

TAPPING MARKETING STUDENTS' USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN TEACHING SELF-MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

Marketing practitioners and educators alike recognized the importance of harnessing the power of social media to reach (Liodice, 2010; Bush, 2010) and teach (Kalamas, Mitchell and Lester, 2009) young consumers. Many marketing educators have begun to explore the potential pedagogical opportunities to utilize social media to improve students' learning experience and outcomes. The prevailing research points to the need for operational guidelines before social media can be used as an effective teaching tool.

The purpose of the current research is twofold. First, it examines the patterns and motivations of college students in their usage of social media. Second, it explores the use of an experiential exercise for teaching students how to develop and execute self-marketing strategies. Thus, a questionnaire was designed to determine how college students use social sites, the primary motivations behind site usage and self perceptions of students' abilities to effectively use these sites. A principal component analysis revealed four motivator factors for social media usage a (i.e., socialization, instrumental use, entertainment, and self-expression). Data on students' perceived abilities showed that the majority (over 80%) were familiar with social sites and viewed themselves as savvy users.

Students were exposed to an experiential exercise based on a seven-step e-marketing plan developed by Strauss and Frost (2009). The seven steps

included: situation analysis, strategic planning, objectives, e marketing strategies, implementation of the plan budget, and evaluation of the plan. The outcomes of this class project indicated that students found the exercise to be relevant to real world experiences. It provided them with a framework to begin the process of promoting the skills they acquired in marketing course as well as helping them excel in a myriad of other areas in their lives.

The current research and the classroom project provided some additional insight into the complex relationship between students and their social media usage. Further research is needed to examine how usage of social media can be effectively implemented in the classroom environment.

REFERENCES

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