

# **Lebanese American University**

Achieving Student-University Identification and Loyalty through Social Responsibility:  
The Case of the Lebanese American University

By

Dania Makki

A thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Business Administration

Adnan Kassar School of Business

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## THESIS APPROVAL FORM

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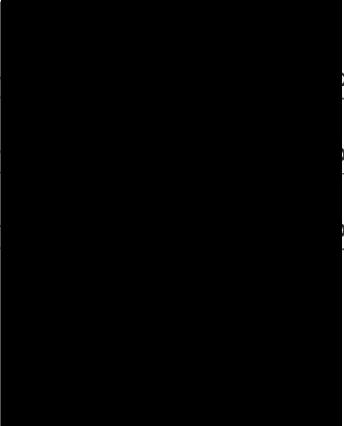
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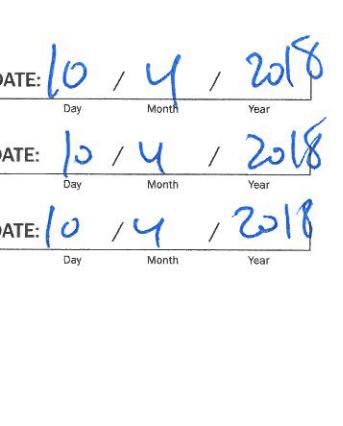
Department: Information Technology Management

School: Adnan Kassar School of Business

The undersigned certify that they have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis and approved it in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

MBA in the major of BUSINESS

Thesis Advisor's Name Dr. Abdul-Nasser Kassar | Sign  DATE: 10 / 4 / 2018  
Day Month Year

Committee Member's Name Dr. Manal Yunis | Sign  DATE: 10 / 4 / 2018  
Day Month Year

Committee Member's Name Dr. Walid Elgammal | Sign  DATE: 10 / 4 / 2018  
Day Month Year

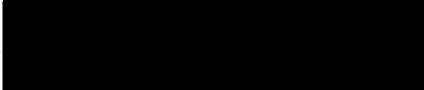
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# Dedication

*“It only takes one person to believe in you  
to change your life for the better.”*

*-Unknown Author-*

I am truly blessed and grateful to have so many in my life!

To the people who believed in me:

Dr. Elise Salem, you turned my dream into reality and you “gave me wings to fly”...  
Dr. Raed Mohsen, you always empowered me and supported my advancement ...  
Dr. Abdul-Nasser Kassar, you pushed me out of my comfort zone and made me believe that sky is the limit...

Aya El-Mir, my source of inspiration, my best friend, and my dearest sister...

My dear parents, Hanane and Hachem, I made it through with your blessings and prayers...

Celine and Mohamed, my stars, my heart, and my hope...

And, Abdel-Kader, my soulmate, my light, my backbone, my everything...nothing would have been possible without your presence by my side...I have been through so many hardships: at times, I felt weak and exhausted, I wanted to surrender, I thought it is not meant for me, and that I cannot do it! You were always there to lift me up, offer support, and remind me that I am strong and I am capable. You taught me to believe in myself!

I cannot find words to express my sincere gratitude to you all. I owe this first step toward my dream to you, to your faith in me, encouragement, guidance, support, and above all, to your love and patience. I hope this work is just the beginning of the journey I aspire for...

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Achieving Student-University Identification and Loyalty through  
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ABSTRACT

Today, the fierce competition in the Higher Education industry and the increasing number of universities is hindering institutions' efforts to raise or at least maintain their enrollment rates. This pressure is coupled with further strains caused by the rise of social and environmental challenges associated with globalization. Since universities play a vital role in fostering sustainable societies, the Higher Education industry witnessed the emergence of university social responsibility (USR) as a key element with a growing significance. This study aims to highlight the importance of USR by examining its impact on student-university identification and loyalty, the latter being a key factor that affects recruitment and retention. It also assesses the mediating effect of student-university identification on the relationship between USR and student loyalty. A conceptual model was developed and empirically tested using data collected via online questionnaire. The survey was sent to all currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students at the Lebanese American University, one of the prominent private higher education institutions in Lebanon and the region. A total of 439 completed questionnaires were returned, 429 of which were found to be useful. The conceptual model was tested by applying the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling technique using the Smart PLS 3.0 software. The results indicated that student loyalty can be achieved directly through university social responsibility, or indirectly through student-university identification. The relationships in the proposed model and the inferred outcomes have major practical implications. Upon identifying the factors that impact student loyalty, universities can enhance the efficiency of their recruitment and retention efforts by introducing tailored social responsibility programs and initiatives, and by focusing on the factors that lead to the desired students' attitudes.

*Keywords:* University Social Responsibility, Higher Education, Student-University Identification, Student Loyalty, Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

- AACSB: Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business  
ABET: Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology  
ACPE: Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education  
CCNE: Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education  
CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility  
HE: Higher Education  
HEIs: Higher Education Institutions  
LAU: Lebanese American University  
NEASC: New England Association of Schools and Colleges  
OIT: Organizational Identification Theory  
SIT: Social Identity Theory  
USR: University Social Responsibility

# **Chapter 1**

## **Scope of the Study**

This chapter comprises an introduction, highlights on the value and originality of the study, as well as the research questions to be addressed. And it concludes with the thesis statement.

### **1.1 Introduction**

Universities today are experiencing a massive challenge to raise their enrolment rates with the fierce competition and the steady growth in the number of higher education institutions. These strains made higher education appear as a “business” and led to its marketization, with a main focus on rankings and accreditations (Sadlak & Liu, 2007), diverting universities’ efforts from their initial role that is preparing future leaders that are able to contribute to the sustainable development of the society (World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century, 1998).

Additionally, the current societal and environmental crises, as well as globalization entailed major changes on the approach and objective of Education (Nuñez & Alonso, 2009), urging universities to reassess their mission, vision, and procedures in order to respond to these challenges (Herrera, 2009). Although universities can be efficient and effective without necessarily incorporating goals that serve the society, being socially relevant is a stipulation nowadays for higher education institutions so that the generated knowledge responds to the local, regional, and global needs (Herrera, 2009). Therefore, universities’ efforts should primarily focus on

sustainable human development rather than on competition and competitiveness (Escrivas & Lobera, 2009). They are expected to contribute to enhancing the quality of life by responding to the needs of all sectors of society and by promoting a socially relevant knowledge in its context and applications (Herrera, 2009). Accordingly, social responsibility of universities (USR) appears as a valuable tool to respond effectively to the global changes, as well as to the vicious competition in the educational market (Sánchez-Hernández & Mainardes, 2016).

Social responsibility is not a new topic. The research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved in the last 60 years. Most of it tackled the conceptual development of CSR (Blagov, 2010; Carroll, 1999; Madrakhimova, 2013; Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011) and its impact on organizational behavior (El-Kassar, Messarra, & El-Khalil, 2017; Farooq, Payaud, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2014; Morgeson, Aguinis, Waldman, & Siegel, 2013), and financial performance (Lin, Yang, & Liou, 2009; Pava & Krausz, 2012; Saeidi, Sofian, Saeidi, Saeidi, & Saaeidi, 2015; Van Beurden & Gössling, 2008). It was also linked to internal and external stakeholders, mainly employees (El-Kassar, Yunis, & El-Khalil, 2017; Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008; Turker, 2006, 2009) and customers (Anadol, Youssef, & Thiruvattal, 2015; Crespo & Del Bosque, 2005). CSR has become a high-ranking topic (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006). Yet, very limited research discussed social responsibility in higher education (Ahmad, 2012) and its impact on university stakeholders (Gonzalez-Perez, 2011; Larran, Hernandez, & Cejas, 2012).

