GLOBAL MARKETING ISSUES

MKTM030

AS2: REFLECTIVE PORTFOLIO

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This portfolio provides a reflective analysis and evaluation of the module MKTM030 Global Marketing Issues and contains three distinct elements: module reflections, topic engagement and online reflections, and article reflections.

Module reflections are composed of an introductory reflection based on initial expectations of what this module was considered to be about and how it relates to the MSc International Marketing Strategy as a whole.

Topic engagement and online reflections were submitted on a weekly basis to provide evidence of engagement with the taught materials from 5 module sessions.

Article reflections provide a critical reflection of a peer-reviewed journal article related to each of the 5 module sessions. They contain a personal reflection in terms of how the article is associated with a specific aspect of the session and taught theory.

Concluding remarks are part of module reflections and were written after completion of the module, taking into account thoughts on taught material, assessment criteria and how they link back to initial expectations.

Introduction

Upon embarking on the distance online course Global Marketing Issues MKTM030, I was expecting to explore current research, insightful academic content related to marketing and practice, future predictions and global thought leadership on how world politics, culture, digitisation and globalisation are factors affecting organisations and business everywhere. In addition, I had been looking forward to engaging and collaborating with other members of the course cohort on critical issues related to globalisation and marketing strategy. It was my expectation that as a result of doing a master's degree outside of my own country I would gain greater awareness and insight into diversity and an increased global awareness.

I was expecting an increased understanding of the global marketing context in collaboration with others from all over the world, along with key dimensions of the global marketing environment; culture and managing divergence; and global trends – all of particular interest to me in my current role working for a prestigious academic institution in Canada, with a business goal of attracting students worldwide.

As a marketing strategist an ideal forum for me to achieve these goals would be in the form of connecting and drawing from relevant academic resources; assessment opportunities which relate directly to the module outcomes and allow me to draw upon my own marketing experience as well as evaluating and reflecting upon current research and thought leadership and online discussion and collaboration with peers.

Topic Engagement and Online Reflections

Session 5 Leadership, Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility

The Session 5 readings reinforced my view that marketing has come of age. Martin Eisend (2015) demonstrates that the marketing field, which is currently characterised by fragmentation and specialisation, has reached a stage of maturity. Consumers are demanding a more authentic exchange between marketing, advertising and the organisations serving those societies.

TV and mass media as the primary method of effective advertising is over, and the Internet and social media have levelled the playing field between consumer and business or organisation, altering the way in which consumers and company interact (Antoniadis, Koukoulis, Assimakopoulos, 2017). Marketers need to focus on tribes of people who care about what the company has to offer and about what it has to say. Developing trust is imperative. For me, trust between consumer and organisation is a central theme. How is it built or destroyed? How do cultural differences impact trust? How does it relate to profit? Inherent in trust is ethical consumerism. If we marketers expect to be heard through our materials, stories and ads, then we owe it to consumers and society to be accountable in the trust relationship. Not because social cause marketing and corporate social responsibility are trendy but because we owe it to ourselves, our society and our industry.

Session 6 Strategic Elements of Competitive Advantage

It is curious that most organisations will choose to center their corporate strategies around the current marketplace and its competitors rather than identify blue oceans (Kim and Mauborgne, 2004). That only a small percentage of business launches are aiming at creating new market spaces or industries, but that is where the profit is.

It is not surprising that corporate business strategies in America are heavily imbued with the red ocean military-like attributes of "confronting an opponent and driving him off a battlefield of limited territory" (Kim et al., 2004). This idea aligns with Hofstede's (n.d) national culture index demonstrating the US as having a very high score on the Masculinity index. The masculinities variable referring to a national culture focused on "winning" and "losing". Another reminder that business strategies are inherently related to the culture in which they are formulated.

If there is a current industry that could be considered a messy red ocean getting worse, it would be higher education. It is an exciting time to be sitting in a front row seat watching the unprecedented disruption of the higher education landscape. Some say that in 10 years many colleges and universities will either not exist or will be merged with other institutions - education finding blue oceans.

Session 7 Innovative Technology and Social Media

AI has the power to disrupt every major industry today, making it a special phenomenon in human history. Consider how Gutenberg's invention of the printing press was one of the most influential events in the 2nd millennium and all industries were forced to morph as a result. AI will be/is another such epic event in our history, but are we ready for its potential impact?

