to ensure that every individual has the skills and confidence to make full use of the opportunities that a knowledge-based society presents (Seltzer & Bentley, 1999, p.88).

On the one hand, propositional knowledge is the knowledge that develops basic laws and models, concerned with the “what” rather than the “how”. On the other hand, prescriptive knowledge is gained through experience (Mokyr, 2002, cited by Lorange, 2008, p.38). The first is related to conceptually driven business schools and the latter is related to market driven business schools. In order to create academic value business schools must find a balance between these two approaches. Propositional and prescriptive knowledge (that lead to market driven and conceptually driven knowledge) complement and reinforce each other and make possible to focus on the challenges that students are going to face after they graduate. In order to face these challenges business schools should consider to evaluate their approaches since it is not evident that business schools as we know them today will be the dominant providers of business education in the future (Hawawini, 2005, cited by Lorange, p.77).

IMD has already gone through this process since as its motto says; its model provides real knowledge for the real world.
This approach has proven to be successful. It has been applied in IMD, in Switzerland, which is one of the best business schools of the world and is recognized as a world top 15 business school by Financial Times. The whole learning and teaching model of the institution is based on this approach and has significantly contributed to the long term success of businessmen and businesswomen that have studied there.

In addition to this, other authors apart from Lorange have also mentioned this necessity of meeting students’ long term needs and providing them with the best. For instance, as Yulia Stukalina states, there is a necessity to link the needs of the customer with service functions in the framework of creating a student-centred educational environment (Stukalina, 2012, p.85). Or, as stated in Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, “learning resources and other support mechanisms should be accessible to students, designed with their needs in mind and responsive to feedback from those who use the services provided” (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2005, p.17). It has also been mentioned that educational organizations should maintain an awareness of and act on the current and future needs of its students (“primary customers”) (Hammond et al., 2006, p.69).

However, works like these usually focus on all kinds of universities and Lorange’s IMD model is business schools specific, and therefore, it suits this thesis better.

### 3.2.3 Key Points of business schools

Business schools are concerned on preparing people to be successful in the business world; however, their traditional system is being criticized nowadays because it lacks a more realistic approach. In other words, they do not provide the tools to face real business challenges. In order to solve this situation, we have chosen Peter Lorange’s IMD model because it has already been proven and provides us with a value creation model that seeks balance between propositional and prescriptive knowledge as a way of creating value for the students. This model translates into a balanced model between market and conceptually driven business school models.
3.3 Link between Consumerism and business schools

As we wrote in the problem background, 1.1, the relation between Consumerism and business schools has already been studied by different authors. Identifying students as consumers of services provided by these organizations, the economic theory’s point of view of Consumerism has been studied with very interesting results.

Authors like Naidoo & Jamieson have stated that Consumerism, understood as the theory that affirms that an increasing consumption of goods is economically desirable, may have facilitated a system of higher education that has some continuity with the demands of the labour market. (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p.270). This kind of conclusions are relevant for us since they are linked with the long time needs of consumers, but authors of papers like these usually do not have the standpoints we are looking for because they are not interested in the perspective of Consumerism that we want to analyze.

Very few authors have analyzed the relation of the consumer movement and doing what is best for consumers with business schools. Sarkar and Saleh studied this relation and analyzed what business schools should do regarding consumer education in a society in which Consumerism is present. They concluded that business schools have an important role to play in this field (Sakar & Saleh, 1972, p.222), but did not go farther analyzing other rights for consumer protection. More recent works have also treated this particular matter and think otherwise, while stating that consumer education should start at an early age and not in business schools or universities (Süle, 2012, p.219). However, these works analyzed the role of business schools in Consumerism as a part of society, through the scope of consumer education providers, but they did not analyze if Consumerism was applied in the business school sector or not.

Finally, regarding this kind of knowledge (how Consumerism is applied in the business school sector), some works that understand Consumerism as the theory that states that an increasing consumption of goods is economically desirable, mention some ideas that can be useful for our point of view of the term. When it comes to consumer protection, it is stated that consumer rights have been strengthened by the elaboration and institutionalization of complaint and redress mechanisms and there is currently a national pilot of a student satisfaction survey, and proposals for the compulsory publication of information relating to the quality of academic programmes such as external examiner reports (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p.268). These kinds of statements are directly related to consumers’ protection, which are discussed in the next section, 3.3.1, and are important for us.

As we have seen above, Consumerism mainly aims for the long term needs of consumers. After analyzing the specific case of business schools, we realize that there are two areas to take into account in the application of Consumerism. On the one hand, there are the generic protection needs of every consumer in all kinds of sector. We have defined this as Consumer’s Protection. It is based in the eight rights defended by CI. On the other hand, there are the specific long term needs of consumers of the business school sector, the demand of doing what is best for them. The main service offered by this industry is knowledge, which we have named VKP or Valuable Knowledge and Preparation. We have based this idea in Peter Lorange’s IMD model, explained before.
Thus, this section has three parts: 3.3.1 Consumer’s Protection, 3.3.2 Valuable Knowledge and Preparation and to conclude the application of these two issues in our study in the chapter 3.3.3 Consumerism application in business schools.

3.3.1 Consumer’s Protection

Consumer rights that provide protection, mentioned above, are universal for all type of sector or industries. Nevertheless, when it comes to analyze which are the main ways in which consumerist attitudes have been applied in business schools, student representation has been one of the most important and common ones. Student unions have worked to defend students’ rights and represent their needs during several years, ultimately participating in business schools’ decision making processes. As Will Straver wrote, Consumer organizations were created to provide an aggregate countervailing power that the individual consumer cannot possibly generate all by himself even if he wants to do so in an active way (Straver, 1978, p.321). Consumer organizations aim to protect the consumers and represent them in case of conflict between the businesses’ interests and theirs. In the business schools specific case, student unions also provide this protection and countervailing power. This has created a bridge between business schools and their services’ consumers, helping both parts to understand each other. Other figures, like the study advisors and redress mechanisms mentioned before, also contribute to this objective. Thus, the main rights of consumers of business schools’ services should be usually covered through the protection framework that the country provides by regulations and consumer organizations, and in our particular case, by the existence of student organizations and other special figures and mechanisms like the previously mentioned ones.

But, as we have said before, Consumerism goes further beyond guaranteeing consumer protection. Consumerism demands doing what is best for consumers, so what about satisfying consumers’ long term needs? How do business schools manage to do that?

3.3.2 Valuable Knowledge and Preparation (VKP)

Although Lorange doesn’t mention Consumerism specifically in his book, probably because it was written to explain his business school model, the IMD, we found that it provides an excellent starting point to our research since it does not focus on knowing what students want but in what is best for students in the long run to face future challenges. He tries to create value through detecting the blind spots in most important business schools’ education models. He mentions that these schools do not meet the real needs of the students because their education is too focused on theoretical knowledge rather than real life knowledge and a balance between the two kinds of knowledge is needed. Other authors like Sargeant and Angus also ask for more real life knowledge in business schools, value creation through the introduction of more practical experience and practice-driven theory (Sargeant & Matheson, 1996, p.3), but Lorange develops a specific and already applied model to follow.
We understand that real-life practical knowledge is strongly related to the long-run needs of the students since they are going to use what they have learnt in business school during their professional careers after graduation. In other words, doing what is best for them, providing them with valuable skills that they will need in the future. Consumerism shares the same attitude in terms of real-life long-run needs.

3.3.3 Consumerism’s application in business schools

As a consequence, we can see that both consumer protection and valuable knowledge and preparation are necessary to satisfy students’ long term needs. Providing them with basic rights such as the right to safety or representativeness is necessary but not sufficient. For doing what is best for them we also need to consider those factors specifically for the business schools sector. According to Lorange, the combination of theoretical and real-life knowledge is what will really lead the student to be prepared for future. By analyzing these two dimensions we are going to understand to which extent Consumerism is being applied in business schools and how this can result in a long run advantage and success for the companies applying it.

![Diagram of Consumerism in Business Schools](source: Own creation)

Figure 7. Main elements of Consumerism in the business school sector

3.4 Theoretical Framework Model

As mentioned in the research design, we use a three actor-based framework in our study. These three actors affect in different levels when it comes to the Consumerist movement:

- **1st level: Country - Institutions**
  Creation of monitoring bodies and protection.
- **2nd level: Industry - Business schools**
  More self regulation and care. Awareness of social pressure and provide more information to the consumer.
3rd level: Consumers - Students
   Personal and collective awareness of their actions.

Knowing that, and focusing more on our specific case, we develop a theoretical framework model to analyze how deep Consumerism is established in each of these levels.

To analyze the existing institutions in each country we compare the existence of monitoring bodies and the level of protection they offer to the citizens. The higher this level, the more even the relation with the customer is when facing the seller. Thus, their demands are more likely to go further than in more unprotected environments.

To analyze the industry, the business schools sector in our case, and how they apply Consumerism we examine the two main dimensions of Consumerism that we identified before. On the one hand we try to see how business schools protect their consumers, based on the eight basic rights that Consumer International defends. On the other hand, we analyze the level of valuable knowledge and preparation that universities offer, using Lorange’s IMD Academic Value Creation model (Lorange, 2008).

Finally, we analyze consumer reaction to the previous factors. As mentioned before, Consumerism seeks the best for consumers. If we take into account most of the marketing experts’ opinion, doing the best for consumers will result in loyalty and in success for the company. Christopher W. Hart and Michael D. Johnson state in the article “cliente para toda la vida” (Hart & Johnson, 2002, p.56) that loyal customers are the ones that have been satisfied constantly over time. Loyalty comes when consumers can trust that a firm will always act in their best interest, without exception.

Moreover, this value transfer can be understood in a three level analysis. As we have already seen, there are three main application levels in which Consumerism influences: country, industry and consumer level. This analysis is crucial because countries’ degree of application affects its organizations’ level of application, and also affects consumers’ awareness of their own actions as consumers. The following model helps us to understand and measure how business schools manage with Consumerist attitude in these three levels:
By using this framework business schools should be able to know if they are delivering value by covering the needs of the students. In addition, they should be able to know how they and their students are affected by the environment in which they develop their activities by the level of protection that the countries provide. Finally they should also understand if it is worthy and why to apply this attitude.

Therefore, the previous figure shows the provisional theory we have created. With the empirical research we try to test if it is correct, or otherwise, if is something fails on it.
4) PRACTICAL METHODOLOGY

This chapter is the continuance of the second one, *Theoretical Methodology*. 4.1 *Specific Data Collection Methods* starts explaining the way we have used to gather the data for each level. Secondly, 4.2 *Information Needs*, is the information we request of our empirical research and the process of how we have arrived the final interview guide questions beginning from the problem formulation. Thirdly, the sample is described 4.3 section *Research Sample*; the type of used sampling, the selection of the respondents, the pre-tests before the official interviews and the limitations of our sample. Afterwards, the interview structure and its details are described in 4.4 section *Interview Design*. Lastly, part 4.5 *Analysis of the Data and Strategy for Presentation* explains how collected data is studied and the way the findings are presented.

4.1 Specific Data Collection Methods

As mentioned before, data has been collected in different ways depending on which stage of the three levels of Consumerism we analyze:

First, at **country level**, data has been collected from secondary sources. This type of source is published data or collected in the past. Both Spain and Sweden have specific state organizations and laws that protect consumers’ rights with plenty of information available. As for laws, law bills provide first hand information at all times. Regarding organizations, data can be easily collected from their web pages since it is publicly posted there so consumers can access it to know their rights in a simple and a fast way. As Bryman and Bell emphasize (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.566) the data that we use is classified as organizational documents of public domain. We have taken this decision because the governmental documentation is extensive, clear and public. Furthermore, contacting the representatives of the main consumerist and industry organizations is very difficult and the information could be too subjective to understand the framework of the business school sector in the consumerist area.

Secondly, both the **industry** and **consumer level** data have been compiled directly from first hand experience, also named primary sources. We have chosen this option because there is not much previous empirical research to which we have access and that are relevant enough (either for the questions done to the interviewee or for the year in which they were collected). Nevertheless, we have completed our empirical study of these two levels with additional research due to the lack of time and resources. To analyze the companies we have conducted three semi-structured interviews, two staff members from Deusto Business School and one from Umeå School of Business and Economics (more details in the section 4.2 Research Sample). That entails the collection and analysis of data from two nations. There are several possibilities when collecting data for a cross-national approach. The most appropriate one in our case, considering that we are living in Sweden, is doing face to face interviews to Swedish staff and online interviews to Spanish ones, using online tools, such as Skype or Google Plus. Regarding the consumer level, we have done four semi-structured interviews taking one student from each
relevant profile target we have found (more information in the section 4.2 Research Sample). As in the case of the companies, we have done online interviews with Spanish students and face to face interviews with Swedish students.