Thus, this thesis aims at examining the relationships between USR and student-related outcomes by developing a conceptual model based on two theoretical

frameworks, the Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Organizational Identification Theory (OIT), by analogy to previous CSR research to assess industry-specific effects. It is worth noting that the findings of this study were presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lebanese Conference on Information Systems (LCIS 2017) that was held in April 2017 at the Lebanese American University (LAU). Also, the model developed in this thesis was used to conduct a cross-cultural comparative study between students from Lebanon and Colombia. The cross-cultural study was presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Organization and Management (ICOM 2017) in November 2017 in Abu Dhabi, and the full paper was accepted for publication in the *International Journal of Educational Management* (see El-Kassar, Makki, & Gonzalez-Perez, forthcoming).

## **1.2 Importance of the Study**

Research revealed that CSR generates considerable benefits for firms (Singh, 2011). It translates into a competitive advantage (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Saeidi et al., 2015; Smith, 2007), positive marketing performance (Rahman, Rodríguez-Serrano, & Lambkin, 2017), enhanced financial performance (Lin, Yang, & Liou, 2009; Pava & Krausz, 2012; Saeidi et al., 2015; Van Beurden & Gössling, 2008), economic value (Smith, 2007), customer-company identification (Arikan & Güner, 2013; Chen, Tai, & Chen, 2015; Crespo & Del Bosque, 2005; El-Kassar, Messarra, & El-Khalil, 2017; El-Kassar, Yunis, & El-Khalil, 2017; Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009; Huang, Cheng, & Chen, 2017; Marin & Ruiz, 2007; Martínez & Del Bosque, 2013), as well as a greater loyalty (He & Li, 2011; Maignan & Ferrel, 2001; Pérez & Del Bosque, 2015). All these outcomes led CSR to become an essential component at the core of any successful business today.

Even in higher education, social responsibility is gaining a different meaning and a greater importance. Universities today are bound by their compliance with all levels of social needs. Yet, there is scarce literature on university social responsibility (Ahmad, 2012), and higher education industry-specific research examining the effect ofUSR on internal and external stakeholders such as students and society. In particular, there is a lack of studies on the impact ofUSR directed toward students and toward society on student-university identification and loyalty. This research will examine these relationships by analogy to previous research on CSR.

This study sheds light on the importance ofUSR by assessing its impact on student-university identification and loyalty. The findings provide vital implications for universities and guide their efforts to achieve desired student attitudes. By implementing socially responsible initiatives and actions, universities will positively influence student-university identification and loyalty, the latter being a key factor affecting student motivation, recruitment and retention efforts, as well as fundraising (Elliott & Shin, 2002; Sánchez-Hernández & Mainardes, 2016; Schreiner, 2009).

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This thesis discusses the following research questions that will be addressed by collecting and analyzing data:

**RQ1:** What is the effect ofUSR on student-university identification and loyalty?

**RQ2:** How do the two dimensions ofUSR (USR toward students and USR toward society) impact student-university identification and loyalty?

**RQ3:** Does student-university identification mediate the relationship betweenUSR and student loyalty?

The organization of the remainder of the thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 includes a brief historical background about the Lebanese American University and its socially responsible practices. The literature review in chapter 3 provides highlights about social responsibility in the business field as well as in higher education. In chapter 4, the proposed conceptual model is developed and the hypotheses are stated. The research methodology, statistical analysis, and findings are presented in chapter 5. The last chapter includes the study's implications, limitations, as well as recommendations for future research.

# **Chapter 2**

## **Social Responsibility at LAU**

This chapter consists of a brief historical background about the Lebanese American University, followed by an overview of socially responsible practices and initiatives undertaken by LAU.

### **2.1 Historical Background of the Lebanese American University**

LAU is a nonsectarian and not-for-profit private university that is almost 100 years old, and recognized nationally and regionally (“About”, n.d.). It was established in Beirut in 1835 as the first American School for Girls (ASG), and its pioneering beginning evolved to a multi-campus, world-class accredited institution (“About”, n.d.).

LAU operates two campuses in Beirut and Byblos hosting more than 8500 national and international students, and employing approximately 1660 faculty and staff members (“About”, n.d.). It offers 59 degree programs across seven schools serving undergraduate, graduate, doctoral degrees and professional diplomas (“Academics”, n.d.). The expansion in the diverse student body and the newly added academic programs was coupled with the acquisition of the LAU Medical Center – Rizk Hospital in Beirut, the establishment of the academic center and headquarters in New York, and the Executive Center in Beirut Central District.

In addition, LAU's quality education and reputation were acknowledged through the awarded institutional accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) in 2009, and the programs accreditation (ACPE for the Pharm. D program; ABET for the Engineering and Computer Science programs; CCNE for the Nursing Program; and AACSB for the School of Business programs) ("About", n.d.).

## **2.2 USR at the Lebanese American University**

Any organization including universities can affect the society, environment and economy through its daily activities and operations (Gómez, Morales, & Vadi, 2014), be it socially responsible or not. Yet, LAU opted for a socially responsible impact at various levels. It embedded social responsibility in its mission and practices as will be discussed in the next section. In addition, LAU community has been lately exhibiting a growing interest and a stronger engagement in ethical, socially responsible, and sustainable practices. In the following sections, some of such important practices will be presented.

### **2.2.1. USR in LAU's Mission and Values**

The university's mission emphasizes its commitment to "academic excellence, student centeredness, civic engagement, the advancement of scholarship, the education of the whole person, and the formation of leaders in a diverse world" ("About", n.d.). LAU is dedicated to building future leaders through providing quality education and an enriching college experience that fosters civic engagement and social responsibility. LAU's values also promote inclusiveness and diversity, academic excellence, effective leadership, and integrity ("About", n.d.).

## **2.2.2. USR in LAU's Pedagogical and Research Activities**

In addition to having social responsibility and civic engagement present in its mission and vision, LAU incorporated social responsibility in various practical aspects such as teaching, research, social and environmental actions, and sustainability management.

### **2.2.2.1. Pedagogy**

LAU offers more than 40 courses within different disciplines (Engineering, Pharmacy, Business, Social Sciences, Political Sciences...), all of which include topics related to social responsibility, ethics, and sustainability. Table I lists some of these courses.

Also, the Business Studies program, in cooperation with the Outreach and Civic Engagement Department, introduced a mandatory zero credit “Civic Engagement” course through which students are assigned in NGO’s to complete a minimum of 12 hours of guided volunteer work. Prior to their assignment, students attend an informative session about civic engagement, and an orientation session about the NGO’s mission and field of work. Upon completion, students and NGO’s submit evaluation reports assessing their mutual experience to ensure quality and commitment of both parties.

**Table I:** Courses with content related to SR, ethics, and sustainability

<u>School</u>	<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Title</u>
Adnan Kassar School of Business	BUS213	Business Law and Ethics
	ECO320	Environmental, Resource, and Energy Economics
	MGT721	Corporate Governance
	MGT734	Business Legal Environment, Ethics and Social Responsibility
School of Arts & Sciences	BIO410	Biotechnology
	CAR231	Introduction to Human Rights
	CAR315	Community Conflict and Conflict Resolution
	CAR317	Conflict Resolution Tools for the Business World
	COM213	Public Relations
	JSC312	Media and Society
	JSC419	Media Law and Ethics
	LLM813	Legal Ethics
	NUT301	Community Nutrition
	PHA567B	Special Topics - Public Health
	PHL301	Ethics
	PJE201	Cross-Cultural Communication and Conflict
	POL230	Citizenship
	POL237	Basics of Leadership
	POL252	Fundamentals of Conflict Resolution
	SOC101	Sociology and Society
	SOC203	Citizenship and Leadership
	SOC215	Introduction to Gender Studies
	SOC311	Social Problems: Strat. & Marg.
School of Engineering	SWO210	Introduction to Community Development
	SWO301	Sociological Perspectives in Social Work
	SWO322	Field Work Experience I
	SWO350	Social & Welfare Policies
	SWO411	Sustainable Community Development: Theories & Practice
	CIE434	The Civil Engineering Profession
	CIE522	Environmental Impact Assessment
	CIE525	Environmental Policy And Management
	ELE493	Professionalism in Engineering
	ENV427	Environmental Physics
School of Pharmacy	GNE303	Engineering Ethics
	GNE305	Professional Ethics
	GNE335	Introduction to Sustainable Engineering
	PRGR676	Global Sustainable Business Management
	PHA325	Pharmacy Practice and Ethics

