

Internet Marketing Communication and Schools: The Slovenian Case Study

Aleš Tankosič¹, Anita Trnavčević²

¹Technical School Centre Nova Gorica, Cankarjeva 10, 5000 Nova Gorica, Slovenia, ales.tankosic@tsc.si

²University of Primorska, Faculty of Management Koper, Cankarjeva 5, 6000 Koper, Slovenia, anita.trnavcevic@fm-kp.si

Worldwide, some 1.32 billion people now use the Internet (Internet World Stats 2007). In the developed countries the Internet is also present in educational institutions; schools use the Internet as a means of communication with their customers. In Slovenia, however, research focusing on Internet marketing communication are rare in the field of education. This paper provides the theoretical framework and the results of the qualitative case study conducted at a school centre in Slovenia in 2005. Data were collected through group interviews and document analysis. The findings support the School Centre teachers' claim that the Internet does not enable personal contacts and the sensory collection of physical evidence, which are considered to be major disadvantages of Internet marketing communication. The teachers who consider Internet marketing communication to be an advantage stress the importance of virtuality which can function as a simulation of communication in the real world. Their adversaries, on the other hand, stress the importance of the physical world and warn us of the negative sides of virtuality.

Key words: education, marketing, internet marketing, internet marketing communication

1 Introduction

Globalisation and the intensification of competition, changes in demographics regarding birth rate, the comparisons of quality of educational systems and the 'adaptation' to the EU standards, the impact of information (communication) technology (ICT), and focus on customer satisfaction are some of the factors influencing the marketing strategies of schools in Slovenia and worldwide (Snoj 2007). A number of changes have occurred in Slovenian schools, such as a decrease in the birth rate and a related decrease in the number of students enrolled in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools; changes in school management and governance (i.e. changes in the structure of the school board), a greater autonomy that was devolved to schools and a 'call from the government' to make networking between schools more effective than they were in the past (Trnavčević 2007). Moreover, the importance of information technology is being given even greater attention in our nation's schools.

The Internet is a constituent part of information technology. It has changed the view of organisation management greatly and brought fundamental changes in this field (Zinkhan 2005; Weber 2007; Crovella and Krishnamurthy 2006). Internet World Stats (2007) claims

the number of Internet users in Slovenia has increased by 296% between the years 2000 and 2007. The latest data concerning Slovenia show that 64% of its inhabitants are currently using the Internet (Internet World Stats 2007)¹. A growing trend towards the Internet use can be seen in schools as well; for example in the school year 2007/08 The National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (2007) is offering twenty seminars on the Internet. The seminars offer not only a basic knowledge of the Internet as a source of information, but also present it as a tool of marketing communication.

Internet marketing communication is a constituent part of internet marketing, having a considerable number of advantages in comparison with other communication tools: cost efficacy, time and geographic dimensions, massiveness, interaction with users, speed, a high level of segmentation and personalization, and data measurement (Weber 2007; Hanson 2007; Kalyanam and McIntyre 2002). Due to these advantages Internet marketing communication has been introduced into schools. However, no research on its efficacy and attitudes of its users, employees in schools or other school 'customers', has not been conducted in the field of education in Slovenia as of this date.

The purpose of our study was to explore the views, attitudes and perceptions that participants, teachers emplo-

¹ In North America 71% of the population use the Internet, in Europe 43,4%, in Africa only 4.7% of the population use the Internet (Internet World Stats 2007).

yed in the selected School Centre, have regarding Internet marketing communication. The School Centre was chosen because it was the first among all other secondary schools to introduce a free system of e-management (e-markbook etc.) which is available for users on the Internet. The School Centre programmes focus on technical education, e. g. electronics, mechanical engineering, computer science, etc. The average age group of the students is between 15 and 18 years of age.

The development and implementation of the website is entirely the product of the School Centre teachers. The population consisted of 112 school teachers, grouped into three schools. One might argue that multiple views should be included in the study in order to 'avoid' bias and 'singular perspective'. However, teachers who, according to Barnes (1993: 6) and Evans (1995: 16), represent internal providers who are an important group in the process of marketing communication between schools and customers. We argue that if teachers do not accept Internet marketing communication, there are few, if any possibilities that such communication will be successful in its initial stage. Teachers' commitment and understanding of the role of Internet marketing communication and their positive attitude towards this 'kind' of communication form the foundation for the development initiative from the school side.