AI is changing how we work, live and learn. Some say AI will facilitate solving some of humanities' most complex problems like climate change or curing diseases. As my interests lie in higher education, I envision the elimination of schools, universities and colleges as buildings in physical space. Instead I picture hubs of specialised thought mobility clusters whereby students, thought leaders, and academics from varying disciplines of similar research interests meet in a physical space when appropriate. It will not be considered a "university" per say but rather a "learning everywhere" idea. MOOC's

and digitised learning environments become the norm, erasing education sector boundaries.

Session 8 Global Marketing and the Digital Environment

Digital marketing is dead. In other words, everything is digital. In strategic marketing planning "digital" needs to be at the very core of the marketing planning process. However, in real life, as a long time digital marketer I have not experienced this being the case. In each boardroom I enter I experience similar sentiment – while digital is very important it is still just an aside. Sometimes it is fear (people like to do things the way they have always done them), other times it is lack of understanding and more often than not organisations don't know how to effectively alter strategic marketing planning with "digital" as a centre piece being the foundation on which all campaigns and content are driven.

Large public organisations face even bigger issues as change happens much slower and technology uptake takes longer. Despite these barriers, industries and organisations are doing their best and we are on our way towards true omni channel and cloud marketing.

Session 9 Transnational Segmentation

As globalisation continues to result in increased massification in higher education I am struck by the size and scope of its many audiences. The higher education sector serves a wide spectrum of stakeholders that spans cultures, generations and demographics making it challenging for marketers working on segmentation. Ernst & Young LLP have appropriated a model of transnational segmentation for higher education in their publication "The Differentiated University" (Pantheon Group, 2014). What separates this segmentation from others and makes it transnational is that the cohorts are differentiated by motivation and mental models as opposed to traditional demographic segmentation.

This model could be extended to micro cohorts based on culture as well as other stakeholder groups such as alumni, donors or parents, for example.

By focusing on motivational drivers and mindsets, this model facilitates understanding why the educational product fits the individual and how it will help him/her achieve their educational goals.

Article Reflections

Session 5 Leadership, Ethics and CSR

<u>The Importance of Ethical Marketing Practices</u>

In their article, Rawat, Bhatia, MihikaHegde, Bhat and Tewari (2015) state that ethical marketing is the best method to derive long term benefits for business, consumers and the good of society as a whole. This article supports my view that marketers should not ignore the growing importance of ethics, and in a globalised world especially need to be aware of ethical issues in cross-cultural settings. Conventional marketing frameworks need to be revised.

Hunt and Vitell (1986) define ethical marketing as "…an inquiry into the nature and grounds of moral judgments, standards, and rules of conduct relating to marketing decisions and marketing", but what does this mean in real terms for me in my marketing career?

For me, one of the most significant issues when creating ethical marketing campaigns, is the importance of not only being aware of cross-cultural ethical issues but also global advertising regulations. In Canadian law, for example, the *Competition Act* contains provisions addressing false or misleading representations and deceptive marketing practices. Controversial marketing campaigns prove that there is a fine line between what regulations permit and what is considered ethical. Examples include the H&M advertisement in 2018, or in 2014, from Urban Outfitters (both pictured below).
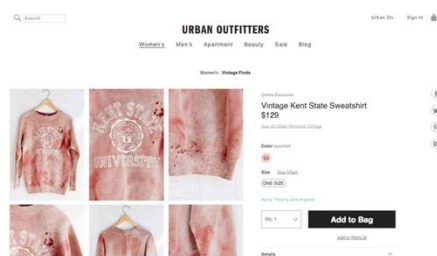
Through reading the material for this session I have significantly developed my knowledge regarding effective corporate leadership. My view that having the ability to influence and effect change to exploit global opportunities is an integral part of leadership has been reinforced. CEOs, leaders of organisations and marketing professionals have an obligation to promote social responsibility through practices in the best interest of society; standing by a code of ethics and core values; and give back to the local market. This knowledge is essential to me as a practitioner and going forward, better equips me to apply these principles to exploit the global opportunities that working for my institution present.

Article source:

Rawat, S.R., Bhatia, K., MihikaHegde, Bhat, N. & Tewari, S. (2015). The importance of ethical marketing practices. *Journal of Business Management and Economics, 3*(2), pp.23-30.

Session 6 Strategic Elements of Competitive Advantage

Preparing for the Future of Higher Education

Tashfeen (2015) presents ideas for achieving sustainable competitive advantage in Higher Education (HE) through taking into account adjustments to teaching and learning as disruptive technologies are changing the landscape for the delivery of education. Internet and mobile devices are disrupting the status quo, allowing consumers to access education at a time and location convenient to them. E-learning, distance learning, open educational resources are shaping a new market.