### **2.2.2.2. Research**

LAU strives to incorporate a research culture among its faculty and does not spare an opportunity to display its commitment to research as a key pillar. For this purpose, the Office of Graduate Studies and Research works closely with the schools and supports research efforts by providing funds, facilitating access to grants, and establishing partnerships to advance technological research (“About”, n.d.), such as signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the top-tier New Jersey Institute of Technology (“LAU signs MOU”, 2018). All of these initiatives would take research to a higher level and would lead to a greater productivity. Additionally, faculty and students are showing more interest in exploring topics related to local and global, social and environmental challenges. Some examples of researched topics are “CSR, Corporate Ethics, and OCB: The Role of Employee-Company Identification and Perceived CSR Significance” and “The Use of Energy Efficient and Renewable Energy Applications in the Local and Regional Markets”. In addition to an innovative design to help the deaf developed by LAU Engineering students (“News & Events”, 2017). Moreover, “The Sign Language Translating Glove” developed by four Mechanical Engineering senior students helps translate the sign language of people with hearing and speaking difficulties into speech that people can easily understand. Despite their heavy study load, students were motivated to create this tool thus proving their innovation and great sense of civic engagement (“News & Events”, 2017). In fact, a larger number of students and faculty from different schools such as Business, Engineering, and Arts & Sciences are engaging in research related to social responsibility, sustainability, and innovation. Several outstanding research outcomes and papers presented at international conferences were recognized through awards and publications in highly ranked journals such as Elsevier and Emerald Publishing.

### **2.2.3. USR in LAU's Social Actions**

#### **2.2.3.1. Equal Learning and Academic Success Opportunities**

LAU ensures equal opportunity for all students through its pledge to making quality education affordable for all accepted applicants (“About”, n.d.). It offers significant financial support packages ranging from financial aid, to scholarships covering from 10 to 100% of the tuition, special donors’ grants, in addition to bank loans. It is worth mentioning that in the academic year 2016-2017, LAU supported 45% of its undergraduate students with at least one type of financial aid assistance, be it need-based or merit-based, with a total sum of 32,508,956.09 USD, as shown in Table II (“About”, n.d.).

**Table II:** Financial aid figures for the academic year 2016-2017

<b>Types of Financial Aid</b>	<b>Number of Awards</b>	<b>Amount in \$</b>	
Work Aid	2,591	59.9%	10,737,517
Grants	2,555	59.0%	6,027,560
LAU Loans	1,523	35.2%	3,007,278
Honor Scholarships	796	18.4%	2,103,827
Sponsorships	372	8.6%	2,068,693
Graduate Assistantship	304	7.0%	1,873,608
Entrance Scholarships	263	6.1%	1,591,798
USP (USAID Grant)	242	5.6%	1,139,998
Talent Scholarships	146	3.4%	1,037,790
Merit Scholarship	114	2.6%	893,100
Athletic Scholarships	114	2.6%	822,296
Baccalaureat Scholarships	92	2.1%	361,484
MEPI-TL (US Dept. of State Grant)	68	1.6%	346,832
FAFSA (US Federal Loans)	41	0.9%	264,947
NCSR (Lebanese Scientific Research Grant)	13	0.3%	232,223
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,328</b>		<b>32,508,956</b>

LAU also supports its students' academic success through personalized academic advising, career counselling, and writing support to help struggling students overcome any difficulties related to their courses, choice of majors, and career readiness.

#### **2.2.3.2. High Quality Campus Life and a Rich College Experience**

LAU offers its students an enhanced learning experience through smart classrooms, highly equipped laboratories, huge libraries providing quality services and resources, diverse sports facilities, students' recreation areas, a music room and several theatres.

Additionally, it provides various support services to the whole community, such as on-campus health and counselling services through one-on-one sessions delivered by a qualified team including a registered nurse and psychologists. This team organizes health-related events and awareness campaigns on topics like addiction and substance abuse, nutrition, diseases, etc. they also help students struggling with issues related to mood disorders (depression, anxiety, phobia, etc.), behavioral problems (aggression, disruptive behavior, etc.), relational issues (friendships and romantic relationships, abuse, etc.), family issues, academic issues (studying skills, procrastination, etc.), learning disorders (dyslexia, etc.), attention disorders (ADHD/ADD), addictions and substance-related issues (drugs, alcohol, etc.), eating disorders, and others.

LAU also supports its varsity teams by sponsoring their trips to participate in local and international tournaments and encouraging talented athletic youth. It also promotes students' extra-curricular activities and funds a wide variety of events

organized by student clubs on- and off-campus. Most of these events are fundraising and volunteering activities such as working with orphans, helping refugees, volunteering with NGO's, distributing food and clothes to needy families, debating the solutions to the world's challenges, as well as organizing lectures, trips, festivals, and music events.

Moreover, outreach and civic engagement remain on top of all. Outreach has been one of the main strategic priorities in the university strategic plan 2011-2016, with a main goal to extend its academic and social services to the community at large. In alignment with this goal, departments and institutions undertook civic engagement initiatives and organized events and competitions to serve this purpose. They directed students toward public interest and provided them with various opportunities to engage in community service. Some of these contributions are listed in Table III ("News & Events", n.d.).

In addition to the departments and institutes' initiatives and events, LAU established an Outreach and Civic Engagement Unit ("Student Life", n.d.) through which LAU students are connected to a variety of student organizations devoted to developing their skills and abilities outside the classroom. These outreach and civic engagement opportunities include programs such as the Global Classroom LAU Model United Nations (GC LAU MUN). Through this program launched in 2005-2006, LAU has been leading the conferences in New York and touching the lives of more than 1900 middle school and 1700 high school students from all over the world every year. Another program is LAU Model Arab League (LAU MAL) that involves Lebanese high school students from different religious and political backgrounds in discussions about

emerging social, political, and economic issues that are influencing the Arab World. As for the LAU Model European Union (LAU MEU), this program engages student leaders in the fundamentals of the European Union in training high school students to develop their diplomatic and leadership skills. Furthermore, LAU built partnerships and collaboration agreements with several NGO's and organizations to enhance students' civic involvement and sense of social responsibility. For this purpose, LAU signed 175 agreements with 105 institutions in 33 countries between 2012 and 2017.

**Table III:** *Some Outreach and Civic Engagement Activities*

<u>Event Title</u>	<u>Description</u>
Annual Arts and Sciences Fair	For secondary school students from all over Lebanon
Learn_Computing@LAU	Free of charge course for grades 10 & 11
Computing Summer Camp	For Grade 10 and 11 students
Creative Writing Summer Camp	For Grade 11 students
“Activism Against Gender-Based Violence” campaign	Discussions and presentations addressing gender-based violence with art
Nutrition and Food Research Day	Conference addressing trends and challenges in the Middle East
Lab Venture Day	One-day workshop for High School students on OLED technology)
Computer Science Summer Institute	Teaching programming for high school students
“Concepts of Citizenship”	Student poster exhibition
“Violence Against Women: Whose Problem Is It”	Regional arts competition
“ Music as a Tool For Peace”	Panel discussion
“SALAAM 2018”	Community outreach performance concert for individuals with autism and their families
TEDxLAU	A day of talks, inspiration, networking, and therapy
“Learning While Serving the Community”	A health fair promoting diseases prevention

Finally, LAU developed a social policy for staff and faculty that ensures equal opportunity for all, without any discrimination due to “race, color, religion, creed, gender, marital status, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, political affiliation or belief”. In addition to a Code of Ethics that promotes academic freedom, integrity, and non-discrimination based on the person’s background (“About”, n.d.).

#### **2.2.4. USR in LAU's Environmental Actions**

LAU’s Facilities Management department strives to ensure a sustainable and efficient physical environment that meets the local and international building standards by implementing sustainable and environmentally friendly measures in its construction and renovation projects. It is also instilling green initiatives like energy saving, recycling, water conservation, waste management, sustainable living, sustainable design and construction, environmental protection, as well as sustainable purchasing (“Facilities Management”, n.d.). These efforts are supported by green awareness campaigns disseminated to the LAU community through posters, short videos, and tips on LAU’s website and its social media channels.