The presented research is a qualitative case study. Data was gathered by group semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. For each school of the School Centre we conducted separate group interviews with six teachers. The research questions were derived from theoretical discussions and published research. The analysis was done by a content analysis method (Angrosino 2005; Esterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe 2005). Interviews were recorded and transcribed which enabled detailed text analysis. Data, in the form of the transcribed text, was then categorised.

2 Internet marketing communication – theoretical background

Chaffey et. al. (2006: 6) define Internet marketing as »the application of the Internet and related digital technologies to achieve marketing objectives and support the modern marketing concept«. Strehovec (2003: 28) argues that the World Wide Web is a sociable, rather than technical creation intended for people to interact. Chaffey et. al. (2006: 34) state that the Internet enables interactive communication between marketers and customers, customers themselves and the competition. Users can learn more about products, or services by allowing them to interact with the Web site. It also provides for a greater accumulation of customer knowledge as it is customer-oriented concerning his or her needs and wants. Weber (2007: 120) argues that each phase of developing and positioning a product or service on the Internet can provide feedback information to the business from its best experts, that is its customers. Weber (2007: 122) also discusses the essence of this interaction; by offering feedback information, custo-

mers can influence the company's decisions about certain products or services. A customer becomes a team worker, an external expert whose opinion is of crucial importance to the marketer. By promoting interaction through the use of chat, virtual communities, Web conferencing, etc., marketers can have direct access to customer feedback (Allen, Kania and Yaeckel 2001). Certainly this type of interaction and customer feedback is relevant for educational institutions as well.

Nowadays, new programmes are being introduced into Slovenian schools; unfortunately, the opinion of their potential customers is not being considered adequately. The enrolment of students in new programmes is often disappointing. Up-to-date feedback information from customers is recommended, which could increase the efficiency and efficacy in planning and introducing innovative programmes.

The Internet has been proven to be a most useful and effective tool in the field of service marketing (e. g. e-consulting, e-finance, e-education, etc.) and products which can be digitalized (e. g. books, specialized literature, software, music, games, photographs, etc.) and easily transferred, with lowest risk and without any additional costs, to the customers (Hansen 2007; Hart, Greenfield and Johnston 2005; Weber 2007).

On the basis of data concerning Internet user's behaviour, the Internet allows for greater segmentation and personalization (Kalyanam and McIntyre 2002; Hanson 2006). Weber (2007: 79) and Hanson (2006: 297) claim segmentation enables the creation of virtual communities that result from shared interests, relations and transactions. A virtual community is a collection of people whose online interactions are based upon shared enthusiasm for knowledge of a specific activity (Bakardjieva 2003; Solomon 2002). Such sites allow members to congregate online and exchange views on issues of common interest. From the point of view of marketers, virtual communities represent an exceptional source of information for greater knowledge of customer behaviour (Solomon 2002; Weber 2007; Hofacker 2001).

Dreyfus (2001: 104) criticizes virtual communities by warning against anonymous chatterers from all over the world who do not take any risks at all. According to Strehovec (2003: 321), today's world tends to criticize the Internet; namely, the cyber-space experience is far more impoverished than the physical one since it excludes physical contact; hence cyberspace is a platonic environment of pure and ideal identities and processes where because of the lack of physical contact, passions and interests can be fatal. Dreyfus (2001: 55) criticizes cybernetic Platonism where the role of a body is absent, and accumulated information on the World Wide Web makes us think the world is a senseless collection of billions bits of data and a senseless environment defined by bodies, wishes, interests and intentions. The attraction of the World Wide Web is in its disappearing relevance. Consequently Dreyfus (2001: 79) argues that nothing is so trivial that could not be included, and nothing is of such irrelevance that could not be included. We agree that Dreyfus's reproaches are too 'static'

and impractical since Internet marketing communication does not necessarily imply the separation of body and mind. Dreyfus's opinion is opposed by Kotler and Keller's supposition (2006: 493) that even e-organizations use, besides the Internet, the so-called offline; traditional tools of marketing communication. Internet marketing communication cannot entirely replace other forms of marketing communication. On the contrary, the success and efficacy of Internet marketing communication depend on the appropriate integration and use of traditional marketing communication tools which inform the customers about the existence and location of the website on the Internet.

Virtual space can certainly be understood as a place filled with ideal identities, but it is impossible to exclude the physical factor, that is an individual in the 'real' world from the virtual one. Owing to the advantages (gaining potential users), a specific educational organization can idealize its own identity with the help of the Internet. Irrespective of the level of virtuality, the process of communication between schools and its customers needs a physical point of view which can satisfy the need for physical evidence. Yet, it is questionable whether the idealizing of a proper identity is useful and reasonable. It is in the interest of schools to obtain new students who are able to fulfil the demands of a programme and finish their studies.