In addition to this, we have completed students interviews with two previous research done by institutions both in Spain (concretely in the Basque Country) and in Sweden.

### 4.2 Information Needs

To be able to design the interview guide that we have used for the empirical investigation, we need to understand which information we want. The next figure shows the process in which we have based the design of the questions, starting from the general problem formulation and finishing in the exact questions that will help us to solve our main issue:

*Figure 9. Theoretical Model of the Procedure to get to a Interview Questions*

*Source: Own creation*

The followed procedure to formulate the questions we have considered adequate to make to our interviewees can be found in the first appendix.
4.3 Research Sample

4.3.1. Sampling Method

The way of choosing the people that will compose the sample is an important decision to think about. Usually, quantitative studies use probability sampling, randomly selecting the subject. Nevertheless, many qualitative studies like ours, do not seek to generalize results, as the sample is not representative, but aim to create transferable knowledge. We have chosen our sample strategically, also known as using a non-probability sampling method (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.180).

There are different types of non probability samples. The one that fits best our investigation is the convenience sampling for the following reasons. On the one hand, we have financial and time limitations that do not allow us to take a big sample or a too complicated one to contact. We use our current network to find people that fit with the profiles we are looking for. Even further, we have followed a criterion-based sampling. As Patton explains, this method “involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 2001, p. 238). The following are reasons to choose each of the profiles we are looking for in this study:

- With regards to the business schools, we have chosen DBS and USBE for the physical nearness and direct contact possibility. Moreover, it has been a strategic decision as they are both located in developed countries inside the European Union. Sweden is nowadays the country of reference on consumerist development and Spain in contrast, has a very different culture with a very distinct way of working. Finally, due to the student exchange program, there is a strong relationship between both universities that gives us the possibility of sharing information and really applying the proposals to face future challenges obtained from this study.

- When it comes to students, we use the following criteria: direct contact possibility, availability and disposition to answer. We want to analyze four specific student profiles, so we have used our networking to find them. However, it is important to mention that apart from the convenience sampling technique, we have also used the snowball sampling method in the case of the third profile search. We do not know any Swedish student that could fit with our profile, so we asked the fourth profile interviewee (P4) for help.

4.3.2 Selection of Respondents

As we mentioned before, we have two samples: business schools and students. We want to see both points of view in order to see the differences between them. Thus, the basic requirements for choosing the candidates have been unique for each sample:
**Business schools**

The basic characteristics all the respondents from business schools have are the following ones:

- At least one person of each business school
- Minimum number of years working at the university: 5 years
- Position related to customer management or direct contact with customer (teacher)
- Fluency in English (for data presentation)

The table below shows the components of our business school sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years in the organization</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Way</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSS1</td>
<td>DBS</td>
<td>Vice dean</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>05/16</td>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>01:10:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSS2</td>
<td>DBS</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>05/11</td>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>00:48:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSS3</td>
<td>USBE</td>
<td>Study director</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>05/10</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>00:47:35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Business school profiles**

BSS1: Staff from DBS  BSS2: Staff from DBS  BSS3: Staff from USBE

*Source: Own creation*

Is important to highlight that in the beginning we were expecting to have four interviews. Nevertheless, it has been impossible to find an available teacher in USBE with a proactive attitude to participate in the research due to the fact that is not usual in the institution to participate in this kind of activities. Thus, our conclusions about USBE staff will be based in BSS3’s opinion.

**Students**

The basic characteristics all the student respondents have are the following ones:

- At least one person of each consumer profile
- Be a student of either DBS or USBE
- At least two years in university as business student
- Real intention of finishing business studies or already finished
- Fluency in English (for data presentation)

The table below shows the components of our student sample:
Empirical Findings

Table 4. Student Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Date of studies completion</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Way</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>DBS</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>05/08</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>00:53:39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>DBS</td>
<td>Spring 2012</td>
<td>05/09</td>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>01:08:58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>USBE</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>05/11</td>
<td>13:00</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>00:47:01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>USBE</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>05/07</td>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>00:59:48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Consumer profiles**

P1: Student from DBS
P2: Student from DBS + exchange from USBE
P3: Student from USBE
P4: Student from USBE + exchange from DBS

*Source: Own creation*

4.3.3 Pre-test of the Interviews

Before performing the real interviews, in order to check the validity and quality of the questions, we have performed a pre-test with two persons that meet the basic requirements mentioned before. We would have liked to do it with at least one person from each country. However, it has been very difficult to find respondents from Sweden, so we have only used Spanish respondents for the pre-test and left all the Swedish interviewees for the real test.

Table 5. Pre-test Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years in the organization</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Way</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT1</td>
<td>DBS</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>05/04</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>00:30:53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Date of studies completion</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Way</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT2</td>
<td>USBE</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>05/03</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>00:43:23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre-test profiles**

PT1: Business School pre-test
PT2: Student pre-test

*Source: Own creation*

On the one hand, we have selected the exchange student from USBE codified as PT2, for the student pre-test. Thanks to his collaboration, we improved the order of the topics and changed some of the terminology to a more informal and simple one, in order to have a better comprehension. Moreover, we realized the small relevance of some questions, which we deleted and about the importance of some other, which we improved or created new ones.

On the other hand, we contacted a teacher from DBS codified as PT1, for the business school pre-test. We had already applied the changes from PT2 so we confirmed the new order of the
Empirical Findings

topics and made some new changes in the questions to make them more understandable. She also provided us very interesting information about DBS activities that we used to add more knowledge in the Empirical Findings part.

The audio recordings of both pre-test are available by contacting the thesis authors.

4.3.4 Limitations of the Sample

As it is mentioned previously, there are several limitations in our sample:

First of all, it is a fairly small sample due to the lack of time and resources as well as the difficulty of finding respondents. In order to minimize this issue, when it comes to VKP, we have used complementary data provided by UmU (National Agency of Higher Education, 2011). As nor DBS or ANECA (Spanish National Fund of Quality Evaluation and Accreditation) keep a record of surveys about the questions in which we are interested, it is very difficult to make comparisons between DBS and USBE on that area. However, Lanbide (Basque Employment Service) has a record of the employability of DBS students, which we have also used in some parts of the analysis (Lanbide, 2008).

Moreover, there could be biases due to fact that we have relation with some of the interviewees, so it can influence in the answers and the interpretations of them. Besides, analyzing also other kind of students would be a good idea, such as the ones that finished their studies some years ago and students that have just started their business studies.

Secondly, we have considered including more countries in the research, such as the United States or some developing countries. Nevertheless, we do not have the contacts and resources that we have the two chosen countries.

Finally, as it is explained before, a pre-test with people from both countries would allow minimizing the problems related to culture and nationality.

4.4 Interview Design

There are many alternatives when designing an interview for a qualitative research. Depending on the purpose of the study and the rigidity of the structure, we can choose among the following options:

- Un-structured interview: It is a conversation about a topic without set questions or answers. The interview’s direction depends on the participant’s responses (Corbin & Morse, 2003, p.336).
- Semi-structured interview: It is a flexible list of questions around some specific topics (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p.649).
• Structured interview: It is a rigid list of questions with predetermined answers. The interview guide can be hardly modified (Ryan et al., 2009, p.313).

Being consistent with the methodology and information objectives defined above, we have done semi structured interviews, both for business schools staff and students. We have taken this decision due to the following reasons, based on what Silvia E. Rabionet defends in her article “How I Learned to Design and Conduct Semi-structured Interviews”; First, we wanted to discuss about ten topics, so a complete unstructured interview can end up without all the information we want to get. Secondly, our questions are open and we were not looking for short concrete answer, but we wanted our interviewee to tell us stories. Consequently, we wrote down some questions around each topic as a guide, but with the flexibility of modifying and deleting some during the interview (Rabionet, 2011, p.563). The interview guides can be found in the second appendix. We have followed the guide in all cases, except in some cases when people answered a group of questions altogether, so we did not ask again about those subjects. This happened especially with the students, who were more relaxed and talkative, so the discussions came more naturally and they were proactive to speak about the problems that they were most concerned about.

4.4.1 The Interview Protocol

As the previously analyzed article states, there are two main components in the interview protocol: how does the interviewer introduce himself/herself and what are the questions to be asked. The first step is to introduce ourselves to the interviewee have been via email. We wrote down personalized letters for each participant in which we explained who we were, what we were doing and why we needed them for the research. The letter can be found in Appendix 3. Most of the interviewees already know us, so there was no need of doing an extensive presentation of ourselves. The ones who didn’t know us previously were contacted through people we know, so they have also explained our situation to them.

Regarding the questions, the strategy we have followed is the opposite of the “funnel” strategy: start asking specific issues (the ten topics we have considered relevant to ask about) and finish with the general opinion about the business school service. These ten topics are based on the eight rights for consumer protection and the two types of knowledge presented in Lorange’s IMD model. The following interview guides can be found in the Appendix 2, as well as the explanation to the decision of having two different guides depending on the sample.

4.4.2 Conduction and Recording of the Interview

As Silvia E. Rabionet states in her article, (Rabionet, 2011, p.565) there are many ways of recording an interview, starting from notes written in the moment and after the interview, to audio and video recording. According to Rabionet, the most recommended one is the audio recording. Nevertheless, we decided to record it both in video and audio, while we take some short notes during the interview. This way, we were able to transcribe all the interviews and lose the minimum information possible. Before performing the interviews, we have asked each interviewee for his approval to use the information given to develop some ideas for this thesis. Additionally, we have been careful to keep anonymous their identity using codes instead of their real names. For the business staff sample we have used the code BSS followed by a number. For
the student sample, a P and a number (for example: BSS1 or P1). The relation between the names and the codes has been deleted from any kind of document or archive so there is no way of knowing who the participants in the findings are.

4.5 Analysis of the Data and Strategy for Presentation

4.5.1 Analysis of the Data and Limitations of the Collection

All the interviews have been recorded not to miss any detail and to be as accurate as possible. Once the interview was done, we watched it and transcribed into paper. Afterwards, we followed the “three reading” method to analyze the data obtained:

1st reading: Diagonal reading, to get the general idea
First, we read in general the transcription to get a general idea about the interviewee’s opinion about the current situation and possibilities he/she sees. We also took into consideration the tone, in order to see the level of satisfaction with the university service.

2nd reading: Codification and interesting notes
After a general look, we did a deep reading of the transcription. We identified where each variable was answered and codified, writing next to the answer the appropriate abbreviation. Moreover, we wrote notes about details we thought are important to take into account when analyzing the answers.

3rd reading: Choice of relevant information and prioritization
Finally, we took a critical look, choosing the most relevant information and resuming it, in order to answer to each information need.

We also found some limitations when collecting the data. On the one hand, all the Spanish interviews have been developed online (Skype), so the relation was more distant than with the face to face method. We also have little technical problems, like the low volume of certain respondents’ voice when recording it or Internet connection failures. On the other hand, the business school staff tried to focus mostly on the strengths of the organization, forgetting the weaknesses, especially in Spain.

4.5.2 Strategy for Presentation of the Findings

Once the data is analyzed, it is presented in the Empirical Findings and Analysis chapters. The main structure is the same in the two chapters: the information is presented in three sections according to the different levels of the Consumerism.

In the first one, Empirical Findings, the first part, 5.1 Country Level, shows the main findings in terms of the shared and each country’s protection framework. Regarding to the sections 5.2 Industry Level and 5.3 Consumer Level, there are descriptions of the interviewees and short
resumes of one page for each interview with the main results for each variable. The audiovisual material it is also available.

In the second chapter, *Analysis*, we first study 6.1 *Country Level* regarding to three topics (rights, organizations and student representation) and then 6.2 *Industry Level* and 6.3 *Consumer Level* in terms of consumer protection and VKP.
When analyzing the data, we differentiate the three previously mentioned basic levels: Country, Industry and Consumer. For the first one, use secondary sources, focusing only on the institutionalization of consumer protection. For the next levels, Industry and Consumer, we carry out a primary research, based on four interviews and we add extra data to have a broader perspective regarding to VKP in the consumer level. The results are summarized below.

