

FEATURES OF MARKETING TRAINING IN THE CONDITIONS OF DIGITALIZATION

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Abstract: We all live in specific times. We are changing as consumers, producers and society as a whole. We specifically learn many things, both about ourselves and about the environment around us.

Under the influence of digitalisation, we have become different both as people and as consumers. Higher education has also changed and is beginning to meet the challenges of the external environment. The implemented innovative approaches will provide excellent competencies, which are aimed at digitalization of the curricula and real achievement of sustainable development within the 21st century Education.

Digitization has a significant impact on the volume, speed and variety of data that is important for marketing decision-making. Marketing training, which is highly subject to digital changes, is emerging as a significant challenge. The results of this training are also important for companies that work in the digital economy, because marketing specialists should rethink their behavior for processing this data and transforming it into real actions to improve marketing results. As a result, the demand for data skills has grown significantly, mainly due to the lack of skills in modern marketing, which is driven by analytics, digital marketing and marketing technologies.

Keywords: education, digitalization, marketing, consumer behavior, consumers, higher education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The last few years have presented the economy and society in general with a number of challenges. Different crisis periods affect the behavior of different types of organizations and consumers. There were and still are consequences for the educational system and in particular in higher schools. An extreme shift and re-transformation from face-to-face to online learning was required when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. In fact, many universities switched to online learning in response to the emerging pandemic. It is an indisputable fact that a transition to a new hybrid model of education has become necessary, which in its essence combines the advantages of face-to-face learning with those of online learning.

A special case is the teaching of economics and, in particular, of marketing at the New Bulgarian University. In reality, changes in teaching approaches in this scientific field have also become necessary, under the influence of digitalization and the pandemic.

The purpose of the report is to show the peculiarities of marketing education under the influence of digitalization.

2. ANALYSIS

In retrospect, the teaching of marketing in higher education dates back to 1890 in the US, certainly not as we know marketing in its modern form. In late 1890, Cornell University began placing advertisements in the New York News, and there was commotion and concern for both Harvard and Johns Hopkins University. (Fine, B., 1983)

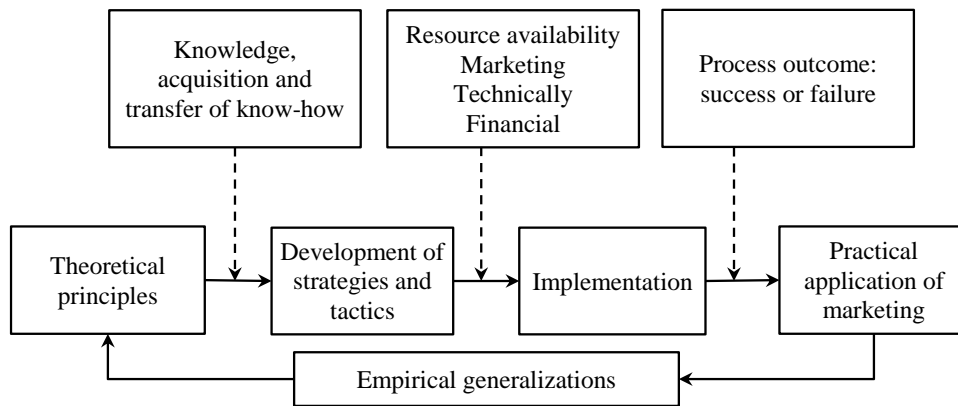
The University of Chicago issued a recruiting brochure in 1896. By 1910, several American universities have good public relations departments, and by the late 1930s there were more than 200 college publicity offices. The initial innovation of marketing teaching was implemented in large universities, but small universities have the freedom and creativity to pioneer the implementation of marketing teaching and do so with great success. (Stephen, G., 1985)

Of course Philip Kotler is considered the father of marketing, who together with his colleague Harold Martin are considered leading specialists in the field of marketing at the dawn of its creation as a science.

Marketing teaching is specific because of the extremely dynamic changes that occur in the economy, the market, consumer tastes and preferences, products, services, prices, distribution and communication. Digitization models the teaching of marketing, and every direction in teaching goes precisely through the new technologies. There are changing generations of consumers who have their own specific needs, wants and desires. The consumer remains at the center of marketing teaching, but he is very different – informed, modern, with higher expectations and a desire to experience his purchase. In this way, both theory and practice play an important role in expanding knowledge in the generations who study marketing. (Jaworski, B., 2011), (Lilien, G., 2011)

In these conditions, it is important to note why theory and practice are inextricably linked. Teaching marketing becomes even more complex because theory and practice are particularly important. Theory drives practice, and practice drives the development of theory.

Fig.№ 1 Interdependence and cyclicity between theory and practice



/Source: Kumar, V. (2017) Integrating Theory and Practice in Marketing, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 81, No. 2, Special Issue: Theory and Practice in Marketing (March 2017), pp. 1-7/

A closer look proves that there is a cyclicity. Despite this fact, there are a number of steps that must be taken in order to realize this relationship.

By their very nature, theoretical principles form the basis that is needed to explain phenomena from practice. Based on the theory, it is possible:

- ☞ undertake precise and rigorous empirical analyses;
- ☞ to establish what exactly is the created connection between theory and practice;
- ☞ placing an interdisciplinary focus on research problems;
- ☞ explaining or refuting a particular finding.