However, financial and intellectual theft, as well as virtual violence, are some of the disadvantages of the Internet (Weber 2007). Although there is much hype and media attention to the privacy on the Internet, online users are skittish. Customers are concerned about the security and confidentiality of their personal information in the online environment (Svantesson 2007). The fragility of trust is in fact a characteristic of the virtual environment. Trust, which is hard to build, can be easily betrayed (Balkin and Noveck 2006; Skyrme 1998).

The advantage of Internet marketing communication is its cost efficacy in the sense of gaining customers and observing their behaviour, developing relationships with customers and exhibiting a great deal of flexibility when paying attention to the customers' needs and wants (Weber 2007; Strauss, El-Ansary and Frost 2005).

The characteristics mentioned above are a challenge for all schools in general and for the school that is the subject of this study. From 2005 on, the School Centre has been working on the project entitled MoFAS. The new system should enable schools to have greater autonomy and responsibility for the results of the education they offer their customers. It should stimulate greater economy and solutions to identified problems which will improve the quality of its programmes as well as reduce costs, and enable a faster reaction to the needs of the labour market and environment (MoFAS 2004).

2.1 Case study of the School Centre in Slovenia

The School Centre where the study was conducted has its own website which serves as a means of communica-

tion with its customers and the public. The Centre was the first among all other secondary schools to introduce a free system of e-management (e-markbook etc.) which is available for the users on the Internet. The development and implementation of the website is entirely the product of the School Centre teachers. It was developed and implemented in order to increase the 'rational use of resources' and to expand all possible ways of communication. The factors demanding rational communication between the school and its customers are the following: the introduction of new programmes, a cost efficacy demand, greater emphasis on 'satisfied customers', and the size of the Centre itself with 112 teachers. Moreover, there is polarization amongst the staff regarding opinions about the use of the Internet as a means of rational marketing communication.

3 Methodology

The present research is a qualitative case study. Case studies strive to portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation, to portray the close-up reality and 'thick description of participants' lived experience of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation (Stake 2005; Yin 2005; Merriam 2002). The purpose of the case study was to gain an insight into the teachers' perception about Internet marketing communication. For a research community, a case study optimizes understanding by pursuing scholarly research questions (Stake 2005). The research questions are derived from theoretical discussions and published research. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- How do teachers perceive the Internet in comparison with other tools of marketing communication?
- What do the teachers from the School Centre perceive as advantages and disadvantages of Internet marketing communication? A previous survey shows that 71% of the School Centre teachers consider impersonality to be the basic disadvantage of Internet marketing communication. Hence, we were particularly interested in the advantages or disadvantages the participants perceive in Internet marketing communication.
- How do teachers make sense of their own activity, and efficacy within the process of Internet marketing communication in comparison with other tools of marketing communication? We were particularly interested in this question because of the results of a survey conducted in this school in 2005.
- How would teachers/participants in the study improve the role of the Internet as a means of communication between the school and parents? Having analyzed the documents on the use of the forum as a communication tool, we found out that the forum was considered to be too simple of a means of communication as has been identified in some research (Allen, Kania and Yaeckel 2001). How, therefore, can then be intensified the use and role of the Internet be improved in schools?

Data were obtained by a group interview process. The results of a previous survey served as a basis for questions used in the group interviews (Tankosić 2005).

The School Centre consists of three schools identified for the study as A, B and C. School A employs 41 teachers, school B 40, and school C 31 teachers. The School Centre website is the same for all three schools, thus all the schools are presently using the same technology for Internet marketing communication. For each school we conducted a separate group interview with six teachers. The participants were selected according to working groups that are the largest in number within the particular school. Another criterion was the diversity of fields of professions among employees in order to obtain as many different opinions as possible. Each school was represented by three teachers/participants with a technical science background and three teachers/participants with a social science background. All the participants were assigned false names in order to ensure an ethical standard – the anonymity required in qualitative studies (Christians 2005).

To reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation various procedures were employed, two of the most common being redundancy of the data gathering and procedural challenges to explanations. For qualitative casework, these procedures generally are called triangulation (Stake 2005; Yin 2005). Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, and verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Stake 2005). The case study was carried out using triangulation of data sources (data triangulation) (Yin 2005).