However, before starting with the findings in each level and to get a general idea of the empirical research context, we introduce the two business schools that we have analyzed:

**DBS**  
Deusto Business School (DBS) is the Business Administration School of the University of Deusto. DBS, was created by integrating the ESTE in San Sebastian and La Comercial in Bilbao, aiming to be an international reference for business and executive training for future business leaders. The school has nearly 200 professors, teachers and researchers on staff, 270 visiting professors and teachers, over 1,700 undergraduates enrolled in its programs and 1,000 students yearly in its Master's degrees, Open Programs and In Company Programs. Deusto Business School focuses on innovation and keeping up to date with the latest tendencies in the twenty first century, management education and a firm commitment to developing the business school today's changing world needs. These efforts are all based on nearly 100 years of widely recognized quality education, teaching excellence and the thousands of successful business executives who studied at Deusto (DBS, 2012).

**USBE**  
Umeå School of Business and Economics (USBE) is a campus school, part of Umeå University, has over 170 employees including about 90 PhDs and researchers. The activities consist of research and teaching in Business Administration, Economics and Statistics. The School offers seven master’s programs, four graduate programs, two undergraduate programs and courses. It has more than 2000 students going through its programs every year. Despite being a young university, Umeå University has recently been voted as the first Swedish university for international student satisfaction (USBE, 2012).

### 5.1 Country Level

Within the country level, we distinguish three different parts: First, we concentrate on the shared protection framework. The two analyzed countries are part of the European Union. Thus they share some basic protection legislation. Thereafter, we continue with the analysis of each country’s framework, in order to see the similarities and differences between them.
5.1.1 Shared Protection Framework: European Consumer Centre Network

Both Spain and Sweden are part of the European Union, hence, their consumer protection organs exist in a common environment. As a consequence, there is a consumer protection organization that works in all European Union member countries, the European Consumer Centre Network (ECC Net or ECC network). The ECC network is a result of the merger in 2005 of the two existing consumer protection networks: the Network for the extra-judicial settlement of consumer disputes (EEJ-Net) and the Network of Euroguichets.

The European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net) is an EU-wide network co-sponsored by the European Commission and the Member States. It is made up of 29 centres, one in each of the 27 EU Member States and also in Iceland and Norway (European Union, 2011).

According to the European Union, the ECC-Net pursues the following objectives:

- Provide information so as to enable consumers to purchase goods and services in the internal market with full knowledge of their rights and duties.
- Respond to direct requests for information from consumers or other parties.
- In the event of a complaint, to help and support consumers in their contacts with the business operator.
- Where necessary, to help consumers in the event of a dispute.

As it can be seen, the main input for consumers is that it provides them with a platform from which to defend themselves against situations of disadvantage.

5.1.2 Spain’s Protection Framework

A) RIGHTS

Consumer protection is ensured by Spanish constitution thanks to its 51st article. It has three principles:

- **1st principle:** The public authorities shall guarantee the protection of consumers and users, protecting, by means of effective, safety, health and legitimate economic interests them.
- **2nd principle:** The public authorities shall promote the information and education of consumers and users, foster their organizations, and hear them on issues affecting their members, under the terms established by law.
- **3rd principle:** Under the provisions of the preceding paragraphs, the law shall regulate domestic trade and the system of licensing commercial products (Spain/Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1979, p.122).

As constitutional articles like the previous one are usually not specific enough for real and practical consumer protection, a much more detailed law was created in 1984. The 26/1984 law, *General law for consumers’ and users’ defense*, was intended to protect all consumers in Spain.
Later, in 2007, by the 1/2007 Royal Legislative Decree, this law was reformulated because it was not good enough to protect the consumers as it was intended to do. It is much more detailed and its protection concerns:

- **Basic rights of the consumers:**
  - Protection against risks that may affect consumers’ health or safety.
  - The protection of their legitimate economic and social interests, in particular against unfair trade practices and the inclusion of unfair terms in contracts.
  - The compensation for damages and compensation for damage suffered.
  - The correct information about the different goods or services and education and divulgation to facilitate understanding of their proper use, consumption or enjoyment.
  - The hearing in consultation, participation in the process of drawing up the general provisions directly affect them and representing their interests, through partnerships, associations, federations or confederations of consumers and users.
  - The protection of their rights through effective, especially in situations of inferiority, subordination and helplessness.

- **Right of representation, consultation, participation and status of consumer groups and users:** It explains and regulates the basic legal framework of consumer and user associations. It also ensures their independence so their only goal is to provide a fair relationship with the service or product provider.

- **Institutional cooperation:** It explains the aim of the Consumer Affairs Conference, which makes possible the application of the law in all Spanish territory. As the Spanish territorial organizations is one of the most complexes on earth (Álvarez, 2003, p.44), some regions have adopted their own consumer protection laws. Therefore, it is necessary to create a body so the law is applied, using this law as a starting point.

- **Sanctioning power:** It makes sure that any action against the consumers’ rights will be sanctioned and that the responsible will be punished.

- **Judicial and extrajudicial protection of consumers and users:** It is focused on obtaining a judgement to order the law-breaking companies to cease that kind of conduct and prohibit its future repetition.

**B) ORGANIZATIONS**

There are several different organizations, both government dependant and non dependant, which aim to protect the consumer.

**Government-State dependant:**

- **National Consumer Institute:** is the Central Government dependant organization, which by implementing the previously explained 51st article of the Constitution and the
reformulated *General law for consumers’ and users’ defense*, exercises the functions of promotion and development of rights of consumers and users.

- **Consumers’ and users’ council:** the Council is organized as an organ of representation and consultation at national level through the most representative consumer organizations to protect the interests of consumers and users. The council is also involved decisions taken by public authorities in relation to the consumer policy.

**Independent organizations:**
The independent organizations that protect consumers are much sectorized in Spain. There are important general organizations but usually each economic sector has its own smaller organization. The following are the most important consumer organizations, the ones represented at Consumers’ and users’ council:

- **ADICAE Asociación de Bancos Cajas y Seguros:** Banking and insurance sector.
- **ASGECO Asociación General de Consumidores:** it has a more general orientation; it is not specific to a sector.
- **AUC Asociación de usuarios de Comunicación:** it is focused on communication users, like radio and television.
- **CEACCU Confederación Española de Organizaciones de Amas de Casa, Consumidores y Usuarios:** this unique organization protects the interest of Spanish housewives.
- **CECU Confederación de Consumidores y usuarios:** as ASGECO, it has a general orientation, but it works in the autonomous community level (the different territories that form Spain and that have the right to write their own laws in certain areas depending on the autonomy level they have. The second article of the constitution recognizes the rights of "nationalities and regions" to self-government and declares the "indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation (Spain/Ministerio de Asuntos exteriores, 1979, p.122)."
- **FACUA Consumidores en Acción:** as its name shows, it is one of the most active organizations. It is also one of the strongest and has an international section. Besides, its actions go further than consumer protection and have full awareness of what Consumerism means. As an example, it prints a magazine called Consumerism every two months.
- **FUCI Federación de Usuarios-consumidores Independientes:** it has a general character but is especially concerned about avoiding misleading advertising.
- **HISPACOOP Confederación Española de Cooperativas de Consumidores y Usuarios:** protects the rights of the cooperative business in Spain.
- **OCU Organización de Consumidores y usuarios:** very similar to FACUA, it has a general orientation and it is one of the biggest organizations in Spain.
- **UCE Unión de Consumidores de España:** similar to CECU but focusing on provincial level rather than in autonomous communities.
- **UNAE Federación Unión Nacional de Consumidores y Amas de Hogar de España:** it has almost the same objectives and works in a very similar way to CEACCU.
C) STUDENT REPRESENTATION

In order to defend student rights, each business school works in a different way. Each business school can decide how to organize student protection systems according to their own criteria, and especially when it comes to private institutions like DBS. The following picture shows, how each faculty of the Deusto University, to which the DBS belongs, is organized when it comes to student protection.

![Diagram of student representation system in Deusto University]

*All representatives have a vice representative that help them with their duties

**Figure 10. Representation system in Deusto University**

*Source: Own creation based on Imanol Osa’s explanations, 2012*

As the figure shows, it is organized in four different hierarchical levels. At class level, a class representative is chosen among the students by democratic election. The second student with the most votes is named vice representative of the class. Course representatives gather in the faculty council to solve problems at faculty level. If the problems they are trying to solve concern higher levels of hierarchy, such as university board, these problems will have to be addressed by the faculty representative, who takes an active role in the students’ chamber. Finally, among all faculty representatives, a chamber coordinator is elected as the highest representative of all students.

According to 2011/2012 chamber coordinator Imanol Osa, in an attempt to increase student protection and to generate a more direct contact between students and the higher organizational levels of the university, a student office called “ikaslegune” has been created this 2012. This office is specially prepared to help students with extra-academic issues.
5.1.3 Sweden Protection Framework

A) RIGHTS

Sweden has always been known for its advanced consumer protection methods. For instance, in 1970, with the so called Marketing Practices Act, a special post for consumer affairs was created, the Consumer Ombudsman (Bernitz, & Draper, 1986, p.55).

Several law acts defend consumers in Sweden; the following are the most important (Embassy of Sweden, 1999):

- **The Marketing Act**: All statements and promises made in advertising have to be truthful. Companies must be able to substantiate their claims. Misleading or otherwise unacceptable (“unfair”) advertising can be prohibited. Especially important facts must be included in advertisements.
- **The Price Information Act**: stipulates that consumers must be provided with clear and correct price information on goods and services in shop windows and elsewhere.
- **The Consumer Contract Terms Act**: makes illegal to employ contract conditions which exclusively benefit the seller at the expense of the consumer.
- **The Product Safety Act**: intended to protect consumers from potentially dangerous goods and services. Dangerous products can be prohibited.
- **The Consumer Sales Act**: this Act gives the consumer rights if the product is defective and in case of delayed delivery.
- **The Consumer Services Act (services)**: this Act provides the consumer with protection concerning, for example, repairs, work on property, and storage of items.
- **The Consumer Credit Act**: intended to guarantee that the consumer will be told the true cost of buying on credit, whether in the form of a bank loan, payment in instalments, or credit on account, etc.
- **The Consumer Insurance Act**: applies to insurance against damage. This Act includes rules for information, premium payments, settlement of claims, and how insurance is to be renewed.
- **The Door-to-Door Sales Act**: when something is sold over the phone or in the consumer’s home, the consumer is entitled to cancel the purchase within a week of ordering or buying the product.

B) ORGANIZATIONS

**State dependant**:
The National Board for Consumer Policies or Konsumentverket, is in charge of consumer affairs in Sweden. The previously mentioned figure of the Ombudsman or Konsumentombudsmannen, heads the board as its director and is also the chairman of the Governing Council of the Board. He or she represents consumers’ interests in relations to businesses and pursues legal action on behalf of consumers.
The organisation chart of the Swedish Consumers Agency provides a better understanding of how it works:

![Organisation Chart of the SCA](image)

**Figure 11. The Organization Chart of the SCA**
*Source: Own creation, based on the Swedish Consumer Agency, 2011*

The Swedish Consumers Agency has two overall objectives: Aware and secure consumers.

**Independent organizations:**
Swedish government has encouraged non-governmental organizations to participate actively in consumer policy, first as a cohesive interlocutor for private business, and then to emerge as a countervailing power (Prestoff, 1988, p.18). There are two main organizations that are part of Consumers International:

- **Swedish Consumers’ Association or Sveriges Konsumenter:** an independent, non-partisan cooperative organisation consisting of 28 member organisations. It aims to strengthen the position of consumers in order to improve their ability to bring consumer power to bear. According to its statutes, its goal is to ensure that political, business, and government decision makers always have the best interests of consumers at heart.

- **Swedish Consumer Coalition or Sveriges Konsumenter i Samverkan (SKIS):** a non-profit, non-governmental consumer organisation. They claim to be independent from trade and producers. The organization consists of 15 member organisations as well as local groups and a number of individual members around Sweden.
C) STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Student Unions have played an important role in Swedish university life. These unions are highly organized and have existed for more than 100 years. The Swedish National Union of Students (Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer, SFS) is the umbrella organisation of student unions, is a federation of student unions at Swedish universities and colleges. According to them, SFS now has over forty member unions, which, together, make about a quarter of a million students (Studentkårer, 2012).