#### **2.2.5. Sustainability Management**

The Facilities Management department also adopted a partnership-based approach with students, faculty and staff to minimize the impact of the university’s operations on the environment, decrease the use of natural resources, reduce operating costs, and foster environmentally responsible behaviors within the LAU community (“Facilities Management”, n.d.).

To sum up, LAU does a lot in terms of social responsibility. The previously indicated socially responsible actions and events are only highlights, there are way more. However, these practices remain departmental or individual initiatives that don't follow any relevant strategic planning at the university level. They are numerous, yet scattered efforts presented separately which deprives them from being powerful and impactful.

# **Chapter 3**

## **Literature Review**

This chapter provides an overview about social responsibility in the business field in general, and in higher education in particular.

### **3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility**

With the pressing challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as social inequities, armed conflicts, climate change, pollution, sustainability, deforestation, poverty, globalization, and big data among others, social responsibility has gained a greater importance in all business practices. According to the Business Dictionary (2009), social responsibility is “the obligation of an organization's management towards the welfare and interests of the society which provides it with the environment and resources to survive and flourish, and which is affected by the organization's actions and policies”. This implies that today, organizations' main focus on generating profits must be coupled with fulfilling the needs of their internal and external stakeholders while accounting for the environmental, social, and economic issues. Hence, socially responsible practices became an essential part of any business.

Previous research revealed that CSR generates considerable benefits for firms (Singh, 2011). It translates into a competitive advantage (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Saeidi et al., 2015; Smith, 2007), positive marketing performance (Rahman, Rodríguez-Serrano, & Lambkin, 2017), financial performance (Lin, Yang, & Liou, 2009; Pava & Krausz, 2012; Saeidi et al., 2015; Van Beurden & Gössling, 2008), as well as economic value (Smith, 2007).

In brief, businesses are expected to act proactively toward societal and environmental issues, and to contribute to the sustainable development. Their commitment to ethical practices and social involvement grants them a better reputation and performance (Zhu, Sun, & Leung, 2014), as well as a competitive advantage (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Saeidi et al., 2015; Smith, 2007). It also facilitates win-win situations for them and for the society at large (Vasilescu, Barna, Epure, & Baicu, 2010). Although CSR has been discussed with respect to corporations, social responsibility in higher education remains relatively unexplored as the next section will show.

### **3.2 Social Responsibility in Universities (USR)**

Since universities represent a main pillar of the society, they cannot escape the impact of the social, environmental, and economic changes, nor their responsibility to respond to these challenges. As CSR is at the core of any successful business today, similarly, social responsibility in the academic setting - known as USR - is acquiring a greater significance and a different meaning linking universities' mission to provide relevant knowledge and research to the importance of responding to the society and environment needs (Herrera, 2009).

Giuffré and Ratto (2014) stated that university social responsibility represents “the university’s ability to provide educational services and knowledge transfer following ethical principles, good governance, respect for the environment, social engagement, and the promotion of values”. Nowadays, universities should balance between their academic role and the public interest (Al Tabsh, 2008) by building future

generations that embrace socially responsible practices and sustainable development, while taking into consideration the interest of the society at large.

Most of USR research and programs first developed in Latin America. According to Vallaey (2007), university social responsibility emerged in Chile in 2001 following Universidad Construye País' initiative that joined the efforts of 13 Chilean universities to expand the concept and practice of USR. And in 2010, following the "Ethics, Social Capital, and Development" initiative by the Inter-American Development Bank, numerous universities in Latin America realized the importance of USR and adopted socially responsible practices. Interestingly, much of the relevant research is conducted in Spanish-speaking countries.

Moreover, USR appears as a new paradigm (Giuffré & Ratto, 2014) that influences internal and external stakeholders. Yet, students remain the keystone of the educational system and the main stakeholder directly affected by the university's socially responsible initiatives that shape their experiences and impact their attitudes. It is important to note that most of the research on USR addresses this topic as a concept (Ahmad, 2012; Giuffré & Ratto, 2014; Gómez, Morales, & Vadi, 2014; Kaul & Smith, 2012; Vasilescu et al., 2010; Wigmore-Alvarez & Ruiz-Lozano, 2012) without examining its impact on university stakeholders. To my knowledge, there is no research that tests the impact of USR on student-university identification and loyalty in particular. In contrast, a considerable amount of CSR-related research investigates CSR's impact on customer related outcomes notably customer-company identification and loyalty. USR related studies did not approach these relationships.

However, only few researchers have tried to assess students' perception ofUSR (Ali & Ali, 2016; Kvasničková Stanislavská, Kvasnička, Kuralová, & Margarisová, 2014; Vázquez, Aza, & Lanero, 2015), and the relationship between USR and student satisfaction (Sánchez-Hernández & Mainardes, 2016; Vázquez et al., 2015), but not student-university identification and loyalty. The latter is believed to affect two major concerns for universities: student recruitment and retention (Sánchez-Hernández & Mainardes, 2016). Unlike USR studies, CSR research examined the direct and indirect effects of CSR on various outcomes related to customers such as customer-company identification and customer loyalty (Chen, Tai, & Chen, 2015; El-Kassar, Messarra, & El-Khalil, 2017; El-Kassar, Yunis, & El-Khalil, 2017; He & Li, 2011; Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009; Martínez & Del Bosque, 2013; Pérez & Del Bosque, 2015). Given the gap in the literature related to the effect of USR on student identification and loyalty, this study examines these relationships to identify antecedents for student loyalty.

Moreover, universities are regarded as service providers, and accordingly they abide by several norms and values ruling the services industry (Vázquez, et al., 2015). With the current "marketization" of higher education institutions due to the fierce competition and globalization, universities today are operating as businesses. As a result, this paper argues that universities, through USR, might benefit from the competitive advantage that CSR offers to organizations. For this reason, it is important to probe the literature on the impact of CSR on customer-company identification and loyalty.

Several papers discussed the relationship between CSR and customer-company identification (Chen, Tai, & Chen, 2015; El-Kassar, Yunis, & El-Khalil, 2017; Pérez & Del Bosque, 2015). In this regard, some researchers believe that customer-company identification is a direct positive outcome for CSR (Arikan & Güner, 2013; Crespo & Del Bosque, 2005; Huang, Cheng, & Chen, 2017; Marin & Ruiz, 2007). A firm's ethical and socially responsible practices are increasingly affecting customers' purchasing decisions (Grimmer & Bingham, 2013). This relationship between the firm and its customers is regulated by the Social Identity Theory developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979 (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), whereby social identity is expressed by the way an individual labels himself with respect to the group he associates with or he belongs to (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). It determines how customers perceive themselves, connect, and develop a strong relationship with the firm based on the social identity presented, and the extent to which it matches their interests and satisfies their needs (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). And even though some research showed that students are being more sensitive toward university's socially responsible initiatives (Ali & Ali, 2016), there is still a lack of studies assessing the impact of USR on student-university identification.

Moreover, numerous studies confirmed that CSR positively affects loyalty (He & Li, 2011; Maignan & Ferrel, 2001; Pérez & Del Bosque, 2015). Actually, a growing number of customers are becoming more sensitive and responsive to firms' socially responsible practices. They perceive CSR as a sign of respect for them and a truthful liability to provide them with quality services leading to a stronger association with the firm, and a greater commitment and loyalty to it (Aaker, 1996; Maignan, Ferrell, & Hult, 1999). The significance and value of this outcome raise the need for further studies to identify a similar effect for USR on student loyalty.

# **Chapter 4**

## **Hypotheses and Conceptual Model**

In this chapter, hypotheses to be tested suggest direct and significant relationships among USR, student-university identification, and loyalty. These relations are depicted by a conceptual model.