The present case study has methodological, as well as content limitations. The former is represented by the generalization of the findings. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2005: 64) and Trnavčević (2003: 8) discuss generalization through statistical probability and theoretical abstraction. They stress the importance and the size of the sample structure. The following study does not fulfil criteria for generalization through statistical probability beyond the case, which also is not the purpose of the paper.

One of the authors formed his own general opinion about Internet marketing communication due to his participation in Internet marketing communication at the School Centre, which one could claim to be a biased position.

As for contextual limitation, there are only a few references in Slovenian on Internet marketing communication and Internet marketing in general. Also, the amount of literature from other countries is insufficient in the field of Internet marketing communication in education. The authors (Chaffey et. al. 2006; Strauss, El-Ansary and Frost 2005) claim that the doctrine of Internet marketing communication is changing rapidly, which can be considered an obstacle from the point of view of analyzing the theoretical framework.

4 Findings

Data was analyzed by employing a content analysis method (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe 2005). In the process of analysis, data were categorized on the basis of the research questions asked of the participants. Findings are presented in the following sections.

4.1 The importance of the Internet in comparison with other tools of marketing communication

The teachers perceive the Internet as a tool of marketing communication which does not enable personal contact and provide physical evidence². According to Weber (2007: 32), Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999: 3), these deficiencies have a great influence on the interactions, feelings, emotions and relationships among participants in the process of communication. Furthermore, the lack of physical evidence negatively influences the building of trust gained within relationships (Balkin and Noveck 2006). Trust is particularly important for services, which by their nature are highly intangible (e.g. educational institutions) because there is a need for a minimum level of customer trust before service delivery is initiated (Evans, Jamal & Foxall 2006).

The School Centre teachers consider personal contacts and physical evidence extremely important. They even claim that the 'open-door day', compared to Internet marketing communication, is the most effective tool of marketing communication for the school. In our research the teachers had to rank twelve tools of marketing communication; the Internet is found in third place right after the 'open-door day'.

As for the impersonality of the Internet, opinions differed significantly. Some teachers said it is an advantage in the sense of a relaxed interaction with other participants as well as allowing for a freedom of expression. This is certainly a good point, for Chaffey et. al (2006: 374) argue: »The customers' feedback information is of vital importance in analyzing efficacy and planning improvements.«

At the same time the advantages function as the counterweight to Dreyfus's (2001: 55) criticism, through which the author reproaches the users of the virtual world with the lack of risk. In this case, it is exactly the characteristic of 'no risk' which enables the user of the Internet to gain authentic feedback information.

The teachers argue there is a kind of a generation gap among Internet users. They believe the Internet will have a greater significance in the future. The main reason for that can be seen in the progress of technology development which will enable a higher level of interaction. Weber (2007: 208-214) as well as Haeckel (2001: 16) discuss the impact of technology development on the future

² To reduce uncertainty, customers will look for evidence of quality. They will draw inferences about quality from the place, people, equipment, communication material, symbols, etc. (Kotler and Keller 2006).

and claim that the level of interaction is getting higher and higher due to technology, which involves a wider spectrum of senses. This is why in the future we can expect an increase in the interaction level.

The teachers also mention the importance of the influence of other e-business (e-banking, e-shopping, e-administration) on Internet marketing communication in schools. Chaffey et. al. (2006: 35–43) as well as Strauss, El-Ansary and Frost (2005: 142) argue that the stress on Internet marketing communication is becoming greater and greater due to public relations within different forms of e-services (education, finance, administration, regions etc.) and its links enabling the formation of different communities of interests with global dimensions.

Despite the facts, the teachers still stress the importance of personal contacts and physical evidence for building trust in the future.

4.2 Advantages and disadvantages of Internet marketing communication

Personal contacts and physical evidence enable people to see with their own eyes and thus build trust. Internet marketing communication is a virtual tool, hence it provokes doubt. This is why people need confirmation in the real world. As Skyrme (1998: 32) argues: »In the virtual world, trust is fragile.«

There are big differences among teachers concerning what is needed to build trust in the virtual world. An example of a high level of trust is given by a teacher claiming that he would not buy a car on the Internet without having tested it before. An example of a low level of trust is a teacher who does not trust letters of apology sent via e-mail; in fact, she prefers receiving them in a classical form. Despite the big differences concerning the level of trust, Sheehan (2001: 158) states both men and women mention doubt as well as trust as being problematic in a virtual environment.