In Umeå University, where this thesis focuses, three student unions exist: The Umeå Student Union, the Umeå Student Union of Science and Technology and the Medical Sciences Student Union. Each one of them is focused on a different study field, and the students of USBE are part of Umeå Student Union or Umeå Studentkår.

Umeå Studentkår not only defends students’ rights, but it also represents them in different levels so their demands can be heard and taken into account. The three levels in which students are represented and how the representation works are summarized in the following picture:

![Levels of Student Representation in Umeå Studentkår](Source: Own creation based on Umeå Student Union information, 2012)

Thus, students have the possibility to influence their own education through student unions, not only in the level of the specific faculty to which they belong, but also in University and state level thanks to SFS.

5.2 Industry Level: business schools

5.2.1 Interviewees description

We base our business school investigation on four interviews; two of them to Spanish staff and the other two to Swedish staff members. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to find two
Swedish staff members available. Thus, we settle for one, considering that the information obtained from him can answer our information needs well enough. In order to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, we codify their names with acronyms:

- **BSS1: First business school staff**
  The vice dean from DBS, San Sebastián. Since 2002, she is in charge of the undergraduate programs of the San Sebastián campus. She has also worked in other responsibilities: She used to be the coordinator of the marketing department and she has been teaching for almost 20 years marketing subjects.

- **BSS2: Second business school staff**
  The coordinator, teacher and researcher of the marketing department from DBS, San Sebastián. She has been teaching for fifteen years and she has been coordinator of the marketing department for the last two years. She used to work in the International department of DBS.

- **BSS3: Third business school staff**
  The study director for Business Administration in USBE. He has been two years in the current position. He started working in USBE as a teacher for two years and then he did his PhD program while he continued teaching.

5.2.2 Results summary

*Note: Quotations are shown in italics.*

- **General view**

  BSS1 feels very satisfied with the business school’s offer and in her opinion both rankings and companies support this feeling. Nevertheless, the institution needs to change the way of understanding how the relationship between students and teachers have to be, encouraging a mixture between formal and informal aspects. “It has to be more a mixture between formal and informal spaces, and this is a big challenge because if you change this, you change a lot of things; such as, technological preparation, methodologies, how the students can be heard”.

  BSS2 thinks that a more clear strategy is needed and that teachers need more resources in terms of time and their education. DBS is a student-centred faculty, with a job market oriented and practical approach.

  When it comes to teaching, BSS3 believes that there has to be a better connection between practice and theory, “the practice-theory relation has to be improved, engage their future life”. USBE provides students with critical ability to see things from different perspectives. BSS3 thinks the organization is doing a good job but much more has to be done to keep improving.
• **Basic needs**

BSS1 thinks that employability is the most basic need, “I see that young people are conscious about the complexity of the world today and that they need the best education as possible. So, when we focus on our advantages for our students, we speak about employability rate. Future is the most important word for them and we try to give the best services as possible to provide them the best future as possible”. Three strategic lines are mentioned apart from the obvious topics (marketing, economy, accounting, etc.): Sustainability, digital strategy and innovation. Teachers have to change their teaching methodology to a more collaborative one (P2P) and encourage values based relationship with students. Infrastructures have to be adapted to the changes in methodology, providing more “non presential” (distance education, web-lectures…) areas, preparation for information technologies and innovation.

BSS2 thinks that the school should provide business skills (preparation for the working place), knowledge and values. Teachers should behave like coaches according to her, they should continue learning. Finally, a stronger relationship with students is required.

BSS3 says that giving students better possibilities to find a job and teach them to see things from different perspectives is the most basic need. USBE aims to hire teachers with PhDs and guest lecturers from companies are invited to give a practical perspective. The school should also provide students with online resources, study rooms and more videotaped lectures since some are the same year after year.

• **Propositional knowledge**

BSS1 thinks that concepts are focused on the practical application in a company, because now the important thing is not to have the knowledge, but to know how to apply that knowledge.

Concepts are very useful for BSS2 but they should be enriched with a practical point of view because business studies are a practical issue. “Theory is necessary but not enough for business studies because in general we are not theoretical, most of our students work for companies, they are not researchers”.

BSS3 believes that concepts are useful but sometimes too focused on theory so the business school should find a balance between theory and practice.

• **Prescription knowledge**

BSS1 thinks that the new Bologna program encourages the obtention of some core competences more than learning concepts. Thus, there is more practical knowledge, being compulsory to participate in internships and a final project related to real cases.
BSS2 says that DBS students do internships, participate in real life cases but some international internships are missed. The university is working to solve that issue.

BSS3 defend that there are internship possibilities in D levels that are worth 15 credits. For instance, in the business development and internationalization program, in the fourth module, students work with Uminova corporation, “In these practice courses students connect the studies with what is happening in the companies and also know to be critical. They participate in the daily work and do some development work, probably linked to improve systems to customers”.

- Consumer education

BSS1 says that since the first day there is a lot of information for students, with the introduction to the main services and the people in charge of them. Furthermore, there are online tools with full information about offered services, even though they are not very friendly and need to be deeply improved.

BSS2 states that there are welcome days for exchange and new students in order to inform them about what the business school offers. Moreover there are tutors and teachers to ask about personal and academic problems. “They do an important job because is the way of identifying the problems that students have”.

BSS3’s opinion is that there are introduction days for new students and staff members try to give all available information. Besides, a better alumni network is being developed, “we are working on it to have better connection with previous students and also in extra academic activities. That could be improved; I have seen very nice extra curriculum departments”.

- Being informed

BSS1 believes that there is a communication problem inside the business school. There is a lot of information provided but the channels but the segmentation (wrong database) when sending this information are not adequate in many cases. “I think there is a generational gap. For instance we give a lot of information via email and after some research we have realized that a lot of students do not even open our emails. It is a clear sight that we have to change our channels”.

BSS2 stated that there is a lot of information but students maybe do not know it is there. Information is communicated through Personal and non-personal channels.

BSS3 says that there is a lot of information and the channels are effective but the students usually do not show up in some lectures if their content is not included on the exam or if they are not mandatory.
• **Being heard**

BSS1 thinks there are many channels to be heard, such as the general secretary, tutors and students themselves.

BSS2 mentions that several people work in this area; moreover “*it is not that structured, they can go to different people but the answer should be similar. Students usually speak to their closest person, mainly teachers, and then they address them to the right person to solve the problem*”. She highlights that tutors do a really important job of problem detection.

BSS3 believes that every decision board has student representation and USBE has an open environment to solve problems. Students can address their problems to the student union, to student representatives or the director of studies.

• **Redress (compensation)**

BS1 thinks that every problem has a different and specific solution. She admits that teachers recognize their faults but they accept that they are not always able to redress.

In BSS2’s opinion the evaluations of the teachers are an important aspect and are taken into account especially for promotions, representatives, the academic director and more recently the Student Office.

BSS3 states that students are able to appeal to the central university institutions. There are quite clear rules, “*there is the Swedish legislation and we have our own school rules*”.

• **Choose**

BSS1 thinks that DBS is chosen by students for the employability, internationalization, relationship between teachers and students, closeness to companies and brand name. The price is not a big limitation; the location though, is an important limitation, as most of the students are from the region (around 80%).

BSS2 stated that location is the main limitation. 100% of the students have the possibility to go abroad and it has a strong connection to real business. The institution also has good name and quality.

The main limitations in BSS3’s opinion could be the marks and also that Umeå is a well adapted city to student life. “*Umeå is a nice place to live, there is the sport centre, the neighbourhoods... I do not think they go too deep on the courses content when making the decision of selecting in which place they should study*”. 
Empirical Findings

- **Healthy environment**

  In BSS1’s opinion there is little experience in the area but DBS is working to improve it. The new strategy of the company considers that sustainability is a main line of action, which is related to being environmentally friendly. This strategy is mainly focused on raising awareness about it, not on specific actions. *“In the new Bologna plan there is a subject related to values where they will have an experience in a nongovernmental institution or similar and the subject of ethics is compulsory for all students. These subjects provide a message to students. (...) We are working in a centre of sustainability”.*

  BSS2 believes that DBS could do more, environmental friendly campaigns for example. Some recycling is made though.

  BSS3 defends that some efforts are made, like not printing a lot of documents and brochures, but USBE should aim for doing better.

- **Safety**

  In BSS1’s opinion basic safety is provided, even though there is much to improve in this area. Thus, this year the university boards have created a safety committee and they have started performing fire drills.

  There is a lack of protocols for BSS2, *“I am concerned about what to do if I am in class and a student has a heart attack or an epileptic attack. If there is a fire what should I do?”*

  BSS3 thinks that there are systems that cover that kind of issues, and also a health service for students.

Later, in the section 5.2.2 Results Summary, we include a resume table with the key points of the obtained data from the interviews.

### 5.3 Consumer Level: Students

#### 5.3.1 Interviewees description

In order to analyze the consumer level, we have performed four interviews, two for each country’s students, Spanish and Swedish students. We identify four interesting profiles to cover all points of view. In order to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, we codify their names with acronyms:

- **P1: First Profile**
  
  She is a Spanish student that studies in DBS Business and Administration, with specialization in Finance, in her 5th year. She is currently an exchange student in Joensuu, Finland and has...
already been hired by an accounting company in Spain, in which she will start working in September. She has complemented her studies with other activities, such as the Innovandis entrepreneurship program and Loreal Brandstorm marketing competition.

- **P2: Second Profile**
  She is a Spanish student that studied Business and Administration in DBS, she spezialized in Internationalization, from 2006-2007 to 2011-2012 and has been an exchange student in USBE in her last year studying the master in Entrepreneurship and International Business Development. She has done two internships abroad, one in Mexico and the other in Umeå, inside the last module of the master.

- **P3: Third Profile**
  He is a Swedish student that studies in USBE International Business Program, in his 6th semester and has 2 semesters left. He has been an exchange student in Canada and he is going to France next semester also with the exchange program.

- **P4: Fourth Profile**
  He is a Swedish student that studies in USBE International Business Program, with specialization in Accounting, and has been an exchange student in DBS the last semester. He has a wide knowledge of the business school as one of his close relatives work in it, he is from Umeå and he has fellow students and friends studying or that they have studied in it.

Since covering the issue we want to focus on can be problematic with a small sample, in addition to these four profiles, we have supported the analysis of VKP with data from the compilation of answers from the National Agency of Higher Education’s 2011 evaluation of business administration that UmU provided us and employability records of DBS alumni. As we have mentioned before, Consumerism goes beyond consumer protection, it demands that businesses do what is best for consumers. Basic consumer protection can be studied in a more general way regardless the sector by studying CI’s eight rights. However, in order to study the main consumerist demand, which in this particular sector concerns VKP, a deeper analysis with more perspective is needed.

### 5.3.2 Results summary

*Note: Quotations are shown in italics.*

- **General view**

  P1 graded DBS with a six out of ten (we asked them to grade the BS’s in a scale from 0 to 10, being 0 really bad and 10 really good). She thinks that her education is too general and that she does not have the tools to differentiate herself from the rest of the students of her class, “the market now wants more specialized people, so maybe they should focus more in each individual instead of in all of us”. She also misses some more freedom when choosing the courses she would like to take.
P2 feels satisfied with both universities. Even though if she had the opportunity she would have studied the whole program in USBE as she scored it higher, a nine out of ten, compared to a seven out of ten for DBS, “if I could go back... I would have studied in Umeå since the beginning”. She misses more preparation for companies’ everyday work, the possibility of studying languages and a better environment in DBS; additionally, she misses studying more deeply the basic concepts in USBE.

P3 thinks the USBE, more specifically his program inside USBE deserves a five out of ten. He thinks that the title he will get will look good in his CV but also that he is not learning that much since he misses more practical work. “Interaction with private sector, that is a weak point.”

P4 gives USBE a five out of ten and a six or seven out of ten to DBS. He thinks that university should prepare students for work, and that this is relevant knowledge for him. He also highlights the importance of having teachers with more working experience. “The utility for the future... mostly on getting the certificate, sad to say that but everyone says the same. I know too little today compared to what I should know.”

- **Basic needs**

According to P1, a business schools should teach students how to work in their own in the future. They should teach how a company works, and also teach about marketing, finance, strategy and general market knowledge. Teachers should have communication abilities and not only the expertise in their field. The infrastructure should be prepared for meetings and for spending the whole day in the university with good cafeterias, etc.