Globally, HE has been swimming in red oceans for decades. Reading Tashfeen's article reinforces my opinion that more research needs to be done on how to move HE into the blue ocean. In my view, research focussed on how better to compete internationally,

differentiate and operationalise marketing orientation as a way forward and outperform current competitors in the red ocean is becoming redundant.

Global participation in HE continues to rise (UNESCO, 2018) and more people are hungry for education – hungry to learn in the non-traditional way. Applying Michael Porter's framework to HE, I believe it is essential that institutions look towards creating competitive advantage through differentiation advantage or focussed differentiation. I envision this happening through the creation of unique learning experiences using cutting edge educational technologies. Disadvantaging rivals through the "competitive innovation" Hamel and Prahalad describe would certainly, in my opinion, open up blue oceans for HE institutions.

W.E Deming stressed that a company must commit to continuing improvement to be a winner in a competitive struggle (Smith, 2018). I believe for HEs to move into blue oceans it is essential to use the strategic intent approach. I agree with Tashfeen's (2015) concluding remarks that collaboration to create strong partnerships between educators and other stakeholders regarding policy, processes, governance and support structures is essential for future success. I believe HE institutions should throw away the old rulebook and look for innovative strategies and fresh approaches to what is on offer.

Article source:
Tashfeen, A. (2015). Preparing for the future of higher education. *Horizon,23*(4), pp.323-330. https:// doi.org/10.1108/OTH-06-2015-0029

Session 7 Innovative Technology and Social Media

When brands come to life: experimental research on the vividness effect of Virtual Reality in transformational marketing communications

In their study, Van Kerrebroeck, Brengman and Willems (2016) examine the impact of Virtual Reality (VR) in marketing. They present a three-dimensional conceptual framework to demonstrate that VR generates higher perceptions of vividness and presence than a regular two-dimensional video. According to their study, vividness – directly and indirectly through presence - positively affects attitude toward the advertisement and stimulates customers' purchase intentions.

When reading this study, I am reminded of immersive marketing campaigns like BMW's where customers can test drive cars in a "perfect" scenario, with beautiful scenery, lovely weather and no traffic. The attempt to create perfect scenarios is common, but as VR offers the buyer more vividness and presence, it raises the question for me about how we define truth through such marketing. If the consumer develops a positive bias as a result of experiencing a product in ideal circumstances is this truly ethical?

For me, this article and module resources hold real significance as I believe that VR will become a bigger part of our world. VR users are continuing to increase, and VR advertising is significantly more effective than mobile or desktop advertising (webpagefx.com).

Previously I had not considered this question of ethics, focussing purely on VR's ability to immerse the user in a scenario, experience it from the inside, bringing about greater engagement through memorable marketing experiences. Being able to offer prospective university students the opportunity to really "experience" life on campus could be a very powerful tool.

Having explored this session's resources in detail, I am more aware than ever that as with each new technology, there needs to be a creative vision behind it to get the best out of it. Whatever the format, innovative storytelling and creating emotional experiences will continue to be key. For me, being a content creator means coming up with innovative ways to use the technology to promote my institution while remaining mindful of ethical considerations.

Article Source:

Van Kerrebroeck, H., Brengman, M. & Willems, K. (2016) When brands come to life: experimental research on the vividness effect of Virtual Reality in transformational marketing communications. *Virtual Reality, 21*, pp.177-191. DOI 10.1007/s10055-017-0306-3

Session 8 Global Marketing & The Digital Environment

Smarter Universities: A Vision for the Fast Changing Digital Era

Coccoli, Guercio, Maresca, & Stanganelli (2014) reinforce the idea that innovations and enabling technologies are changing the dynamic between learners and teachers. They explore the concept that universities need to become "smarter". They offer a smarter university model that comes from the development of smarter cities whereby "smarter" means the seamless ubiquitous transfer of knowledge and information between employees, teachers, students, and all stakeholders. A specific area highlighted in the article is the need for modifying the way in which teachers and students work.

For me the most significant contribution of this work is the proposal of a conceptual model on how to make a university smarter. Up to this point in the module I had not considered what embracing digitalisation could realistically look like for my institution as the gap between research and actual practice continues to be wide. "The future is in technology,

13

yet the bigger future lies in transcending it" (Leonhard, 2016) and it is my belief that working on and adapting a model like this will ultimately achieve transcendence. Australia continues to lead the way in higher education innovations. One example is the creation of Deakin University's "Genie" – a machine learning-based intuitive, responsive, smart learning personal assistant for students at the university.