The virtual world is not the only environment which enables idealization of identities and cognitive processes, as states Dreyfus (2001: 55). The teachers see that it is possible to idealize in the physical environment as well. Namely, 'open-door days' make the School Centre 'shine' differently than in everyday life. This finding can be reasonably linked to critical remarks given by Kenway and Fitzclarence (1998: 665). The authors argue that when promoting, we expose and stress 'the sunny side of the subject' only. The same holds true for 'open-door days' at the School Centre.

It is evident that technically-oriented³ teachers have a higher level of trust in the virtual world compared to socially-oriented⁴ ones, and a lesser need for physical evidence. Those teachers who have a positive view on Internet marketing communication perceive virtuality as a way of simulating marketing communication in the real world.

Their opponents, on the other hand, stress the importance of the physical world and warn us of the negative sides of virtuality.

4.3 Teachers' activity and efficacy within the process of Internet marketing communication in comparison with other tools of marketing communication

The teachers with a technical science background are more active in Internet marketing communication than they are on 'open-door days' which are considered to be the most effective tool at the School Centre. They take an active part in creating their own websites that contain teaching material as well as information on teachers and subjects. They communicate with the customers via their websites and e-mail. E-mail communications enables a high degree of personalization, and in order to personalize messages it is necessary to understand the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of each e-mail audience (Cheung 2008; Chaffey et. al. 2006). Personalization has a significant influence on the intensity and duration of the marketer-customer relationship (brand-loyalty) (Weber 2007; Hanson 2006). The fact is important in the field of education as well. In the virtual world the competition is only a 'click' away. The potential customers are becoming present customers who usually develop a long-termed relationship with the school; hence it is of vital importance to maintain the contact between schools and their customers. To be effective, teachers are designing 'enriched', animated, interactive, and personalized messages for their customers. Personalization, however, is a sensitive area and is often intertwined with privacy issues.

Irrespective of the facts regarding the use of e-mail, teachers must be careful that they don't cause resentment among customers who are already overloaded with 'junk e-mail'. Evans, Jamal & Foxall (2006: 303) also reveal a privacy 'paradox' in that some customers are somewhat cynical about 'relational' interaction and concerned about divulging personal information but are participants nevertheless. There might be a desire on the part of schools to develop relationships with customers but customers do not always want to reciprocate. It is likely that the cynicism is predicated upon a lack of trust resulting from business scams, unfulfilled promises and marketing hype.

Teachers and school marketers walk a fine line between adding value for customers and being intrusive. To avoid irritating customers by sending unwanted marketing e-mail, teachers should ask customers for permission to e-mail marketing pitches. This approach, known as permission-based marketing, has become a standard model for e-mail marketing (Kotler and Armstrong 2008). 'Information privacy' refers to the extent to which individuals can control who holds their data, and what is done

³ Computer science engineers, electrical engineers, mechanical engineers, mathematicians, chemists, etc.

⁴ Linguists, psychologists, sociologists, historians, etc.

with those data. Many customers already believe that they have lost all control over how information about them is used (Evans, Jamal & Foxall 2006).

An increase in teacher efficacy is conditioned by the level of trust in privacy or, in other words, identity protection that is expected and needed by the participants in Internet marketing communication before they start to communicate in a virtual way. Trust is relevant for all virtual communities as well since they hold great promise. Virtual communities rely on a 'Web of trust' in which viewers and advisers tend to be matched up over time with people whose opinions they have come to trust: »It mimics the way word-of-mouth works in the real world.« (Slomon 2002: 325). However, there is also great potential for abuse if members can't trust that other visitors are behaving ethically. Many community members are sensitive to interference from companies and react negatively when they suspect that another member may in fact be a shill of a marketer who only wants to influence evaluations of products/services on the site (Solomon 2002).

Internet fraud, including identity theft and financial scams, has become a serious problem. The question of privacy is certainly of great importance since the results of several investigations (Balkin and Noveck 2006; Weber 2007; Bush et. al. 2000) place privacy in third place within categories regarding ethical issues in Internet marketing.

The teachers with a social science background are more active managing marketing communication tools that require personal contact. This group consists of teachers who speak in favour of personal contacts and physical evidence.

These same teachers do not show any interest in future collaboration with Internet marketing communication. Other teachers with a social science background, on the other hand, are interested in Internet marketing communication, but they lack knowledge about using technologies and Internet marketing communication itself. This group of teachers could improve their efficacy with education in the field of Internet technology and Internet marketing communication.