P2 thinks that is important being able to solve problems and create new things with an entrepreneurial approach. There is a lack of international economy teaching and everyday's work in a company. Both business schools are very focused on teamwork but USBE also looks for individual work and the way of working is more independent and flexible. The perfect teacher should have a lot of theoretical knowledge and also practical experience in real companies. In both business schools teachers are too theoretical. Apart from basic infrastructure to study as the library and teamwork rooms, the environment must also be ready to spend long hours in the university in a relaxed, healthy and collaborative way (such as gardens, cafeterias). Both business schools are correct in that sense, even if USBE is more prepared because it is bigger than DBS.

P3 believes that the contact with the private sector and practical assignments are necessary, apart from basic accounting, marketing and finance skills. Teachers should have experience in real companies, “They need experience; I have the impression that they have no idea what they are talking about in practical terms”. In terms of infrastructure, despite of lecture and teamwork rooms, they should allow free competition between cafeterias and similar establishments to assure more and better food areas.
In P4’s opinion, a business school should prepare students to work in a business environment, which implies that both practical and theoretical knowledge should be provided. Teachers should have real working experience.

- **Propositional knowledge**

P1 considers that everything she has learnt is useful, and she feels that this knowledge has real life application.

P2 is satisfied with both business schools, even though she misses more knowledge about general and world economics and visits to real companies.

P3 does not know if the concepts studied in class are useful since he does not apply them in practice.

P4 believes that USBE is too theoretical even if the concepts are useful. He thinks that there is a mismatch between what USBE offers and what the job market demands. In the DBS, they relate theoretical knowledge to examples and practical cases according to him. “I definitely think that concepts are useful, but by only having the models, from a scale 1 to 10 you learn 2. If you compliment it with examples you go up to 9 or 10”. According to him it is easier to interiorize concepts in that way, it is easier to learn and interpret them.

In complementary data, Swedish and USBE alumni state that the topics they learnt were satisfying and that they feel prepared to develop knowledge within the areas of business management.

- **Prescription knowledge**

P1 thinks that DBS provides help when finding internships but sometimes they do not really suit the student as good as they should, “they just give offers of companies which you don’t know where are you going and don’t know exactly what you are going to do there (...) they choose you depending on the marks, not really if the company suits you”. There is a lot of practical work but she does not like the methodology completely, she thinks that the teachers do not supervise the teamwork processes.

P2 is satisfied with Deusto, even if she misses having the opportunity to participate in internships during the course. No big experience in Umeå, even if she feels is good. Both business schools are balanced in theory and practice but DBS is more theoretical according to her (this opinion is strongly influenced by the nature of the program she studied during the last two years).

P3 misses more interaction with the private sector, and also the possibility to get an internship in Sweden since in his program he is required to get them abroad and the business school does not provide enough help for that.
P4 says that there is some but he thinks that in general, more practical work should be done in class. He has heard about USBE providing some help to get internships but he is not really sure. When speaking about DBS, he says that he heard that all students get a lot of help getting internships.

In addition, the complementary data provided by the Swedish National Agency of Higher Education shows that USBE alumni think that the capabilities they got at business school are used to a large extent in their current job positions. However, there is no consensus on if those job positions demand more capabilities than they can offer. Another interesting fact related to prescription knowledge is that a majority of students either did not have internships in their education or chose not to utilize the option of internships.

Lambide’s data shows that DBS alumni get help from the business school in order to get jobs and internships. For instance, 32% of all DBS alumni get a job through the institution.

- **Consumer education**

P1 misses some preparation but she recognizes that it may be because she has paid not enough attention during some lectures.

P2 knows the basic services offered in both schools and how to use them but she does not have information about the ones that are more specific. She is not really interested anyway, especially in DBS’s case. She does not miss any preparation, even if she feels it was better in USBE.

P3 does not miss any preparation and he thinks he knows what services USBE offers to him.

P4 thinks that it is something each student learns by himself or herself. More information could be provided about how to use databases, and also with more enthusiasm, “a librarian comes to class and explains you how to use the library but you are not seeing any database, it does not make any sense. It does not help you. People cannot use the facilities as they could use them”. In DBS it was a trial and error process since everything was in Spanish.

- **Being informed**

P1 considers that DBS provides good information, especially through teachers’ reminders and advertisements. In her opinion the channels are good too.

P2 believes that the given information is interesting in both BSs. DBS gives all the information at once (apart from the posters in the corridor). However USBE gives it in a more continuous way and using social media (informal relation) “we were informed by the web page and also we were encouraged to like the page on Facebook to follow the events, so it was really ok.”. Teachers encourage students to take part in the activities organized by the faculty in both schools.
Empirical Findings

P3 thinks that the communication is bad sometimes. The channels, TVs, emails and posters are very good though.

P4 thinks that USBE is doing a really good job when informing students about activities and possibilities; additionally, he considers the channels to be very good.

- **Being heard**

P1 believes that the communication with the teachers is good and they always help students so in case of any problem she always asks them for advice. She also knows that she can go to the faculty secretary or to the general secretary in case of having different problems.

P2 thinks that universities have tools to represent and hear students but USBE uses them more efficiently. DBS has the general secretary, the students’ representative and teachers; and USBE has the Student Service, the international office (focus on exchange students) and teachers. She thinks she always knew where to go.

P3 says that there are representatives and organizations to go to when having a problem but he does not think that their problems are heard, mainly because of the program he studies. He does not feel enough represented as a student. “They do not listen to what we say, they give you the possibility to fill evaluation but they do not hear it.”

P4 believes that the study advisor is the main figure to go when having a problem, they are very helpful. He does not really feel much represented as a student since he thinks USBE does not care very much about students’ complaints (complaints about teachers for example).

- **Redress (compensation)**

P1 thinks that the teachers are always ready to help but she thinks that in some particular situations the business school may care more about keeping their prestige and good name than helping her. “I think that if our school does something wrong, they would just try not to extend it (...) I do not really think they always try to do their best”.

P2 never had big problems, but because of one lack of information related experience she had in DBS, and because of a not fully satisfying solution, she thinks USBE has a better redress system than DBS.

According to P3 there is no transparency, he thinks that the business school does not care about his problems.

P4 does not think that USBE or the university compensates students in any way if they make a mistake. He feels that his opinion does not really count.
Empirical Findings

- **Choose**

P1 said that there were some limitations when choosing DBS, money and location were important issues since she wanted to study abroad but she thinks that it was more convenient investing in a good university next to home rather than in living out of home but in a cheaper university. “When you go outside you have to pay the accommodation, the food... so my parents prefer to pay for the university than for being out”.

P2 didn’t feel she had any limitation when choosing the studies and the business school. Nevertheless, in the case of DBS, the location affected in the decision and in USBE the duration of the exchange (it offered her a longer stay than other exchange business schools).

P3 studies business administration mainly because of the job possibilities that it provides. There were no limitations apart from the marks when choosing what and where to study.

P4 studies business administration because he did not know what to study and it offered good employability. His limitations when choosing USBE were mainly that his family and friends were related to it.

- **Healthy environment**

According to P1 DBS does not do too much in terms of being environmentally friendly, but she also says that the little they do, they do it honestly and not to improve their public image.

P2 never took the time to think about it, but she feels USBE and in general Sweden is more environmentally friendly.

For P3 the environmental effort is OK but more recycling would be fine.

P4 thinks that it is not a priority for USBE and DBS, however, more could be done according to him. “It’s nothing that you think about, you do not see advertising for it or against it; thus I guess we are in the middle. I think when I was in DBS I had the same kind of feeling. I did not feel like it was not or was taking responsibility”.

- **Safety**

P1 would not know what to do in case of an unexpected situation since the students in the DBS have received no training for that kind of things. The facilities are not prepared for handicapped people.

For P2 both universities are safe and are ready for unexpected situations, but the level of preparation of USBE is better in terms of people with physical disabilities.

P3 thinks that facilities are very safe and he thinks that students are more or less prepared in case of an emergency situation. “I think Sweden is a very safe place and there are rules that they respect”.
P4 feels safe and he considers that USBE has good safety standards. He knows that there are crisis protocols in case of any emergency. In Deusto, there were some underground classes with little windows in which he was not feeling that safe.

The following table presents the key points of the interview data:

**Table 6. Interviews’ Data Collection Resume**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDY TOPICS</th>
<th>BUSINESS SCHOOLS OPINION</th>
<th>STUDENTS OPINION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General View</strong></td>
<td>Very satisfied with their institution</td>
<td>Pretty satisfied with their institution/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvements:</td>
<td>(both punctuation around 6,5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In DBS: More informal relation and more resources for teachers</td>
<td>Improvements:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In USBE: Better relation between theory and practise</td>
<td>- More practical preparation and real work experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic Needs</strong></td>
<td>Employability</td>
<td>Preparation to work in a company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative teachers/PhD experts</td>
<td>Teacher with labor experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ICT infrastructure</td>
<td>Pleasant environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Propositional Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Necessary and basic</td>
<td>Necessary but too focus on it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prescriptional Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Very focus on improving</td>
<td>Request more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consumer Education</strong></td>
<td>Communication problems</td>
<td>General knowledge of the services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being Informed</strong></td>
<td>A lot of information provided to students</td>
<td>There is information but not always relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: good channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being Heard</strong></td>
<td>Many tools to hear students</td>
<td>Don’t feel heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Redress</strong></td>
<td>Not always able to redress but very concern about it</td>
<td>Bad redress system: no transparency, looking for image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choose</strong></td>
<td>Detected limitations:</td>
<td>Business: first option to study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In DBS: Location</td>
<td>Limitations in the school decision:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- In USBE: Marks</td>
<td>- In DBS: Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- In USBE: Marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthy Environment</strong></td>
<td>Basic knowledge and service</td>
<td>No big interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety</strong></td>
<td>Basic knowledge and service</td>
<td>No big interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Own creation*

*Note: For more detailed information, both the transcripts and the audio recordings are available for all the interviews.*
6) ANALYSIS

The Analysis chapter focuses on understanding the empirical findings from the previous chapter. Following the three main elements that previous consumerist analyses have used and the ones presented in the theoretical framework (Garcia and Cravens & Hills), this analysis chapter is divided in three sections: 5.1 Country Level analyzes the rights, organizations and students representation in both countries. The parts 5.2 Industry Level and 5.3 Consumer Level instead explain the consumer protection and VKP in both levels.

6.1 Country Level

6.1.1 Rights

Spain and Sweden defend their consumers by different laws. Spain reformulated its 1978 constitutional law to offer a wider and more effective protection level. Spanish consumers’ are protected by using mainly one detailed and broad law. Sweden defends its consumers with not a single law act, like Spain, but using several acts concerning different consumption situations. Apart from that, we corroborate the fact that Sweden has been pioneer when it comes to Consumerism. We have seen how its early protection laws were the first in its kind. As the theoretical framework shows Straver already suggested this in the early days of Consumerism as we know it, Sweden was the only country in the final stage of the Consumerist Life Cycle in 1977.

Even if there is a law that affects all Spanish citizens, certain Spanish laws change depending on the territory, and as a consequence to that, protection levels may change between territories. Therefore, we can say that the protection level is heterogeneous in Spain. In contrast, Swedish consumer protection is more homogeneous since all Swedish citizens enjoy the same protection level.

Even if the ways are different, both countries provide the means to respect Consumer International’s 8 rights. However, is important to highlight that certain rights, like the right to choose, are regulated by other laws, like anti-monopoly laws.

6.1.2 Organizations

When it comes to institutions, it is obvious that Sweden has a much more organized and better established state-level institution system. This was expected since, as we see in the previous literature by Straver, Swedish government has had a deep implication in the Consumerist movement. The Swedish consumer agency is the central and only organization at country level, having its director acting also as Ombudsman. However, Spain has more than one government-dependant organization, the national consumer institute and the consumers’ and users’ council. The former seeks consumer protection by promoting rights of consumers while the latter is
concerned in representing independent consumer organizations, which are very important in Spanish consumer protection frame. This situation leads to analyze the importance of independent consumer organizations. In Spain, consumers can ask for help to several different organizations when they have a problem or want information. Almost every economic sector counts with the presence of an organization of this nature and the most important are represented at Consumers’ Council, making possible for the consumers to have influence on the authorities. This influence is what Straver called the countervailing power that consumer organizations provide and that we mentioned in section 3.3.1.