Fornell, Morgeson, and Hewitt (2016) demonstrate that customer satisfaction contributes to abnormal returns has a direct and tangible financial effect on companies, even though they have significant costs to satisfy their customers.

The theoretical foundations themselves open up new avenues of research and expand the database for scientists. There is also a synchronicity between old traditional themes and the implementation of emerging ones. Of interest to both theorists and practitioners are studies in which there is an emphasis on the theoretical framework through the prism of managerial relevance. (Kumar, V., 2017)

Higher education is changing extremely fast and dynamically. The Internet provides a wealth of information to both educators and students. According to McFerrin (1999), information and resources offered on the Internet are becoming a normal part of the academic life of students in higher education institutions around the world. Universities rely heavily on modern technology to deliver the content of individual courses and programs. The use of distance technologies offers opportunities to improve the teaching and learning process, expand the geographical reach and provide more efficient service. (Broskoske and Harvey, 2000). The use of new technologies has the potential to be a leading prerequisite in the development of leaders in higher education, as well as in reforming the preparation for leadership and achieving successful education. (Beyrouti, N., 2017)

On the other hand, albeit smoothly, digitalization is creeping through the changes in marketing management, but the emergence of the Covid – 19 crisis turned the entire approach to studying marketing upside down. The very fact that a large number of companies organized their activities with the mandatory inclusion of an online store in their activities was enough to rethink a number of strategies, especially the marketing one. Omnichannel commerce is a fact, and it also requires consideration, both on the part of consumers and on the part of companies.

It is of particular importance that there is humanity in the training, because marketing is closely related to humanity, because at its center stands the consumer as a human being. The strengths of the humanities lie in the presence of creative energies and rich language that build human cultures. These forces enable a mature perception of reality, and by clarifying our desires and dreams, they also enable a wise judgment of the value of life. They also play a vital role in shaping and transmitting values and in enhancing cultural trust. (Hassan, I. 2015)

In fact, the significant changes that occurred and characterized the teaching of marketing in these specific settings can be summarized as follows:

- ☞ Online teaching of science that is closely linked to practice. The use of a virtual classroom is an exceptional advantage that New Bulgarian University had even before the pandemic. This was a serious prerequisite for the successful launch of the new virtual learning environment.

☞ Provision of systematic knowledge based on classical theories, but in close connection and conditioning with current literary sources, which precisely emphasize the changes in marketing not only as a theory, but also as a practice.

☞ Creating a prerequisite for greater two-way activity "teacher - student" for the realization of discussions, solutions to problems and solving specific cases that are closely related to practice. Use of various communication channels, including social networks. The prerequisite for applying specific skills and communication in the new environment also arose.

☞ There was also a challenge for teachers to use different approaches and assessment methods - multi-component, with students proving different knowledge and experience and proving them in a virtual environment.

☞ Prospects for interdisciplinarity were created in terms of not only the courses, but also the creation of various events at the New Bulgarian University between different programs and departments.

☞ There is greater awareness and a more granular approach to data processing that is related to marketing and GDPR.

☞ A desire was formed on the part of the teachers to improve their teaching in the new environment.

☞ Ideas arose for a greater commitment to work with students and doctoral students in a scientific-research direction and the development of the study of marketing at the New Bulgarian University.

☞ Although virtual, the development of the concept of close connection and communication with managers from the practice continues.

☞ The overall marketing training in the various programs and courses is improved.

A large part of these changes certainly apply to other scientific fields at the New Bulgarian University, but the interpretation and implementation of these changes through the prism of the knowledge and experience of the teacher is what distinguishes them and provides motivation to both students and teachers. These challenges are also important in face-to-face learning, but the impossibility to communicate personally with the student requires many and different qualities, knowledge and preparation on the part of the teachers.

It is no less important to note that academic values should be preserved, but in sync with the teaching of knowledge and skills that are based on changes in the economy and society in general.

Regardless of these changes, there are also specific guidelines on which decisions should be made and which concern not only marketing education, but in general. A discussion direction in this context is how and in what way the students' personal communication, teamwork, the formation of excellent presentation skills in front of an audience, the ways of proving knowledge and skills and quick decision-making in a real environment will be improved. There remains the question of the duration of the development of the new environment and the new challenges we will face.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the major challenges and trends for higher education are undoubtedly changing and transforming it into a new kind and it is no longer the same. People who think pessimistically would say that digitization and the changes caused by the pandemic are insurmountable and unpredictable. For these people, there is no way to solve these problems.

Optimistic people, and everyone in higher education, should be optimistic because these problems will provide a real chance for new opportunities for development and improvement. An example of excellent preparation for overcoming challenges is New Bulgarian University.

In general, the teaching of marketing in higher education should not be based on fear, but on the courage to embrace dynamic changes. The excellent infrastructural provision of the New Bulgarian University is a basis on which a number of teaching problems can be solved, especially in marketing.

The future will tell whether hybrid learning delivers the desired results or whether face-to-face or online-only learning is needed. Certainly the economy and society are not the same as digitization is underway, but it is optimism that will enable universities, teachers and students to make the most of these changes.

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