### **4.1 Hypotheses Development**

This section will present four hypotheses to be addressed in the analysis. These hypotheses are posited based on the literature review and two theoretical frameworks: the Social Identity Theory and the Organizational Identification Theory.

#### **4.1.1 USR and Student-University Identification**

According to the Social Identity Theory (SIT), individuals associate themselves with organizations offering an attractive social identity that meets their values and desires. And since people strive for a positive self-image (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), consequently, employees identify more with the firms that undertake socially responsible behaviors, a fact which seems to enhance employee-company identification (Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010). Additionally, numerous researchers concluded that customer-company identification is a direct positive outcome for CSR (Arikan & Güner, 2013; Crespo & Del Bosque, 2005; Huang, Cheng, & Chen, 2017; Marin & Ruiz, 2007). By similarity, to test the impact of USR on student-university identification, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): *Perceived USR is directly and positively related to student-university identification.*

#### **4.1.2 Student-University Identification and Loyalty**

Research showed that customer-company identification has a positive impact on customers' behaviors (Ahearn, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005). Customers who identify with a firm exhibit greater satisfaction and stronger loyalty. They tend to buy more, and they passionately recommend the firm's products and services. In fact, both the Organizational Identification Theory (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987) and the Social Identity Theory (Ashforth, Blake, & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) support these results. Organizational identification, being an individual's tendency to identify with his organization, is related to major outcomes such as employee loyalty and retention (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Thus, customers who identify with the firm show greater loyalty. In addition, the Social Identity Theory (SIT) infers that the group identification always comprises an emotional component (Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009). Hence, customers associate themselves with the firm when they exhibit positive perceptions and emotions. Several studies showed that customer company-identification leads to customer loyalty (Ahearn, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005; Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braig, 2004). Similarly, we assume a positive relationship between student-university identification and student loyalty, and we posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): *Student-university identification directly and positively affects student loyalty.*

#### 4.1.3 USR and Student Loyalty

Several studies revealed that CSR positively affects loyalty (He & Li, 2011; Huang, Cheng, & Chen, 2017; Maignan & Ferrel, 2001). Actually, customers exhibit greater commitment toward organizations practicing social responsibility (Aaker, 1996; Maignan, Ferrell, & Hult, 1999). This trust is directly related to the service consumption, and indirectly to the firm's reputation (Delgado & Munuera, 2001). Researchers also highlighted an increase in the number of customers preferring to buy products or services from firms involved in serving societal issues (Jones, 1997; Ross, Patterson, & Stutts, 1992). Customers accord a greater significance to the organization's initiatives and respond to them with a greater loyalty (Maignan et al., 1999). Thus, we assume the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): *USR is directly and positively related to student loyalty.*

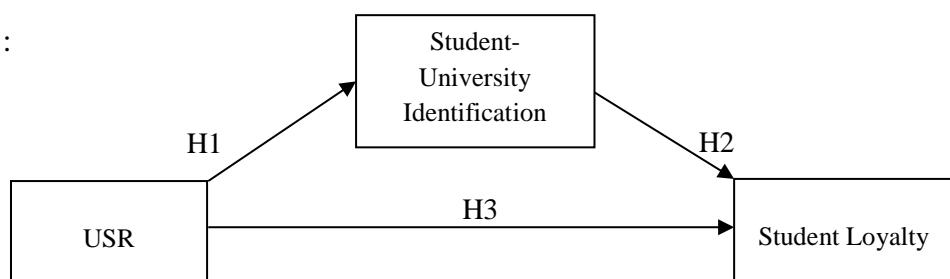
Based on hypotheses 1 and 2, we suppose that the relationship between USR and student loyalty is mediated by student-university identification; accordingly, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 4: *The relationship between USR and student loyalty is mediated by student-university identification.*

#### 4.2 Conceptual Model

The previously stated relationships can be illustrated by the conceptual model in

Figure 1:



**Figure 1.** The Conceptual Model 1

# **Chapter 5**

## **Research Methodology & Statistical Analysis**

This chapter comprises a description of the research population, instrumentation, and the applied procedures to collect and analyze the data. It also includes the statistical analysis, findings, and discussion.

### **5.1 Research Methodology**

#### **5.1.1 Participants**

The sample population consisted of 8207 undergraduate and graduate currently enrolled students from all disciplines at both LAU campuses. A total of 429 complete and usable responses were generated out of the 600 participants who responded to the survey.

#### **5.1.2 Measures**

An online questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample population. It consisted of five parts including the demographic section. The survey was based on a 5-point Likert scale. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) or from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

The demographic section consisted of questions to collect data related to:

- Gender;
- Age;
- School (Arts & Sciences, Architecture & Design, Business, Engineering, Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy);

- Class level (Freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate);
- Membership in teams/clubs/student organizations:
  - Varsity teams
  - Student clubs
  - Student councils
  - Global Classrooms LAU Model United Nations (GC LAU MUN)
  - LAU Model Arab League (LAU MAL)
  - LAU Model European Union (LAU MEU)
  - The Volunteer Teachers Program in collaboration with the NGO “MMKN”;
  - The Outreach & Leadership Academy (OLA) in collaboration with the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development;
  - The Reach Out And Dazzle (R.O.A.D.) program for underprivileged children;
  - Achieving Creative Entrepreneurship (ACE) Program in collaboration with SPEED@BDD;
- Benefit from university’s financial aid assistance:
  - Financial Aid;
  - Merit scholarships (100% of tuition);
  - Bacc scholarships (50% of tuition);
  - SAT scholarships (50% of tuition);
  - Entrance scholarships (10-50% of tuition);
  - Honor scholarships (10-50% of tuition);
  - Athletic scholarship;
  - National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS) scholarships;

- o USAID University Scholarship Program for public high school students;
  - o Tomorrow's Leaders scholarship program (MEPI-TL);
  - o International scholarships;
  - o Special donors' grants for new students;
- Courses approaching social responsibility

The first part of the questionnaire contained 11 items adopted from Burcea and Marinescu (2011). Questions aimed to assess students' perception of university's socially responsible initiatives directed toward them (6 items) and toward society (5 items). It included questions about the university cooperation agreements with other institutes to improve education quality, university's financial contribution to social responsibility activities directed toward students, and its commitment to students' welfare, as well as encouraging students to participate in social responsibility related activities. It also tested students' perception of the university's commitment to other stakeholders' welfare (staff, faculty, suppliers, NGO's, ...), its financial contribution to social responsibility activities directed toward society, conducting workshops/conferences/lectures to increase awareness of social responsibility, and encouraging employees' efforts (staff & faculty) for social responsibility related activities.

The second part was adapted from the scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). It included 7 items to measure the extent to which students identify with the university through questions like "I strongly identify with my university" and "When someone criticizes my university, it feels like a personal insult".

The last part of the survey is a 3-item section adopted from Homburg and Giering (2001) to evaluate student loyalty.

### **5.1.3 Instrumentation**

The latent constructs of the proposed conceptual model (USR, student-university identification, and student loyalty) were tested using Smart PLS3.0 software. USR toward students and toward society were combined into one construct by applying the parcelling method before proceeding with the analysis.

## **5.2 Descriptive Analysis**

The 429 respondents were divided into 246 females (57.3%) and 183 males (42.7%), with 44.5% of them aged 19-20 years (191 students); the rest were distributed as follows: 18 years old (14.9%), 21 years old (15.6%), 22 years old (6.8%), 23 years old (6.8%), 24 years old (3.5%), and 25 years old and above (7.9%).