Those teachers who are active within Internet marketing communication will increase their efficacy by improving the knowledge of tools that enable feedback information from customers. Crovella and Krishnamurthy (2006: 99-102) argue that the Internet offers feedback information on how much investment is 'waste' and what is 'waste'.

The teachers promise to increase their own efficacy by identifying Internet marketing communication as a goal of the school and all its employees, not only a couple of avid individuals.

4.4 The Internet in the future

Internet marketing communication is not integrated into the School Centre vision, neither is it an activity planned

and managed by its principals. It concerns, in fact, a group of enthusiastic individuals of the School Centre. The teachers think Internet marketing communication should be integrated into the vision of the School Centre and should be managed by principals (head teachers).

Teachers and parents should be familiar with the advantages and benefits of Internet marketing communication compared to other tools of marketing communication. A course on the basics of the Internet and Internet marketing communication should be offered. The website has to be reorganized; segmentation should be increased and its structure should be simplified. It should be easy to use, professional looking, attractive and useful.

The teachers suggest the introduction of virtual consultations⁵ with the use of a web cam. It is evident that virtual consultations represent an important challenge. As for business communication, Eggert (2001: 10) states: »The experimental results suggest that physical presence is not decisive for a successful meeting or collaboration. A video conference is as useful to employ the favourable features of face-to-face communication as a 'real' conference.«

With regard to virtual consultations, the teachers differ in opinion. Technically oriented teachers have a positive view of them. Their standpoint is that every school should direct changes, which has a positive influence on the school image. Drucker (2001: 76) claims that only the initiators of changes will survive in the period of fast structure changes. Let us mention Kotler and Fox (1995: 350) who say that marketing communication in education should support a better school image. Hence the introduction of virtual consultations at the School Centre is an excellent idea. Technically oriented teachers also stress the importance in integrating Internet marketing with other digital marketing technologies such as mobile phone marketing, podcasts and vodcasts.

Of course we should consider the critiques given by the teachers with a social science background also. They argue that technology cannot and must not replace personal contacts. Trunk Širca and Koren (2003: 201) warn us as well of oversimplification in e-managing. The authors provide examples of schools satisfied with e-markbooks, which reduced the number of parents coming to consultations by half. The case shows that teachers are not aware of the importance of communicating with parents in person, which cannot possibly be limited to informing parents on students' results only. A similar situation can happen with the introduction of virtual consultations.

The forum of the School Centre has not been revived. It is clear it is not the goal of the School Centre. The statements collected from the respondents show that some teachers are even ignorant of its existence, which is, from the point of view of communication between the school and parents, a disadvantage. Weber (2007: 100-103) claims that forums and virtual communities are simple and effective tools of interaction and represent an Internet version

⁵ A means of communication between parents and teachers, virtual consultations are based upon ICT, e.g. video chat, net meeting, etc.

(viral marketing) of word-of-mouth marketing. Since customers pass the message along to others, viral marketing can be very inexpensive.

Online marketing continues to offer both great promise and many challenges for the future. However, for the School Centre, Internet marketing will remain just one important approach to the marketplace that works alongside other approaches in a fully integrated marketing mix for building customer relationships, communicating school information, and delivering services more efficiently and effectively.

5 In conclusion

The case study demonstrated the following:

Firstly, the teachers perceive the Internet as a marketing communication tool that prevents customers from viewing physical evidence and having personal contacts; which, according to Weber (2007: 32), Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999: 3) has an influence on interaction, feelings, emotions and relationships among all participants in the process of communication. Furthermore, the lack of physical evidence influences the amount of trust built within relationships. Personal contacts and physical evidence enable people to see with their own eyes and thus build trust. Internet marketing communication is a virtual tool, hence it provokes doubt. This is why people need confirmation in the real world. A dominant characteristic of the virtual world is the fragility of trust.

Secondly, it is evident that the teachers with a technical science background have a higher level of trust in the virtual world compared to the teachers with a social science background, and therefore, a lesser need for physical evidence. Those teachers who have a positive view on Internet marketing communication perceive virtuality as a way of simulating marketing communication in the real world. Their adversaries, on the other hand, stress the importance of the physical world and warn us of the negative sides of virtuality.

Thirdly, the teachers with a social science background are more active managing marketing communication tools that enable personal contact. This group consists of teachers who speak in favour of personal contacts and physical evidence. They do not show any interest in future collaboration with Internet marketing communication. Other teachers with a social science background, on the other hand, are interested in Internet marketing communication, but they lack knowledge about using appropriate technologies and Internet marketing communication itself.