The situation is different in Sweden since only two independent organizations are recognized by Consumers International. These organizations do not have a direct connection with a governamental level like the independent organizations do in Spain through Consumers’ Council.

As a consequence, it can be said that Sweden is often referred as one of the pioneers in consumer protection and it can be seen by its laws that it offers consumers a high level of protection with a very well organized system to which consumers can address their problems. Spain does not have such a well structured system, but it counts on government-independent organizations that make sure that consumers’ complaints and doubts are heard. Our findings show that Sweden’s systems cornerstone is the Swedish Consumer Agency, while Spain’s system relays on independent organizations that have representation in Consumers’ and Users’ Council.

### 6.1.3 Student representation

When it comes to student representation, there is no standard system to be followed in Spanish business schools. Each business school and university follows its own system and they are very different from each other. In Sweden, there is not a standardized system either, but universities have more similar organizations, so even if we focus on two specific business schools, results will be easier to generalize in the Swedish case.

Umeå University has different student unions that represent each one of the faculties that form the university, and each of these unions is formed by many people. In the DBS, each faculty has one representative and there is only one person in each level, from class representatives to faculty representatives in the council (if we don’t take into account the vice-representatives). The fact of having only one person in charge instead of a whole organization makes this representation system look weaker than the Swedish system. Anyhow, we analyze if students feel enough represented in much more detail in the following points of the analysis and discussion section.

According to our interviewees, (BSS3) we know that students have representation in every level of USBE’s decision making boards and we also know that even if there is some, more student representation and teacher representation is missed in DBS’s decision making boards (BSS2). Therefore, it seems that USBE’s representation system is more solid than DBS’s and that it has more influence.
6.2 Industry Level: business schools

Following Garcia, Cravens and Hills, the next level of the analysis is the industry level.

6.2.1 Consumer Protection

- **Basic Needs**

When referring to the basic needs that a business school should provide, employability appears as important for both DBS’s and USBE’s employees. Both business schools consider that providing students with possibilities to find a job is essential.

When speaking about teachers, on the one hand, DBS staff members think that they should be collaborative teachers, professionals that work closer to students. This “closer to student” approach is linked to Stukalina’s proposal of a student-centred educational environment that we mentioned in point 3.2.2 Critic to business schools Traditional Model, when criticizing the traditional educational model. On the other hand, USBE’s staff considers that teachers should be PhDs, experts on their field above all.

Infrastructure is also important for both schools staff members, is interesting to see that both BSS1 and BSS3 encourage non-presencial (for instance, online lessons) education. BSS3 even affirms that videotaped lessons should be offered. As mentioned in point 3.2.2, learning resources and other support mechanisms should be accessible to students, like these non-presencial tools mentioned by both business schools’ staff members.

- **Consumer Education and being Informed**

DBS recognizes having a communication problem inside the business school. The information is sent but students do not seem to get it all because the information may have not been addressed to the right people. Apparently too much information is sent to the students because of a lack of segmentation. This lack of segmentation can be interpreted as an incorrect application of the customer oriented principles that DeShields, Kara and Kaynak defend, mentioned in section 3.1.3 Consumerism and Marketing. Communication works fine in USBE according to the staff, but students only attend to events organized by the university if they are mandatory. When new students and international students arrive, both business schools provide students with a lot of information, including welcome days and guided tours.

- **Being Heard and Redressed**

As Naidoo and Jamieson stated, and we include in section 3.3 Link between Consumerism and business schools, consumer rights have been strengthened by the elaboration and institutionalization of complaints and redress mechanisms. Regarding this, both business schools provide the different ways for the students to be heard but redress cannot be always assured. DBS has multiple channels for the students to be heard (general secretary, tutors, student representatives, student office, etc.) but staff members admit that students usually go to their
close channel (usually teachers) rather than going to a specific one depending on the problem. The students in USBE can go to the Student Union, the student representatives or the director of studies, and according to our interviews (BSS3) they usually know where to go. Therefore, USBE has a more organized and effective structure.

As for compensation, DBS recognizes its mistakes but is not always able to compensate students for them. Both business schools state that students’ complaints have consequences since in DBS teacher evaluations are taken into account for their internal promotions and in USBE teachers have to change decisions if students decide to appeal and they are right.

- **Choose**

Limitations exist when choosing where to study. Location is the most important limitation according to the DBS staff; most of the students come from the geographic area around the business school. The good name and reputation of the business school, the internationalization or the possibility to go abroad, and the strong connection to real business are also reasons to choose DBS. In USBE’s staff’s opinion, the location is also a factor for USBE since Umeå is a well known student-friendly city in Sweden. However, marks seem also an important factor taken into account since USBE cannot compete in terms of reputation with the most important business schools in Stockholm. These limitations are much related to the context where the business school is (such as location or demography) but especially to the way the firm uses this context to maximize its possibilities, as argued in section 3.2.2.

- **Healthy Environment and Safety**

Healthy environment and safety were the first demands of Consumerism, as we explained in section 3.1.1 Origin of Consumerism, with the mention of the first protest and actions.

Both business schools are safe enough, but apparently, DBS has no emergency protocols even though a safety committee has been created this year to solve that problem. In contrast, USBE has systems that ensure safety and counts with a student health service.

When referring to a healthy environment, DBS’s staff states that the school has little experience in the area but is making some efforts to be more environmentally friendly and some recycling is made. USBE’s employees tell us that the school also makes some efforts but recognize that there is still much more to be done. According to these statements, we can say that being environmentally friendly is not the main priority for any of the business schools.

**6.2.2 Valuable Knowledge and Preparation**

- **Propositional and Prescriptiona knowledge**

DBS is much more focused on applying theory than on building it. Both schools reward internships with academic credits so they clearly think that prescriptive knowledge is important and part of the education they provide. USBE recognizes being very focused on theory and DBS
recognizes that their concepts are taught to be applied in companies. Therefore, applying Lorange’s words, we can conclude that DBS is more market driven and USBE is more conceptually driven.

Referring to Benis and O’Toole’s statement in section 3.2.2, USBE would be closer to what they consider as being focused on “scientific” research and DBS would be closer to what Sargeant and Angus call practice-driven.

### 6.3 Consumer Level: Students

#### 6.3.1 Consumer Protection

- **Basic Needs**

Regarding to the basic needs that a business school should provide, all the students agree that they should be prepared for being able to work in a company. Moreover, they insist that apart from being taught theoretical knowledge about business areas such as marketing, accounting, strategy, etc. they should be taught in a more practical way, with real cases and contact with firms.

Both Spanish and Swedish students miss teachers with more experience in the labour market, apart from having good knowledge about their expertise area. This appears to be reflection of what it is stated in section 3.2.2 by Bennis and O’Toole, business schools are hiring professors with limited real-world experience. Having communication skills is also considered very important.

In terms of infrastructure, meeting rooms and team work areas are identified as very important. Furthermore, an environment that promotes a pleasant staying in the business school is considered necessary, with good food and beverages accesses and open spaces.

- **Consumer Education and being Informed**

All the interviewed students think they have basic knowledge about the services and activities offered by their business schools.

On the one hand, Spanish students think that their faculty gives good information and they don’t miss any preparation to use the provided tools. However they recognize not receiving part of it, reasoning they don’t pay enough attention. Same happens with exchange students in DBS, they feel there is a language gap when informing. This can be understood as a failure in the message issued or in the channels used to communicate this message. In addition, teachers are highly valued as a source of relevant information about the activities of the faculty.
On the other hand, Swedish students believe that they could be provided with more information, even if the channels are varied and appropriate. Exchange students agree stating that the use of social media as a way of informing is a good decision. As it is defended in 3.2.2, the traditional model is not valid anymore and business schools have to adapt to new tendencies and ways of work.

- **Being Heard and Redressed**

All the interviewed students feel that their faculties do not hear them enough. Nevertheless, they all agree that teachers are good intermediaries, with their proactive and kind attitude.

DBS students consider that when facing a problem they can contact the general or faculty secretary, the students’ representative or the teachers. In USBE, on the contrary, students find more alternatives to contact, such as, the student service, the tutors and the student unions.

The feeling about the redress system in DBS is not very positive, as it is considered that the organization cares more about its prestige and image, than for student satisfaction. USBE students think the same about their faculty, where they see a lack of transparency and preoccupation for students’ problems. This is related to the feeling of not being really heard and the need of change in the model of business school sector discussed in 3.2.2.

- **Choose**

Even if most of the students decided to study business as a first choice, there are some limitations when choosing the school. Spanish students were influenced by the geographical proximity to their homes, as they both live in the same city in which they study. Actually, 80% of the students studying in DBS are originally from the same province of the university. In the case of USBE the constraints are more related to the marks required for the entry.

- **Healthy Environment and Safety**

None of the students have ever thought seriously about the level of healthy environment and safety provided by the business schools. Even if there is a bigger concern about these issues, as we state in 3.1.2 Meaning and Dimensions, it is still not considered a priority to solve by the society in general.

Spanish students think the campus does not do anything against being environmentally friendly, though it neither does anything in favour. Moreover, when it comes to safety they feel safe inside the university, even if they see it is not really prepared for physically disabled people.

Swedish students are more positive in these aspects, being sure about their physical safety in case of any unexpected situation. In terms of environmental issues, they believe that their business school does some things but could develop more initiatives in this aspect.
6.3.2 Valuable Knowledge and Preparation

- **Propositional and Prescriptive knowledge:**

  Every interviewed student thinks theoretical concepts are useful if they are combined with practical knowledge. Thus, they agree with what Lorange defends, reflected in section 3.3, that propositional and prescriptive knowledge complement and reinforce each other.

  DBS students miss visits to real companies to see the everyday’s way of working and some general knowledge about global economic situation. Regarding to the prescriptive knowledge they think that the faculty provides the tools to get internships but this methodology is not good enough as the jobs often do not suit the students. They also miss not having the chance of doing internship during the course. (Note: It must be taken into account that the interviewees from DBS are not inside the new Bologna system. The students from the new plan have internships during the year as a complementary course.)

  USBE students see their faculty very theoretical and don’t see clearly the relation between what is learned in class and the application in real life. The think there should be more interaction with the private sector and the system of internship has to be improved.

  USBE alumni data shows that they are satisfied with their education since they use they use the skills they got during their education even if there is disagreement about if these skills were sufficient or not. They also state that no internships were included in their education but they are able to develop knowledge within the area of business management. This suggests that USBE fulfills their theoretical requirements but that it does not focus that much on students’ practical preparation. However, it seems that the learnings are useful for their future.

  DBS alumni data shows that the business school provides students with lots of internship and job opportunities, besides, it has an employability that goes over 93.3% (Lanbide, 2008, p.7) which has been achieved through adaptation to the local labour requirements (more than 70% of the class of 2005 work in the region and 90% in Spain). This suggests that its system is market-driven.
The following chapter shows the conclusions that we obtained from this research study. Firstly, the results of the main topics we are concerned about are clarified (consumer protection and VKP), in the sections 7.1 Basic Protection, 7.2 Protection in business schools and 7.3 Valuable Knowledge and Preparation. Secondly, in 7.4 Managerial Implications we explain the connotations that our thesis has in the business school sector. Lastly, we include a section for the Final Conclusion (7.5), in which we include the main aspects and repercussions of the previous sections.

7.1 Basic Protection

We can see that at a country level, a legal framework to defend consumers’ rights exists. Spain provides this legal framework through the 1/2007 Royal Legislative Decree’s consumer right list. In contrast, Sweden provides this legal framework through its different acts, especially through the marketing act, and the consumer sales act, which defend consumers’ education, the right to be informed, the right to be heard and the redressing rights of consumers. Spanish law is more specific when it comes to which rights consumers have and Swedish law is more focused on providing transparency for the relations that businesses have with consumers. However, as we have mentioned before, both countries provide the means to ensure that consumers’ rights are respected. Spain relies much more on independent organizations that Sweden but both systems provide the necessary tools. This protection framework is necessary but not enough to make sure that business schools in both countries apply Consumerism. As we explained in the introduction, applying Consumerism implies more than defending consumers’ rights, it demands that business should do what is best for consumers. Which implies that this protection framework helps but does not ensure that business schools do what is best for students in the long term.