Furthermore, the descriptive analysis showed that business students constituted the greatest percentage of respondents (39.2%), followed by students from the School of Arts and Sciences (32.4%), Engineering (14.9%), Architecture and Design (6.3%), Pharmacy (4%), with a minimal participation for Medical students (2.3%), and Nursing (0.9%). Tables IV to VI represent respondents' distribution by gender, age, and school:

**Table IV: Distribution by Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Female	246	57.3	57.3	57.3
Male	183	42.7	42.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Table V: Distribution by Age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
18	64	14.9	14.9	14.9
19	101	23.5	23.5	38.5
20	90	21.0	21.0	59.4
21	67	15.6	15.6	75.1
22	29	6.8	6.8	81.8
23	29	6.8	6.8	88.6
24	15	3.5	3.5	92.1
25-63	34	7.9	7.9	
<b>Total</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Table VI: Distribution by School**

<b>School</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Arts & Sciences	139	32.4	32.4	32.4
Architecture & Design	27	6.3	6.3	38.7
Business	168	39.2	39.2	77.9
Engineering	64	14.9	14.9	92.8
Medicine	10	2.3	2.3	95.1
Nursing	4	.9	.9	96.0
Pharmacy	17	4.0	4.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

## **5.2.2 Model 1**

### **5.2.2.1 Outer Model Analysis**

The three latent constructs of Model 1 (USR, student-university identification, and loyalty) were tested for reliability and discriminant validity as per Tables VII and VIII.

The confirmatory factor analysis validated the convergent validity of the constructs. The results in Table VII revealed significant loading (greater than 0.7) for almost each set of items used to test USR (11 items), student-university identification (7 items), and student loyalty (3 items), except for one item related to student identification (STUIDF7) which was excluded. This item was designated to assess student's embarrassment if a story in the media criticized the university.

The average variance extracted (AVE) values are above 69%, thus greater than the required 50% (Fornell & Larker, 1981). As shown in Table VIII, the achieved values for student-university identification, student loyalty, and university social responsibility are 0.698, 0.750, and 0.892 respectively.

Finally, the high-scale reliability for the three constructs is confirmed with Cronbach's alpha and Dillon-Goldsteins' rho values well above the threshold of 0.6 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As for the scale's validity, it is demonstrated in the discriminant validity matrix (Table VIII), where the values on the diagonal are larger than the entries in their respective rows or columns.

**Table VII: Model 1 Outer Loadings and Construct Reliability**

	<u>Manifest variables label</u>	<u>Standardized loadings</u>	<u>Cronbach's Alpha</u>	<u>rho A</u>	<u>Composite Reliability</u>	<u>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</u>
<b>Student-University Identification</b>	STUIDF1	0.862	0.911	0.927	0.932	0.698
	STUIDF2	0.908				
	STUIDF3	0.880				
	STUIDF4	0.883				
	STUIDF5	0.824				
	STUIDF6	0.623				
<b>Student Loyalty</b>	STULOY1	0.900	0.834	0.851	0.900	0.750
<b>USR toward Society</b>	STULOY2	0.828				
	STULOY3	0.869				
<b>USR toward Students</b>	USRSOC	0.939	0.880	0.886	0.943	0.892
	USRSTU	0.950				

**Table VIII: Discriminant Validity**

	<u>STUIDF</u>	<u>STULOY</u>	<u>USR</u>
<b>STUIDF</b>	<b>0.836</b>		
<b>STULOY</b>	0.813	<b>0.866</b>	
<b>USR</b>	0.570	0.576	<b>0.945</b>

### 5.2.2.2 Inner Model Analysis

In the inner model analysis,  $R^2=0.325$  for student identification and 0.680 for student loyalty. These results show that the proposed model explains a considerable

part of the variance. Thus, the model validity is considered satisfactory according to Chin (1998).

The path coefficients in Table IX reveal that USR has a significant direct effect on both, student-university identification (path coeff. = 0.570, p-value= 0.0000 <0.001) and student loyalty (path coeff. = 0.167, p-value= 0.0000 <0.001), confirming H1 and H3. Additionally, student-university identification has a positive direct impact on student loyalty (path coeff. = 0.718, p-value= 0.0000 <0.001), which validates H2.

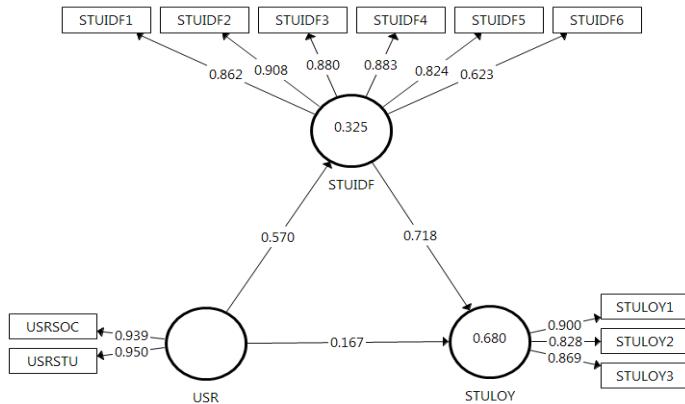
Moreover, Table X shows that USR has an indirect positive effect on student loyalty (path coeff. = 0.409, p-value= 0.0000 <0.001), thus supporting H4. This outcome infers that student identification is a partial mediator to the relation between USR and student loyalty.

**Table IX:** Mean, Stdev, T-values, P-values (Total Effect)

	<u>Original Sample (O)</u>	<u>Sample Mean (M)</u>	<u>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</u>	<u>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</u>	<u>P Values</u>
<b>STUIDF -&gt; STULOY</b>	0.718	0.719	0.031	22.949	0.000
<b>USR -&gt; STUIDF</b>	0.570	0.570	0.041	13.988	0.000
<b>USR -&gt; STULOY</b>	0.576	0.575	0.038	15.109	0.000

**Table X:** Mean, Stdev, T-values, P-values (Indirect Effect)

	<u>Original Sample (O)</u>	<u>Sample Mean (M)</u>	<u>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</u>	<u>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</u>	<u>P Values</u>
<b>USR -&gt; STULOY</b>	0.409	0.410	0.033	12.227	0.000



**Figure 2.** Results of Structural Model 1

### 5.2.2.3 Discussion

Nowadays, universities' role surpasses providing general knowledge and education. It encompasses promoting sustainable and socially responsible actions, and directing students toward public and societal interest (Nicolescu, 2006). This inclusive role deeply impacts their college experience.

This study aims to assess the conceptual model depicted in Figure 1, linking USR to student-university identification and loyalty. The findings reveal that USR positively and highly affects student-university identification, thus confirming H1. This outcome aligns with previous studies indicating that customer-company identification is positively influenced by CSR (Kim, Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2010; Marin & Ruiz, 2007). It is also supported by the Social Identity Theory, since the attractiveness of the organization's social identity affects the customer-company relationship to a great extent. Hence, socially responsible initiatives practiced by universities can be a strong determinant of student identification with the institution.

Additionally, the study revealed that USR has a positive significant effect on student loyalty. This outcome supports previous research findings that confirm customers' greater interest and value exhibited toward organizations engaged in socially responsible activities (Jones, 1997; Ross, Patterson, & Stutts, 1992). Those customers reward the firm's efforts by showing more loyalty (Maignan, Ferrell, & Hult, 1999). As a result, student loyalty is directly influenced by USR, a fact which validates H3.

Moreover, this study presents student-university identification as a strong predictor of loyalty. Ahearn, Bhattacharya, and Gruen (2005) found that customer-company identification positively affects customers' behaviors. Also, several researchers presented loyalty as a direct outcome for customer-company identification (Ahearn, Bhattacharya, & Gruen, 2005; Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braig, 2004). Customers tend to buy more services and products, and to recommend the firm they identify with, and this leads to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. This finding aligns with the Social Identity Theory that posits that customers identify with a firm based on their positive viewpoints and feelings about it. It is also supported by the Organizational Identification Theory that suggests that vital organizational outcomes such as loyalty are linked to organizational identification (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Accordingly, student-university identification has a positive direct impact on loyalty, thus supporting H2. Student-university identification also appeared as a partial mediator to the relationship between USR and student loyalty. This outcome implies the existence of other elements-mediators that affect this relationship.