Having explored the Coccoli et al. (2014) model for smarter universities, I am more aware of the fact that *people* and *processes* are the driving force behind disruptive technologies. It is my opinion that the challenges of providing an augmented learning experience due to increasing pressures on educators and institutions, along with increasing performance pressures on students will drive us to innovate and push the boundaries of integrating technology into education. If we fail at this, we will not sustain competitive advantage.

Article source:

Coccoli, Guercio, Maresca, & Stanganelli. (2014). Smarter universities: A vision for the fast changing digital era. *Journal of Visual Languages and Computing, 25*(6), pp.1003-1011.

Session 9 Transnational Segmentation

Mindscapes across Landscapes: Archetypes of Transnational and Subnational Culture

Venaik and Midgley (2015) examine the idea of heterogeneity in cultural values within and across countries through values people share. Their research identifies distinct transnational archetypes and subcultures suggesting the need to see "culture" as a combination of universal etic and emic characteristics. Their exploration results in how to best conceptualize, measure and analyze cultural heterogeneity across the globe.

For me, the most meaningful aspect of this research is the demonstration that national cultures are more heterogeneous than homogenous. The majority of current studies

share a common underlying assumption that cultures are relatively homogenous including the popular Hofstede framework. Initially, I found Hofstede's (1980, 2001) cultural dimension interesting depicting and grouping national cultural differences with a ring of truth. It is not immediately apparent that the validity (unable to replicate) is questionable. I initially overlooked other concerns and limitations of Hofstede's framework like the western bias contained in his questionnaire as well as the limitations of examining country level values rather than individual values within and across nations. Each of which potentially undermines national cultural scores usefulness. Alternatively, Venaik and Midgley (2015) consider configurations of values at an individual level across the globe leveraging Swartz's model resulting in an interesting conceptualisation and theory of cultural archetypes. One that I can see supporting an efficient segmentation of transnational and subnational groups for the purpose of marketing.

Venaik and Midgley (2015) add what I consider to be a significant contribution to better understanding transnational segmentation. Their work demonstrates that cultural values are hardly homogenous and how incomplete that picture is. As new global hybrid consumers increasingly emerge we will need a more exhaustive way to understand transnational segmentation.

Article source:

Venaik, S. & Midgley, D.F. (2015). Mindscapes across landscapes: archetypes of transnational and subnational culture. *Journal of International Business Studies, 46*, pp.1051-1079.

Conclusions

After engaging with all the sessions, for me the following ideas are the most meaningful things I have learned and will be valuable strategic insights in my work:

Firstly, organisations - including public and non-profit - need to plan and build marketing strategies that are global in scale, recognizing that either adaptation or standardisation or a combination of both are options, depending on the needs and wants of their customers. Perhaps most significant for me and my work is an increased understanding of the new emerging global consumers that share common wants, needs and values (for example, global teens) and that a better understanding of this segment of consumers can facilitate devising standardised approaches across a global marketplace. Also of importance to my work in a globally competitive higher education institution, is an awareness of cultural humility and transnational segmentation, which was previously unknown to me. Many assumptions are made regarding national culture being homogenous, including Hofstede's cultural framework. An increase in global consumers due to an increasingly technologically connected world means there is increased cultural heterogeneity. One aspect of learning that I found particularly exciting was reading about the opportunities for organisations to find blue oceans – the realisation that it is critical to think about what your customers will want or need 5 or 10 years from now to build strategic marketing plans that are sustainable will help me think more about how to create strategies for sustained competitive advantage.

In terms of assessment criteria, I found the assignments to be creative but found it particularly challenging to integrate the taught material – which focused on the private sector – into my frame of reference as someone who works in higher education. I would have appreciated more insight into the rigours of reflective writing at an academic level, something which prior to starting this course I was unfamiliar with. Resources and supporting materials and examples would have been welcomed. Overall, I found the teaching material to be of less use than the articles and academic studies I found from my own research into each session. As both a visual and auditory learner I would have

been grateful for more variety in taught resources, perhaps some video lectures or even recorded voice lectures to offer more of a connection with Dr Smith, his ideas and principles taught.

Regarding my hopes and expectations for collaboration with fellow students from other countries who are also taking this globally offered course, I was very disappointed to experience no collaborative work. I feel that online discussion of views on taught materials, to draw from fellow students' experiences, especially those from other cultural backgrounds is a missed opportunity to provide more value to this course.

In summary, I will take forward some valuable knowledge from MKTM030 and will be able to use this to augment my work.

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