Chapter 88

The Impact of Enhancing Social Media Marketing Knowledge on Customer Attraction and Engagement for University Organizational Growth and Development from the TRACK Theory:
The Context of Mpumalanga University of South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of integrating social media in the marketing strategy for customer attraction and engagement in universities in order to solve challenges associated with marketing strategies for student attraction and community engagement in the context of the University of Mpumalanga in South Africa. A descriptive correlational research design was used in the study. Fifty sales and marketing employees, 50 departmental lecturers, and 100 students randomly selected within the Mpumalanga University responded to the questionnaires. The results indicated that there is a positive impact of applying technological social media-based marketing content knowledge (TSMBCMCK) framework on student attraction and recruitment and community engagement. It is therefore recommended to adopt and apply the technological social media-based marketing content knowledge framework to enhance marketing strategies within universities.

INTRODUCTION

A lot of studies agree that the current university education system has transformed to move along with the global changes in line with technological advancement (Laurillard, 2008; Laurillard, 2012; Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Most of the long-established Institutions of Higher Learning in South Africa have also transformed their educational programs to move along with these global changes in line with technological advancement (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, Sims, 2014). While this move has gained momentum internationally among many long-established universities. there is consensus according to research that new universities are currently facing stiff competition with long-established universities regarding marketing strategies for customer attraction, recruitment, and engagement due to lack of advanced expertise in digital marketing strategies effective enough to challenge the competition. Domański (2013) in the study entitled "Marketing of Higher Education: Future Challenges" found similar challenges in the context of Polish, European and the United States Higher Education Institutions.

With special reference to South Africa education system, many universities whether public or private from a historical perspective were found according to research to have faced challenges associated with marketing strategies during their institutional development phases even before the introduction of digital marketing (Laurillard, 2008; Laurillard, 2012; Mishra & Koehler, 2006, Sims, 2014, Musundire, 2017; Musenge, 2018). For that reason, other related studies argue that whether digital or not, expertise in terms of knowledge, understanding, and implementation of marketing strategies play an important role in boosting customer attraction and recruitment strategies (Laurillard, 2008; Laurillard, 2012; Mishra & Koehler, 2006, Sims, 20140. Given the current scenario of advanced technological marketing, expertise must be in the form of adoption and implementation of digital devices including social media.

Secondly, this study has also been stimulated by theoretical and philosophical approaches to the institutions of Higher Learning. Theoretical and philosophical perspective has played an important role in shaping and supporting educational develop (Laurillard, 2008; Laurillard, 2012; Mishra & Koehler, 2006, Sims, 2014). Although there are always theoretical controversies and debates regarding organisational and theoretical innovations in the adoption and implementation of the concept of social media in education, the teaching and learning disciplines in all the faculties is on the top of the situation as compared to the marketing departments (Laurillard, 2008; Laurillard, 2012; Mishra & Koehler, 2006, Sims, 2014, Musundire, 2017; Musenge, 2018). In other words, there is evidence according to research that more research has been done on developing theoretical approaches of increasing the content knowledge and understanding of integrating Social media technology during the teaching and learning process (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, Sims, 2014, Musundire, 2017; Musenge, 2018). Limited research has been done on theoretical approaches of similarly increasing content knowledge and understanding of the use of social media in enhancing marketing strategies Universities for Customer Attraction and engagement in Higher institutions of learning including University of Mpumalanga (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, Sims, 2014). This already indicate that there is already a gap to be covered in terms of university expansion and educational development hence this study examines the attitude and perspective of students and employees of University of Mpumalanga in order to determine the feasibility of integrating networked social media into the marketing and communication strategy. The findings will assist in developing universities not only from a South African perspective but also from global point of view.

Basing on the above highlighted views, Mpumalanga the only recently established state university in the South African context is still undergoing its developmental stages in this current world characterised with advanced technologies (DHET report, 2014: 12). Statistical reports indicate that initially,

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