### 5.2.2 Model 2

The first conceptual model was tested after combining USR dimensions (USR toward students and USR toward society) using the parcelling method. Yet, the findings led to questioning any difference in the impact of student-university identification on the relationship between each of the USR dimensions and loyalty. Therefore, a second conceptual model was proposed, and the analysis was performed after splitting the USR construct into: USR toward students and USR toward society. The following sub-hypotheses were posited:

H1a: *USR toward students is directly and positively affected by student-university identification.*

H1b: *USR toward society is directly and positively affected by student-university identification.*

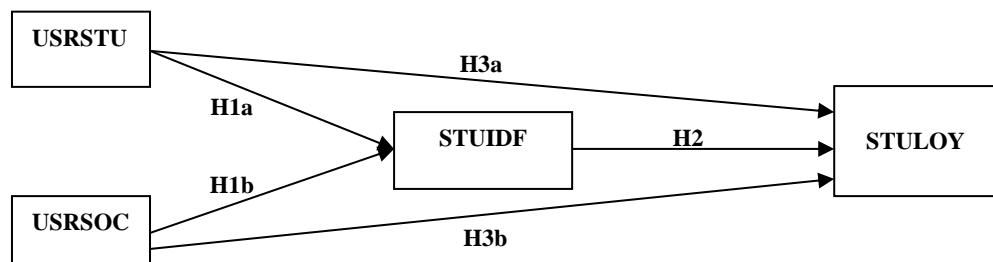
H2: *Student-university identification is directly and positively affected by student loyalty.*

H3a: *USR toward students is directly and positively affected by student loyalty.*

H3b: *USR toward society is directly and positively affected by student loyalty.*

H4a: *The relationship between USR toward students and loyalty is mediated by student-university identification.*

H4b: *The relationship between USR toward society and loyalty is mediated by student-university identification.*



**Figure 3.** The Conceptual Model 2

### **5.2.2.1 Outer Model Analysis**

In the outer model analysis, the reliability and discriminant validity of the four constructs (USR toward student, USR toward society, student-university identification, and loyalty) was tested. The constructs' convergent validity was also confirmed with factor loadings above 0.7 (Table XI) (check STUIDF6=0.622; USRSTU1=0.695).

As shown in Table XI, the achieved average variance extracted (AVE) values for student-university identification, student loyalty, USR toward society, and USR toward students are 0.698, 0.750, 0.691, and 0.617 respectively. These values are above 61%, thus exceeding the required 50% (Fornell & Larker, 1981). Also, Cronbach's alpha and Dillon-Goldsteins' rho are way above the threshold of 0.6 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) confirming the reliability of the four constructs. As for the scale validity, it is supported by the discriminant validity matrix in Table XII where the diagonal entries appear larger than the entries in their respective rows or columns.

**Table XI: Model 2 Outer Loadings and Construct Reliability**

	<u>Manifest variables label</u>	<u>Standar- dized loadings</u>	<u>Cronbach's Alpha</u>	<u>rho A</u>	<u>Compo- site Reliabil- ity</u>	<u>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</u>
<b>Student- University Identification</b>	STUIDF1	0.862	0.911	0.928	0.932	0.698
	STUIDF2	0.908				
	STUIDF3	0.880				
	STUIDF4	0.883				
	STUIDF5	0.824				
	STUIDF6	0.622				
<b>Student Loyalty</b>	STULOY1	0.900	0.834	0.850	0.900	0.750
	STULOY2	0.828				
	STULOY3	0.869				
<b>USR toward Society</b>	USRSOC1	0.776	0.888	0.898	0.918	0.691
	USRSOC2	0.849				
	USRSOC3	0.809				
	USRSOC4	0.853				
	USRSOC5	0.867				
<b>USR toward Students</b>	USRSTU1	0.695	0.875	0.883	0.906	0.617
	USRSTU2	0.774				
	USRSTU3	0.803				
	USRSTU4	0.768				
	USRSTU5	0.817				
	USRSTU6	0.848				

**Table XII: Discriminant Validity**

	<b><u>STUIDF</u></b>	<b><u>STULOY</u></b>	<b><u>USRSCOC</u></b>	<b><u>USRSTU</u></b>
<b><u>STUIDF</u></b>	<b>0.836</b>			
<b><u>STULOY</u></b>	0.813	<b>0.866</b>		
<b><u>USRSCOC</u></b>	0.508	0.525	<b>0.832</b>	
<b><u>USRSTU</u></b>	0.574	0.569	0.782	0.786

### **5.2.2.2 Inner Model Analysis**

Figure 4 showed that student-university identification and loyalty in Model 2 achieved an  $R^2 = 0.338$  and 0.680 respectively, confirming that the model's validity is satisfactory according to Chin (1998).

The path coefficients in Table XIII show that student-university identification has a strong direct impact on student loyalty (path coeff. = 0.717, p-value= 0.0000 <0.001), which validates H2. In addition, USR toward students has a positive significant effect on both, student identification (path coeff. = 0.454, p-value = 0.0000 < 0.001) and student loyalty (reg. coeff. Std. = 0.407, p-value = 0.0000 < 0.001), thus supporting H1a and H3a. As for USR toward society, the results reveal that it has a significant effect on both student identification and loyalty, confirming that H3b and H1b are supported. Yet, the effect on student loyalty is low (path coeff. = 0.207, p-value = 0.005), and it is even lower on student identification (path coeff. = 0.153, p-value = 0.038).

Additionally, Table XIII reveals a significant direct effect of USR toward students on student loyalty (path coeff. = 0.407, p-value= 0.0000 <0.001), presenting

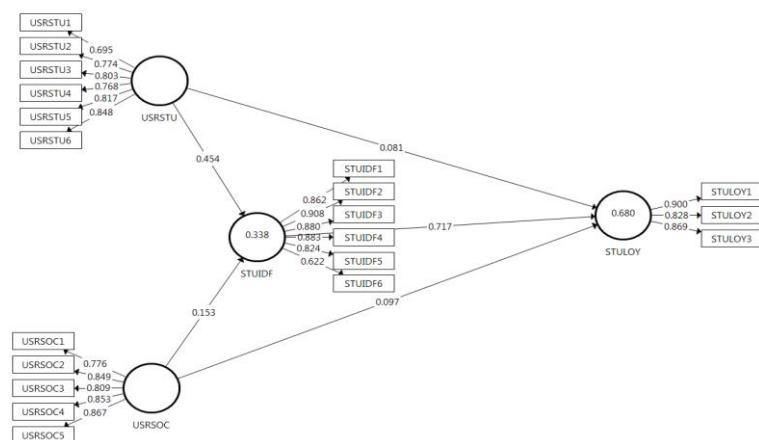
student identification as a partial mediator to this relationship. Moreover, Table XIV shows a significant indirect effect (path coeff. = 0.326, p-value= 0.0000 <0.001), which validates H4a. Analogous results are deduced for H4b.

**Table XIII:** Mean, Stdev, T-values, P-values (Total effect)

	<u>Original Sample (O)</u>	<u>Sample Mean (M)</u>	<u>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</u>	<u>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</u>	<u>P Values</u>
<b>STUIDF -&gt; STULOY</b>	0.717	0.717	0.032	22.160	0.000
<b>USRSOC -&gt; STUIDF</b>	0.153	0.151	0.074	2.074	0.038
<b>USRSOC -&gt; STULOY</b>	0.207	0.205	0.074	2.810	0.005
<b>USRSTU -&gt; STUIDF</b>	0.454	0.457	0.067	6.788	0.000
<b>USRSTU -&gt; STULOY</b>	0.407	0.409	0.073	5.586	0.000

**Table XIV:** Mean, Stdev, T-values, P-values (Indirect effect)

	<u>Original Sample (O)</u>	<u>Sample Mean (M)</u>	<u>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</u>	<u>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</u>	<u>P Values</u>
<b>USRSOC -&gt; STULOG</b>	0.110	0.108	0.053	2.084	0.037
<b>USRSTU -&gt; STULOG</b>	0.326	0.328	0.051	6.414	0.000



**Figure 4.** Results of Structural Model 2

### **5.2.2.3 Discussion and Conclusion**

The analysis of the second conceptual model resulted in validating the positive significant impact of USR toward students on student-university identification, an outcome that is supported by the Social Identity Theory. Students tend to better associate and identify with their university based on their perception of the socially responsible programs and activities adopted by the institution, a fact which confirms H1a. Likewise, the direct positive effect of USR toward students on loyalty supports H3a. The institution's socially responsible behaviors directed toward students are more valued and rewarded with a greater student loyalty (Maignan, Ferrell, & Hult, 1999). Accordingly, student-university identification and loyalty can be strongly determined by USR practices toward students.

