

A PYRAMID APPROACH TO REVAMP MARKETING EDUCATION ON A THIRD YEAR UNDER-GRADUATE LEVEL

Frikkie Herbst, University of Pretoria, Department of Marketing and Communication Management, Pretoria, South Africa, 0002, (2712) 4203387

Giselle de Wet, University of Pretoria, Department of Marketing and Communication Management, Pretoria, South Africa, 0002, (2712) 4203551

ABSTRACT

Using the marketing concept as a foundation, a pyramid approach has been developed which will assist universities in taking the students through each of the phases during their three year education in Marketing Management. This approach also takes into account the movement towards integrated marketing education. The principle idea behind this is to provide the student with a holistic view on what they have studied over a three-year period. It shows them that each sub-segment can only be effective if it is integrated into the complete delineation. The focus of the third paper, in a trilogy, falls on the third level of the pyramid. During the third year project all the elements of the marketing concept are covered, namely: market orientation, profit orientation, social responsibility and systems orientation. All these elements were combined by drawing up a marketing plan for a business.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the importance of practical projects for marketing students in tertiary education. It is in reaction to an article where the student versus employer perspective assesses whether the needs of both students and employers are being met by educators (O'Brien *et al.*, 1995: 47-52).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Marketing is not a theoretical subject. From its roots it is a subject leaning towards practical expression. Although it is possible to write a theoretical curriculum on marketing, it will never be able to convey the full picture to the student. A further problem identifies itself. The marketing fraternity is sceptical of appointing students from

a theoretical background into a practical occupation. In this modern era where the evolution of marketing thought has brought us to consumer and market orientation, should the education of marketing not keep up with these trends in the market? If the market needs a workforce with an understanding of theory and its application, should that not exactly be what is provided? We owe it to the market, for which we provide the first levels of education and training for tomorrow's workforce, as well as to our students, who go to universities to gain a competitive advantage for themselves and not to obtain obsolete knowledge.

THE PYRAMID APPROACH FOR MARKETING EDUCATION

A framework has to be developed to incorporate the principles of the marketing concept on undergraduate level at tertiary institutions. This framework will bridge the gap between education and practice. In order to apply the principles of the marketing concept on each year of the undergraduate curriculum, the following approach can be used:

Figure 1 presents a visual explanation of the pyramid-approach. During this third paper of a trilogy the focus will fall on the third level of the pyramid. During the third year project all the elements of the marketing concept are handled, namely: market orientation, profit orientation, social responsibility and systems orientation.

Based on the pyramid approach a model has been invented to explain the importance of teaching the principles of the marketing concept. Theoretical lectures supported by well structured

Before the final marketing plan was presented to the business it was evaluated and graded by the lecturer. Students also evaluated each other in terms of contribution and participation in the project. Both these marks contributed to the final mark. The project mark represented 30% of the total mark for the course.

After final corrections were made the final marketing plan was presented to the business. The group then received the consultancy fee. The businesses were sent a letter to thank them for their involvement and participation in the project as well as for the donation. They were issued a tax certificate as donations to the university can be deducted from tax.

Stage 8: The selection of the best projects.

The best projects were selected and the students received prize money and certificates for their hard work. The rest of the donations were used for bursaries, books and study material for the student's benefit.

STUMBLING BLOCKS

The most obvious and perceived stumbling blocks in the planning and executing of this project were:

- to assist and motivate the students to recruit a client based on the fact that the students didn't have any practical and/or professional consulting and marketing experience.
- time constraints in guiding and support of the 70 groups.
- quality control to ensure that the marketing plans that are presented to businesses are correct and of the highest standard.

RESULTS

Positive responses from the businesses (client) and the students (product) indicated that innovative changes to marketing education and the value of practical experience to the student and business could not be under-estimated.

From the businesses being consulted, the necessity to broaden the theoretical basis was identified. That is, broadening the theoretical basis so that it will not only include theory on physical products but to include both products and services. To revamp marketing education, educationalists should add the study of services marketing to the under-graduate curriculum to broaden the theoretical basis.

Interaction between the student and industry provides job opportunities for the final year marketing student and definitely contributes to his Curriculum Vitae.

CONCLUSION

By introducing the pyramid approach into the marketing curriculum of all three years on under-graduate level promises to broaden the scope, significance and relevance of marketing teaching at the University of Pretoria. Specifically as the three projects build on each other to cover all the elements of the marketing concept. Firstly to reflect a market orientation by delivering the type of student that were exposed to an extensive theoretical training together with a practical application of the theory. Secondly to generate a profit through their work and contribute to the benefit by all students. Thirdly to render much needed service to the businesses

REFERENCES

- Miller, C. (1995). DePauls students learn marketing "just in time". Marketing News, vol. 29:15, 7, July 1995, p. 25.
- O'Brien, E. M., Deans, K.R. (1995). The position of marketing education: A student versus employer perspective. Marketing Intelligence & Planning, vol. 13:2, 1995, p. 47-52.