When analyzing student representation, which is specific to this sector, we see that the system is much more organized and structured in Sweden, mainly because of the institutionalization and because students have whole organizations that defend their interests, not only representatives in boards. We conclude that students have a stronger influence in USBE than in DBS, since their demands can reach higher organizational levels in the business school hierarchy thanks to the better organization of the student representation system. Thanks to the SFS, their demands can be heard at national level.

7.2 Protection in business schools

Regarding to the protection level that business schools provide, even if in some aspects students and staff agree, there are also many points of disagreement:
Firstly, business schools consider that the basic need of a student is being hired for a job in the future, thus, they focus their main efforts in increasing employability. Consumers agree with this idea, even though they miss more practical experience to achieve this. As for teachers, business schools prioritize collaborative methodology and having experts in specific areas, which is not that valuable according to students, who rather look for teachers with experience working in external companies. There is also a difference in the opinion about infrastructures; business schools find important to change towards non presentational education and innovative areas. However, students prioritize having a pleasant environment with places to interact.

Secondly, an important communication problem has been identified inside business schools, because great amounts of information are provided but it is not well targeted and channels are not always well adapted to the youngest generations’ needs. Therefore, students do not show interest in activities and services that are complementary or not compulsory. This can be also related to the feeling of not being heard. Businesses schools provide several ways to listen to consumer demands; however, they are not effective, with the exception of teachers, who are well considered specially when dealing with difficult situations. There is also a bad feeling about the redress system, which is perceived as more linked to the company image and prestige, than oriented to solve actual student problems.

Thirdly, we do not identify any important limitations when it comes to the right to choose the provided service. Spanish students are influenced by the location of the business school, searching for geographical proximity. Swedish students though, are restricted by the minimum mark required to enrol.

Finally, there is no big environmental and safety consciousness in this sector. Business schools try to provide the basics in this area and keep continuously improving, even if students do not really value these efforts.

### 7.3 Valuable Knowledge and Preparation

Regarding knowledge provided by the business schools, we detect that even if in general the feeling is satisfactory, there is still a lot to improve in this area. DBS is more market driven and USBE instead is more conceptually driven. Nevertheless, both business schools are very focused on enhancing the practical knowledge offer, which is what business students mainly demand.

We can see that both schools are answering students’ demands but none of the business schools is providing a balanced mix of prescriptive and propositional knowledge. This is specially interesting when analyzing DBS’s results, because the staff defends that the school is very market driven and that it is becoming even more market driven but students do not think that this is properly done. For instance, DBS says that the school helps students to get internships; however, students think that these internships are not suitable for them.
7.4 Limitations

After the research, we have seen that as we had already suspected in the beginning of the study, the results cannot be generalized due to the fact that our sample is very small. We have missed some more collaboration from USBE’s staff, even if we understand the short available time they have. A bigger sample would have allowed us solving our generalization issue. Besides, we also think that it is probable that the findings would have changed slightly.

We have also found that interviewing is a very time-consuming activity. Transcribing and analyzing the transcripts takes a lot of time. If we had had more time, we would have been able to analyze the content of the interviews in a more detailed way, and this would have provided us with a deeper understanding of how Consumerism is applied in this sector.

Finally, the resource limitations have affected our study. For the Spanish interviews we had to use online resources instead of travelling there and have a face to face conversation. Moreover, we could not use non-public or expensive information, such as scientific articles or books that the library of both universities did not have available.

Moreover, when analyzing customers, we have only taken into account students’ point of view, because they are the main users, and we have put aside other indirect consumers such as parents (the purchasers of the service, at least in Spain since student loans are very rare) or society in general.

Finally, when analyzing the P2 and P4 (students from USBE + exchange students in DBS) student profiles’ point of view, we have to understand that the international university exchange experience (Erasmus program for instance) cannot be totally compared to the home school’s experience since priorities usually change.

7.5 Managerial Implications

Our thesis and our model should help business school managers to know if they are applying Consumerism and to which extent, in order to know if their institutions are providing the students with what is best for them. Besides we provide some guidelines that these managers could follow according to what we have found.

According to our findings, business schools managers should respect consumers’ rights legislation of the country in which they are stablished in order to give the students basic protection. In case of countries in which consumer protection level is not ensured by law, BSs should provide this basic protection in order to start applying Consumerism.

When it comes to VKP, we think that business schools should create a strong network with other schools in order to send their students there so they can experience different learning approaches. By doing so, market driven schools could send their students to conceptually driven schools and vice versa.
7.6 Final Conclusion

In order to answer the question *how is Consumerism applied in business schools?* We conclude that there is a legal framework in both countries that ensures the protection of consumers. Moreover, all the basic rights of students are satisfied by the business schools in greater or lesser extent. Nonetheless, when it comes to the educational model there is still a gap between the ideal and the current situation. Both schools take into account the two types of knowledge mentioned before, but in the case of DBS, it is more focused on following the market driven point of view (*“is necessary to finish the studies with working experience”* BSS1), has a very high employability and alumni are satisfied with their studies (Lanbide, 2008, p.22). USBE, on the contrary, is more concentrated on the conceptually driven standpoint (*“why start working in the business school, if you are going to spend the rest of your life working”* BSS3). His alumni are satisfied with their education even if they miss more prescriptive oriented knowledge examples, like internships, to be included in their education.

Consumerism demands for doing what is best for consumers and we can see that this objective is not completely achieved yet since none of the two business schools provide students with a completely balanced model of prescriptive and propositional knowledge. Results show that, some years after finishing their studies, alumni of both business schools show that their business school education was satisfactory or very satisfactory even if the balance of prescriptive and propositional knowledge was not perfect. This shows that both organizations do what is good, or even very good for students’ long term needs but still have some space to work and develop, in order to do what is best for students.

As a consequence, we have identified two important aspects to improve the current situation of business schools in terms of Consumerism: First, the discrepancy between students and business schools’ staff should be minimized in order to better satisfy consumer needs. Second, the educational model of both schools should be enhanced by adding their best things to each other, by finding a better balance between prescriptive and propositional knowledge. As Pfeffer & Fong suggest (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p.95), there is no reason that, in a world seeking both knowledge and training (understanding training as a more practical approach, more related to experience and skills), business schools can’t succeed in doing both well.

Nevertheless, it does not seem realistic to enhance the programs of both universities in the short term. In addition, there are other factors to take into account that make this even more difficult. For instance, DBS is facing new challenges with the recent implementation of an even more practical focused Bologna plan *“(…) today Bologna’s program has a different way of specialization. Undergraduate programs are very general today and specialization comes later. But now the most important thing is to prepare our students to have criteria and being able to learn by their own the things they will need. (…)”* (BSS1 Interview) Therefore, we consider that the best option in short-middle run is to give students the chance to participate in both experiences in two different schools through exchange programs. Additionally, if the exchange is in a foreign country, it will provide students with cultural and adaptability knowledge at the same time.
After analyzing how Consumerism is applied in business schools, we have found out that the protection level is less relevant than what it seemed in the very beginning. As we have mentioned, both countries offer a legal framework of protection and this can be generalized to almost all developed countries, mainly in Europe thanks to ECC Network. Therefore, we can assume that a basic protection level will always exist in these cases.

However, we have found that the industry and consumer level should be analyzed in a deeper way. The valuable knowledge and preparation create value for students and as Thompson, Strickland & Gamble state, the main purpose of a business is to create value for its customers (Thompson et al., 2007, p. 110). This value creation is achieved by getting competitive advantages over competing schools, and this competitive advantage will be the basis of superior performance in terms of profitability and finance (Thompson, et al., 2007, p. 6). Such an important relationship should be analyzed in a deeper way in order to link Consumerism to a better business school performance.

As a consequence, the model we developed in the theoretical framework should be modified for future researches, highlighting the VKP, consumer level and industry level, and giving less importance to CI’s eight rights and the country level.

Figure 13. Consumerism influence in business schools – Final Model
*Source: Own creation*

Note: The reader should always keep in mind that these results cannot be generalized to the population as the sample for the empirical research is not representative enough.
Even though our research project has met the planned aims, we consider that there is still a lot to investigate and learn about this topic. Moreover, the time and resource limitations leave us space to improve in possible future investigations. The following points describe some of the enhancements we identified:

- A deeper research should be done based on the one we have done, taking into account indirect consumers and not only students. In the Spanish case, parents’ point of view is relevant because usually, they are the ones paying for their children’s university education; student loans are rare in Spain. Other factors like the companies in which students will work should be also taken into account for a more complete and accurate study.

- Consumerism is not a deeply studied topic and it would be interesting to extend this research to other industries; such as the health sector.

- The Spanish territorial organization is very complicated and specific protection levels are applied in each territory. We have not been able to analyze exactly the differences between the Basque (where DBS is located) and the general Spanish legislation because of the lack of time and resources. This thesis could be improved with a deeper analysis of the regional protection laws because they could affect the offered varied level of protection.

- A new version of the study with a bigger sample should be conducted. At least there should be 16 interviews and some of the profiles should be more different between them. For example, P3 and P4 students come from the same program (International Business program), so we have not been able to have a full view of the USBE’s services.

- Likewise, it should be also considered to analyze the services given to consumers that are not users of the main service anymore, in order to consolidate long term relationships with them. A good example of this are the business schools’ alumni associations that offer them contacts to access job interviews, seminars, new courses, etc. In both analyzed universities these organizations exist. These ways of creating relationships can be related to Consumerism and the students’ long term needs.

- A better development of the theoretical framework would be useful and interesting. Creating a basic model that explains how Consumerism can influence on the way to be successful in the long term would be very enriching for the current Consumerism studies. A deeper study based on a model that relates Consumerism to satisfaction, satisfaction to loyalty and loyalty to long term success would give an important reason to businesses to apply Consumerism as a key to get a sustainable competitive advantage. The following diagram shows what we mean by this:
Figure 14. Theoretical model for future researchers in the area
Source: Own creation

- By studying two different business schools in two very different countries we open the door to further comparison between southern European schools and Scandinavian schools.

- By adding an opinion analysis of students that have finished their studies long time ago, we would get a better perspective of the fulfillment of the long-term needs of the students. A further research on this area would allow the researchers to contrast former students’ opinion with actual students’ opinion.

- A longitudinal analysis of individual students’ opinion comparing their ideas when they start their studies and when they finish would allow us to understand how their demands change through time. It could also tell the researchers if what is best for students changes through time. Thus, allowing business schools managers to change the study programs adjusting them to apply Consumerism better and in a more efficient way.
The unique properties of qualitative research makes reliability and validity criteria to be reformulated or altered (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.410). Some disagreement exists between different positions regarding how to analyze reliability and validity in qualitative research. We will follow Guba and Lincoln’s position (Guba, 1994, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.411), which has two primary criteria for assessing a qualitative study: trustworthiness and authenticity.

Trustworthiness is composed by four criteria:
- credibility
- transferability
- dependability
- confirmability

Authenticity is composed by the following criteria:
- fairness
- ontological authenticity
- educative authenticity
- catalytic authenticity
- tactical authenticity

9.1 Credibility

The establishment of the credibility of findings means that the research has been carried out according to the canons of good practice and that the research findings have been submitted to the members of the social world that were being studied, to confirm that the investigator has correctly understood the social world. In other words, not only good practice has to be followed, but the researcher has to provide the people on whom he or she has conducted research with an account of his or her findings to assure respondent validation (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.410).

This thesis has been written following USBE’s thesis manual and according to its specifications. Therefore, we can conclude that its content has been written following good practice standards. In addition, as the interviewees have access to this thesis at all times, respondent validation is assured.

9.2 Transferability

Qualitative research typically studies groups of individuals with certain values or characteristics belonging to the same environments (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.412). As a consequence, it is relevant to pose whether the results can be transferred or not to other environments. The researcher must assess to what extent results can be generalized on a rational basis.
We found rational to believe that the results of this paper can be transferred to other similar situations of Spanish business schools and Swedish business schools, since we have acknowledged that at organizational level, business schools of each of these countries have reasonably common structures to other business schools in each of the countries. However, we are also aware that especially in the Spanish case, in which the student representation system is not as structured and standardized as in Sweden; results may suffer more variation from one school to another than in Sweden.

9.3 Dependability

Continuing with Guba’s and Lincoln’s proposition, to establish dependability, researchers should adopt an “auditing” approach, in which peers would make sure that proper procedures have been followed. Bryman and Bell state that auditing has not been a very popular approach to ensure dependability due to the extent data sets that it generates.