Fourthly, the increase of teachers' efficacy is conditioned by the level of trust in privacy or, in other words, identity protection that is expected and needed by the participants in Internet marketing communication before they start to communicate in a virtual way. The question on privacy is certainly of great importance since the results of research (Balkin and Noveck 2006; Weber 2007; Bush et al. 2000) place privacy in third place within categories regarding ethical issues in Internet marketing. In Internet

marketing privacy and customer permission have become the cornerstones of customer trust, and trust has become the cornerstone to a continuing relationship (Kotler and Armstrong 2008). Therefore, schools must become the custodians of customers trust and protect the privacy of their customers.

The findings show that Internet marketing communication has disadvantages as well since it does not enable personal contact and physical evidence, which are needed to build trust. Therefore we suggest further research on the ways of compensation for personal contact and physical evidence with the intention of gaining trust in virtual world. Moreover, we suggest research on the views, attitudes and perceptions of students and their parents regarding Internet marketing communication. The knowledge of customers' behaviour within the process of Internet marketing communication is significant for analysing the efficiency and efficacy of marketing communication in general (Solomon 2002; Zaltman 2003).

References

- Allen, C. Kania, D.B. & Yaeckel, B. (2001). *One-to-one web marketing: build a relationship marketing strategy one customer at a time*, 2nd ed.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York.
- Angrosino, M. V. (2005). Recontextualizing observation: ethnography, pedagogy, and the prospects for a progressive political agenda. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd ed. Ed.: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Bakardjieva, M. (2003). Virtual togetherness: an everyday-life perspective. *Media, Culture & Society*, **25**(3): 291-313.
- Balkin, J. & Noveck, B. (2006). *The state of play: law, games, and virtual worlds (ex machina: law, technology, and society)*, NYU Press, New York.
- Barnes, C. (1993). *Practical marketing for schools*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
- Bush, V. et al. (2000). Ethics and marketing on the internet, *Journal of Business Ethics*, **3**(1): 237-248.
- Chaffey, D. et al. (2006). *Internet marketing: strategy, implementation, and practice*, 3th ed.: Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Cheung, M. (2008). 'Click here': the impact of new media on the encoding of messages in direct marketing, *Discourse Studies*, **(10)**2: 161-189.
- Christians, C. G. (2005). Ethics and politics in qualitative research, *Handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd ed. Ed.: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crovella, M. & Krishnamurthy, B. (2006). *Internet measurement: infrastructure, traffic and applications*, John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- Dreyfus, H. L. (2001). *On the internet*, Routledge, London.
- Drucker, P. F. (2001). *Managerski izzivi v 21. stoletju*, GV Založba, Ljubljana.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. & Lowe, A. (2005). *Raziskovanje v managementu*, Fakulteta za management Koper, Koper.
- Eggert, A. (2001). The role of communication in virtual teams, available on: <http://www.virtual-organization.net> (7.9.2006).
- Evans, I. G. (1995). *Marketing for schools*, Casell, London.
- Evans, M., Jamal, A. & Foxall, G. (2006). *Consumer behaviour*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, West Sussex.