Moreover, the results supported H1b and H3b by revealing that USR toward society also affects student identification and loyalty, but with a less significant impact. Expectedly, students are more receptive and appreciative of socially responsible initiatives directed toward them than toward society.

Finally, student-university identification appeared as a partial mediator of the relationship between each of the USR constructs and student loyalty, as per hypotheses H4a and H4b. These findings imply the existence of additional factors that can influence student loyalty.

# **Chapter 6**

## **Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations**

This chapter presents the study's implications, as well as the limitations and recommendations for future research.

### **6.1 Implications**

This study aimed at emphasizing the value ofUSR by assessing its effect on student-university identification and loyalty. The analysis indicated thatUSR has a direct impact on both factors, and an indirect effect on student loyalty, partially mediated by student-university identification. The outcomes also implied that students are more responsive and appreciative of social responsibility programs and activities directed toward them than toward society. This valuation ofUSR generates a better identification and a greater loyalty exhibited toward the university, leading to practical implications at different levels.

First, this study offers universities' administrations an insight about the factors that influence student loyalty. It presentsUSR and student identification as antecedents of student loyalty. It goes even further by noting thatUSR toward students achieves a greater impact thanUSR toward society. Consequently, it facilitates the decision-making process forHEIs' managers and guides them in designing and implementing customized socially responsible programs and initiatives, mostly targeted toward students. Hence, they can better allocate efforts and resources needed to attain sought-after students' attitudes.

Second, this study has shown that USR leads to student identification and loyalty, the latter being a key factor that affects student motivation, retention, recruitment efforts, and fundraising (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Elliott & Shin, 2002; Sánchez-Hernández & Mainardes, 2016; Schreiner, 2009). Accordingly, USR is validated as an essential marketing tool that helps HEIs meet the needs of their key internal stakeholders – the students. Thus, implementing socially responsible initiatives boosts universities' efforts to raise their enrolment rates and to overcome the fierce competition in the HE industry.

Third, universities today are bound by their liability to respond to the social and environmental crises, as well as globalization. They are expected to contribute to enhancing the quality of life and building sustainable societies. HEIs can attain this objective by integrating ethics and social responsibility in their administration, education, research, and extra-curricular activities (Giuffré & Ratto, 2014). Consequently, USR will support university's efforts to surmount market competitiveness.

In brief, this study presents USR as a vital tool that leverages universities' attempts to meet internal stakeholders' needs, defeat the competition in the HE industry, as well as respond to globalization and the pressing challenges of this century.

Based on these outcomes, LAU's management can direct their socially responsible acts mostly toward students in order to achieve a greater identification and loyalty, hence, enhanced recruitment and retention rates. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 2, LAU's socially responsible initiatives are numerous yet scattered. Hence, it

is vital to gather these efforts under the roof of a social responsibility and sustainability/innovation unit that handles designing and implementing relevant strategic planning, raising awareness on these topics, supporting a culture of change, aligning individual and departmental efforts, and working collaboratively with the local community. Establishing this unit will grant LAU a competitive advantage. Only then can LAU promote itself as a leading socially responsible and sustainable university in Lebanon and the region.

## **6.2 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

This study presents some limitations related to the sample population that was taken from one university, the culture of which might have affected the results. Although the tested population was quite considerable (429 respondents), collecting data from other universities locally and abroad would make the results generalizable and would allow a better validation of the causality relationship among USR, student identification, and loyalty.

Additionally, the findings denote the existence of other antecedents for student loyalty, implying the necessity of further studies examining the relationship between USR and other determinants that might be important to students.

In conclusion, since HEIs are expected to respond to the current local, regional, and global societal needs at all levels, they are urged to adapt to their inclusive role that goes beyond providing education ad knowledge. Universities today cannot escape the growing importance of ethics and social responsibility, and their impact on internal and external stakeholders. The findings of this study represent a testimonial on some of the

advantages that can be retracted from implementing USR in every aspect of their activities in order to eventually help universities survive and succeed.

Further research on the relationship between USR and different determinants such as satisfaction, university image, and others is recommended to broaden the understanding of USR and to gain better insights on its implementation.

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# Appendix I

القرار

## NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL – EXEMPT STATUS

To: Dr. Abdul Nasser Kassar  
 Assistant Professor  
 School of Business

APPROVAL ISSUED: 17 February 2017

EXPIRATION DATE: NA

REVIEW TYPE: EXEMPT

Date: February 17, 2017

RE: IRB #: LAU.SOB.AK1.17/Feb/2017

**Protocol Title:** *The Perceived University Social Responsibility And Its Impact On The Students Attitude And Perceived Service Quality*

Your application for the above referenced research project has been approved by the Lebanese American University, Institutional Review Board (LAU IRB). This research project qualifies as exempt under the following category:

**B. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:**

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and

(ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

This approval is limited to the activities described in the Protocol Exempt Application and all submitted documents listed on page 2 of this letter. Enclosed with this letter are the stamped approved documents that must be used.

### APPROVAL CONDITIONS FOR ALL LAU APPROVED HUMAN RESEARCH PROTOCOLS - EXEMPT

**LAU RESEARCH POLICIES:** All individuals engaged in the research project must adhere to the approved protocol and all applicable LAU IRB Research Policies. PARTICIPANTS must NOT be involved in any research related activity prior to IRB approval date or after the expiration date.

**EXEMPT CATEGORIES:** Activities that are exempt from IRB review are not exempt from IRB ethical review and the necessity for ethical conduct.

**MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS:** Certain changes may change the review criteria and disqualify the research from exemption status; therefore, any proposed changes to the previously approved exempt study must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation.

**NOTIFICATION OF PROJECT COMPLETION:** A notification of research project closure and a summary of findings must be sent to the IRB office upon completion. Study files must be retained for a period of 3 years from the date of notification of project completion.

**IN THE EVENT OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ABOVE CONDITIONS, THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR SHOULD MEET WITH THE IRB ADMINISTRATORS IN ORDER TO RESOLVE SUCH CONDITIONS. IRB APPROVAL CANNOT BE GRANTED UNTIL NON-COMPLIANT ISSUES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED.**

#### BEIRUT CAMPUS

P.O. Box: 13-5053 Chouran  
 Beirut 1102 2801  
 Lebanon

#### BYBLOS CAMPUS

P.O. Box: 36 Byblos Lebanon

#### NEW YORK OFFICE

475 Riverside Drive Suite 1846 New York, NY 10115 Tel: +1 212 870 2592  
 +1 212 870 2761 Fax: +1 212 870 2762 www.lau.edu.lb



If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the IRB office by email at [christine.chalhoub@lau.edu.lb](mailto:christine.chalhoub@lau.edu.lb)

*The IRB operates in compliance with the national regulations pertaining to research under the Lebanese Minister of Public Health's Decision No.141 dated 27/1/2016 under LAU IRB Authorization reference 2016/3708, the international guidelines for Good Clinical Practice, the US Office of Human Research Protection (45CFR46) and the Food and Drug Administration (21CFR56). LAU IRB U.S. Identifier as an international institution: FWA00014723 and IRB Registration # IRB00006954 LAUIRB#1*



**Dr. Costantine Dagher**  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED:**

IRB Exempt Protocol Application	Received 13 February 2017
Cover Letter	Received 13 February 2017
GSR Submission Form	Received 13 February 2017
Research proposal	Received 13 February 2017
USR Questionnaire with Introduction	Received 13 February 2017, Amended 16 February 2017
NIH Training – Abdul Nasser Kassar	Certificate # 1896291 (dated 19 October 2015)
CITI Training – Diana Saad	Certificate # 2241882 (Dated 20 December 2016)