Nevertheless, in a short work like this thesis, not such extensive data sets are generated; as a result, this auditing approach can be used. In our particular case, a thesis supervisor takes the role of an auditor. The supervisor takes part in the process of writing the thesis by correcting mistakes and making sure that the researchers follow a correct procedure at all times.

9.4 Confirmability

Bryman and Bell state that confirmability is concerned with recognizing that complete objectivity is impossible to achieve in business research but the researchers have to show that they have acted in good faith. In other words, they have to avoid personal values and previous theories while carrying out the research.

In our case, confirmability has been a difficult criterion to meet since both researchers have studied in both of the analyzed business schools. Despite this fact, one researcher has a marketing background and the other one has a business strategy background. Thanks to these different backgrounds we have been able to write more objectively and not only taking one point of view. Moreover, we can state that we have acted in good faith understanding and taking into account this limitation.

9.5 Authenticity

According to Bryman and Bell (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.414) authenticity criteria have not been very influential. We are going to discuss them though, since we are following Guba and Lincoln’s model in trustworthiness and we consider that authenticity must be also analyzed to complete it.
Quality Criteria

Fairness is met through the representation of the most important viewpoints of the social setting. In our case, the most important actors, students and business school staff are represented. Ontological authenticity is met thanks to the direct access that the interviewees have to the thesis work; members will get a better understanding of the social milieu.

Educative authenticity is met because the research helps members to appreciate better the perspective of other members of their social setting thanks to the availability of the thesis work. For instance, business school staff is able to understand students’ point of view thanks to their answers that they have provided in the interviews.

Catalytic authenticity concerns about the research acting as an impetus to members to engage in action to change their circumstances. We do not know if this criterion is going to be met at this stage, and it is highly unlikely that this thesis would have a big impact by itself. However, we do think that this is going to open new possibilities of research for the future. We expect that it will make the actors of the research think over how Consumerism is applied in business schools.

Tactical authenticity is not directly met since we do not directly intend to empower members to take the steps necessary for engaging in action. Our main objective is to know to which extent Consumerism is applied, we do not seek a change in the actors’ attitude towards it.
LIST OF REFERENCES

BOOKS AND ARTICLES


WEBSITES


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LECTURES

Biedembach, T., Research Methodology in Business Administration, Lecture 1 Sess. 6 (2012). Umeå: USBE

PRIMARY SOURCES

BSS1, Deusto Business School, personal interview, May 16, 2012.


P2, student of Deusto Business School, personal interview, May 9, 2012.


ADDITIONAL SOURCES
List of References


Mujika, Alazne; Deusto Business School (2012).

Umeå Studentkår, Umeå University (2012).
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Information Needs Procedure

1. Problem Formulation
Consumerism’s application in Business Schools sector.

2. Research Question
How is the Consumerism applied in Spanish and Swedish business schools and to which extent?

3. Objectives
   - Protection:
     1. Basic needs
     2. Safety
     3. Being informed
     4. Choose
     5. Being heard
     6. Redress
     7. Consumer education
     8. Healthy environment
   - VKP:
     1. Propositional knowledge
     2. Prescription knowledge

4. Variables to Analyze
   Protection variables:
   (V1) Basic needs
   (V2) Safety
   (V3) Being informed
   (V4) Choose
   (V5) Being heard
   (V6) Redress
   (V7) Consumer education

   VKP variables:
   (V8) Healthy environment
   (V9) Propositional knowledge
   (V10) Prescription knowledge

5. Questions
The questions are developed in the appendix 2: Interview Guide.
Appendix 2: Interview Guide

There are two interview guides, depending if the interviewee is a staff from a business school or a student. Nevertheless, the structure and information needs are very similar in both guides. They start with some opening questions about the interviewee's studying and/or working data to understand and classify their profile. Afterwards, there are several questions about the topics we want to know about, the ten variables defined previously. Finally, there are some general and concluding questions to see the level of satisfaction with the business school offering.

Note: The symbols within the brackets before the questions indicate the following:

- V plus a number: which variable is the question asking about.
- The number after the dot: 1) Is it applied? 2) How should be applied?

1. STUDENTS INTERVIEW GUIDE

OPENING QUESTIONS
– What is your name?
– What do you study / have studied and where?
– If you have not finished yet, how long have been studying and when do you expect to be finished?
– What are you planning to do when you finish your studies? / What are you doing currently?
– Would you like to say something about your background? (do you study something else, etc)

TOPICS
a. Basic needs
(V1.1) What do you consider basic for the BS to provide you?
(V1.1) And regarding to:
- Knowledge offer (content)
- Teacher’s quality
- Infrastructure
- Others
(V1.2) Do they have all of them or you miss something? Reason it.

b. Propositional knowledge
(V9.1) Do you think the concepts studied in class are useful for your future?
(V9.2) Do you miss any type of preparation? Proposals.

c. Prescription knowledge
(V10.1) Does the BS provide any way of putting into practise what has been learnt in class (such as internship, relation with enterprises, etc.)?
(V10.1) Do you think this methodology is effective?
(V10.2) Do you miss more practical application? Proposals.
(V9.2 and v10.2) Balance between theoretical and practical knowledge?
d. Consumer education
(V7.1) Do you know what does your BS offer? Do you know how to use the tools provided by them? (For example: the online library, registration way, food and drink system)
(V7.2) Do you miss any kind of preparation to be able to use/understand any of the possibilities provided by the BS?

e. Being informed
(V3.1) Does the BS inform you about activities and possibilities (such as, grants, congresses, competitions, etc.) that may interest you? How?
(V3.1 and V3.2) Is this information interesting and relevant? Is it adequate or is it too few information or too much? What would you do to improve this situation? Reason it.

f. Being heard
(V5.1) When you have a problem related to the BS where do you go?
(V5.1) Is there any special organization to help you?
(V5.1) In the following cases, where will you go to ask for help?
  - Economical problems (problems with the payments, grants, etc.)
  - Educational problems (related to subjects)
  - Problems with the staff (related to teachers)
  - Other problems
(V5.1 and V5.2) Do you feel enough represented as student? Do you feel heard or not? What could be done to improve this situation? Reason it.

g. Redress (compensation)
(V6.1) Did you ever have a problem with the BS (confusion of lectures, payment, etc.)
(V6.1) How did they react? Did they redress in any way?
(V6.2) Do you think this could be improved? Reason it.

h. Choose
(V4.1) Why do you study business?
(V4.1) Have you been able to choose the studies you wanted to do?
(V4.1 and V4.2) Was there any limitation (such as, economical, location, no offer, etc.) when choosing it?

i. Healthy environment
(V8.1) Do you think your BS does enough in term of environmental issues?
(V8.1) Do you think the measures taken are really effective?
(V8.2) Do you think it could be done more? Reason it.

j. Safety
(V2.1) Do you feel physically safe in your BS? Are the installations good enough in terms of security?
(V2.1) Do you think your BS is ready to face an unexpected situation in which your physical integrity is involved? (injuries, fire situation, intoxication, natural disasters, etc.)
(V2.2) Do you think it could be done something else to improve the current situation? Reason it.
(For profiles 2 and 4 apply the same question to the exchange business school)

GENERAL + CLOSING QUESTIONS
- In general, do you feel satisfy with what your BS offers you? Score it from 1 to 10?
- Do you see the utility for the future? Reason it.
- Is there any improvement you think it should be done? Explain it.
- If you could go back in time, will you study the same thing? In the same BS?

2. BUSINESS SCHOOLS INTERVIEW GUIDE

OPENING QUESTIONS
- What is your name?
- What do you work in and where?
- How long have you been in this job? Where you working in the BS before getting this job? For how long?
- Would you like to say something about your background?

TOPICS
a. Basic needs
(V1.1) What do you consider basic for the BS to provide to the students?
(V1.1) And regarding to:
- Knowledge offer
- Teacher’s quality
- Infrastructure
- Others(V1.2) Do your BS has all of the things mentioned before or you miss something? Reason it.

b. Propositional knowledge
(V9.1) Do you think the concepts studied in class are useful for students’ future?
(V9.2) Do you miss any type of preparation? Proposals.

c. Prescription knowledge
(V10.1) Does the BS provide any way of putting into practise what has been learnt in class (such as internship, relation with enterprises, etc.)?
(V10.1) Do you think this methodology is effective?
(V10.2) Do you miss more practical application? Proposals.

d. Consumer education
(V7.1) Do the students know what BS offers? Do they know how to use the tools provided? (For example: the online library, registration way, food and drink system)
(V7.2) Do you think there should be more preparation to be able to use/understand any of the possibilities provided by the BS? Reason it.
**e. Being informed**
(V3.1) Does the BS provide *information* about activities and possibilities (such as, grants, congresses, competitions, etc.) that may interest to the students?
(V3.1) Do students respond to those advices?
(V3.1) Which information *channels* do you use? Are they effective?
(V3.2) Do you think this can be improved? Reason it.

**f. Being heard**
(V5.1) *Where* can students go when they have any *problem* related to the BS?
(V5.1) Is there any special *organization* that can help them?
(V5.1) In the following cases, where should a student go to ask for help?
- Economical problems (problems with the payments, grants, etc.)
- Educational problems (related to subjects)
- Problems with the personal (related to teachers)
- Other problems
(V5.1 and V5.2) Are the student enough *represented* in your BS? Are they really heard? What could be done to improve this situation? Reason it.

**g. Redress (compensation)**
(V6.1) How does your BS *react* in front of a *problem* of a student? Did you *redress* them in any way?
(V6.2) Do you think this could be improved? Reason it.

**h. Choose**
(V4.1) Is there any other BS that offers a *similar service*?
(V4.1) *Why* should the students go to your BS instead of going to others?
(V4.1 and V4.2) Do you think that part of the students choose to study in your BS due to some *limitations* (such as, being economically more affordable, good location, no other offers, etc.)?

**i. Healthy environment**
(V8.1) Do you think your BS does enough in terms of *environmental* issues?
(V8.2) Do you think the measures taken are really effective?
(V8.2) Do you think that more could be done? Reason it.

**j. Safety**
(V2.1) Do you feel *physically safe* in your BS? Are the installations good enough is terms of security?
(V2.1) Do you think your BS is ready to face an *unexpected* situation where your physical integrity is involved? (injuries, fire situation, intoxication, natural disasters, etc.)
(V2.2) Do you think something else could be done to improve the current situation? Reason it.

**GENERAL + CLOSING QUESTIONS**
- In general, do you think that what BS offers to its students is adequate?
- Do you think is useful for their future? Reason it.
- Is there any improvement you think it should be done? Explain it.
Appendix 3: Letter to Respondents

Dear X,

Our names are Blanca Boix and Iñigo Lizarza, we are students of Business Development and Internationalization master program in Umeå University’s Business School.

We are writing to you because we would like to ask for your help to complete our findings in a thesis on Consumerism and its implications in Spanish and Swedish business schools that we are writing right now.

Consumerism is an upward trend that calls into question the way of meeting consumer needs and desires of marketing. This philosophy defends that economy is too focused on sellers’ rights, leaving the consumers at disadvantage. One of the main implications of this philosophy is the idea of making what is best for the consumers in a long run, even if sometimes it can mean not doing what consumers want in a short term. We want to analyze if business schools apply this idea and in which way they do it and how they could do it.

We have thought about you as a relevant profile of our study. We are certain that your input will make a most valuable contribution to our project. Therefore, we would like you to participate in brief interview. During the interview we will discuss Consumerism’s application in business schools and the topics will involve the following:

- Which are the long term needs of your business school’s students.
- How does your business school satisfy these needs?
- Students expectations in Consumerist terms.
- *(Only students with p2 and p4 profiles)* How does the exchange business school satisfy it comparing it to your home business school?
- Thoughts about the future facing the school.

*(Only for Spanish interviewees)* We have considered that a videoconference voice-recorded interview would be the best choice due to the international character of the study. *(Only for Swedish interviewees)* We have considered that a face to face voice-recorded interview would be the best option. The interview will take around one hour. For any questions regarding the day and time of the interview you can contact us at:

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- xxxxxxxxxx@gmail.com
- xxxxxxxxxx@gmail.com

**Phone:**
- +46 xx xxx xx xx (Blanca)
- +46 xx xxx xx xx (Iñigo)

We deeply appreciate your collaboration in our study.

Best regards,

Blanca Boix
Iñigo Lizarza