- Haeckel, S. H. (2001). About the nature and future of interactive marketing. *Internet marketing: reading and online resources*. Ed.: Richardson, P., New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Hanson, W. (2006). *Internet marketing and e-commerce*, South Western College Publishing, Winfield.
- Hart, T., Greenfield, J. M. & Johnston, M. (2005). *Internet strategies: best practices for marketing, communications, and fundraising success*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New Jersey.
- Hofacker, C. F. (2001). *Internet marketing*, 3th ed.: John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- Internet World Stats. 2007. Usage and population statistics, available on: <http://www.internetworldstats.com> (31.12.2007).
- Jarvenpaa, S. L. & Leidner, D. E. (1999). Communication and trust in global virtual teams, available on: <http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol3/issue4/jarvenpaa.html> (22.5.2005).
- Kalyanam, K. & McIntyre, S. (2002). The e-marketing mix: a contribution of the e-tailing wars, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, (30)4: 487-499.
- Kenway, J. & Fitzclarence, L. (1998). Institutions with designs: consuming schools children age, *Journal of Education Policy*, 13 (6): 661-667.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2008). *Principles of marketing*, 12th ed.: Pearson Education, New Jersey.
- Kotler, P. & Keller, K. L. (2006). *Marketing management*, 12th ed.: Pearson Education, New Jersey.
- Kotler, P. & Fox, K. F. A. (1995). *Strategic marketing for educational Institutions*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: examples for discussion and analysis*, Jossey-Bass Publisher. San Francisco.
- Mofas (2004). Uvajanje novega načina financiranja in upravljanja šolstva. Portorož: Predstavniki pilotnih šol in MŠZŠ.
- Sheehan, K. B. (2001). An investigation of gender differences in on-line privacy concerns and resultant behaviour, *Internet marketing: reading and online resources*. Ed.: Richardson, P. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Skyrme, D. J. (1998). The realities of virtuality, identification-based trust, available on: <http://www.virtual-organization.net> (23.6. 2003).
- Snoj, B. 2007. Kakovost in zadovoljstvo kot posledici delovanja marketinške kulture. *Ko država šepeta: marketinška kultura v šoli*. Ed.: Trnavčević, A. et. al. Koper: Fakulteta za management Koper.
- Solomon, M. R. 2002. *Consumer behavior: buying, having, and being*, 5th ed.: Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd ed. Ed.: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Strauss, J., El-Ansary, Adel & Frost, R. (2005). *E-marketing*, 4th ed.: Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Strehovec, J. (2003). *Umetnost interneta: umetniško delo in besedilo v času medmrežja*, Študentska založba, Ljubljana.
- Svantesson, D. J. (2007). *Private international law and the internet*, Kluwer Law International, Aspen.
- Tankosić, A. (2005). Rezultati anketne raziskave, available from: <http://ucitelji.tscng.net/čalest/alesT/man/rezultati.htm> (4.7.2007).
- The National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (2007). Available on: <http://www.zrss.si/seminarji/seminarji.asp?izbira3=vsi%20strokovni%20delavci&sklop=splšno> (3.9.2007).
- Trnavčević, A. (2003). *Raziskovalne metodologije: gradiva za predavanja*, Fakulteta za management, Koper.
- Trnavčević, A. (2007). Marketizacija šolstva: mit in realnost. *Ko država šepeta: marketinška kultura v šoli*. Ed. Trnavčević, A. et. al. Koper: Fakulteta za management Koper.
- Trunk Širca, N. & Koren, A. (2003). E-poslovanje v izobraževanju. *Management in e-izživi: zbornik 3.strokovnega posveta Visoke šole za management v Kopru*, Fakulteta za management, Koper.
- Weber, L. (2007). *Marketing to the social web: how digital customer communities build your business*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York.
- Yin, R. K. (2005). *Introducing the world of education: a case study reader*, 2nd ed.: Sage Publications, Inc., London.
- Zaltman, G. (2003). *How customers think: essential insights into the mind of the market*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Zinkhan, G. M. (2005). The marketplace, emerging technology and marketing theory, *Marketing Theory*, (5)1: 105-115.

Aleš Tankosić is a Lecturer at the Nova Gorica Technical School Centre and a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Management Koper, University of Primorska, Slovenia. His research work focuses on marketing communication.

Anita Trnavčević is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Management Koper, University of Primorska, Slovenia. Her research work focuses on policy analyses in education, marketing in education and qualitative methodology.

Marketinško komuniciranje na internetu v šolstvu: študija primera

Internet je prisoten tudi v izobraževalnih organizacijah, saj šole internet uporabljajo med drugim kot komunikacijsko sredstvo med šolo in uporabniki. Ne glede na to, so v slovenskem prostoru raziskave s področja marketinške komunikacije na internetu na področju izobraževanja še zelo redke. Članek podaja teoretična izhodišča in ugotovitve kvalitativne študije primera izvedene na šolskem centru v Sloveniji. Podatki so bili zbrani s skupinskim intervjujem in analizo dokumentov. Ugotovitve kažejo, da učitelji Šolskega centra izpostavljajo slabost marketinške komunikacije na internetu, saj ta ne omogoča osebnih stikov in fizičnih dokazov. Učitelji, ki imajo pozitiven odnos do marketinške komunikacije na internetu, postavljajo v izhodišče virtualnost, znotraj katere iščejo 'rešitve' za čim učinkovitejšo simulacijo marketinške komunikacije v realnem svetu, medtem kot 'nasprotniki' marketinške komunikacije na internetu postavljajo v izhodišče fizični svet in opozarjajo na negativne strani virtualnosti.

Ključne besede: izobraževanje, marketing, internetni marketing, marketinška komunikacija na internetu