

The logo of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) is located in the top left corner. It features a shield with a blue top section containing the letters 'D·I·T' in white. The bottom section is light blue and contains a stylized geometric pattern of interlocking cubes. A circular border around the shield contains the text 'INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA ÁTHA CLIAITH' in Irish.

Contemporary Research in Irish Marketing

B Sc Marketing @DIT

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Introduction


The B Sc Marketing at the DIT School of Marketing has produced over 2,500 graduates in past three decades, many of whom are now at the forefront of marketing practice nationally and internationally. Often their first in-depth engagement with marketing research and practice comes with their final year dissertation task. The dissertation allows the students to define, shape and research a marketing issue in great depth, using leading-edge theory to formulate a research question. This question is examined 'out there' in the word of marketing industry practice and consumer reality through the use of appropriate research methods. Such an engagement with research defines and differentiates these graduates and the 'black book' ensures that graduates have demonstrated the core marketing competences needed at the highest level.

This first edition features fourteen varied, rich and insightful pieces of research by final year marketing students. Not surprisingly, online marketing, social media and viral marketing issues are at the forefront of topics for research. In addition, the contemporary issues of community features strongly, with the role of brand communities being a dominant thread as well as issues such as the boundaries of marketing, marketing communications and advertising. All demonstrate the variety, range and depth of research issues being tackled by students, taking leading theoretical ideas into the marketplace for first-hand evaluation.

As well as featuring contemporary marketing issues, the range of methods used to investigate these issues reflect advances in research techniques.

Students have provided a summary or abstract of his or her work in their own words. Their academic supervisor is also listed. If you are interested in any particular work you should contact myself or the staff member concerned. Details can be found on <http://www.dit.ie/marketing/staff/>

I hope you find the students' work stimulating and interesting.



Roger Sherlock,

Head of Department of Marketing Studies,

DIT College of Business,

School of Marketing.



Antecedents to Consumers' Purchase Behaviours and Attitudes Towards Cause-Related Marketing

Author: Barry McGuirk

Supervisor: Jennifer McDonnell

Abstract

There is evidence everywhere that consumers are becoming more and more ethically and socially conscious. Rising awareness among consumers has led to increased demand for ethical products. Producers have answered this call and the amount of social marketing and the number of products with ethical associations being put on the market has exploded over the last few years.

This dissertation aims to give an insight into one of most commonly used strategies for communicating a company's social responsibility, Cause-Related Marketing (CRM). The study sought to test a number of previously established hypotheses about what causes consumers' varied reactions to CRM.

Using secondary research of academic literature and industry publications, the most important of these antecedents to consumer behaviour were selected. They were tested using quantitative methods and significant results were found. The analysis discovered a number of statistically significant relationships between campaign variables and consumer behaviour.



Broadening the Boundaries of Marketing: Investigating the Role of Sales Personnel in Marketing Planning

Author: Sarah Browne

Supervisor: Laura Cuddihy

Abstract

The overall aim of this undergraduate research dissertation is to consider the relatively unexplored notion that sales personnel could possibly play a viable and extremely beneficial role in the marketing planning process.

An examination of the literature provides insight into what exactly marketing planning refers to, who is or should be involved in planning development and implementation and why effective implementation of marketing planning is crucial for achieving improved business performance, as there is a general consensus emerging from the literature that marketing planning does have a role to play in achieving business and corporate strategy. Having reviewed the literature it became clear that marketing planning is considered an important output of the marketing management process and will benefit any organisation that accepts this process into their organisation and allocates sufficient resources to its implementation.

The overwhelming opinion of academics is that marketing activities and planning should not operate in a vacuum but instead should consider input from varying and knowledgeable employees across the organisation (Ashill, Frederikson and Davies, 2003). Having reviewed the extensive literature in the area of marketing planning, it has become apparent that an organisations' sales force has a lot to offer the marketing planning process (Simkin, 2002). While this notion is often alluded to by academics, there is a lack of definitive research into sales involvement in marketing planning in the literature. Therefore the research question proposed is, to what extent do marketing management believe that sales personnel's involvement in marketing planning can positively influence this process?

Qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviewing was conducted with five senior marketing executives from various industries and organisation types. Qualitative research was chosen because an internal perspective was sought on sales personnels' involvement in marketing planning by those highly involved in this process (Mason, 2002). A purposive sampling technique was used as this type of sampling focuses on selecting "information rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002: 230). Rationale for all decisions made in the research methodology including research approach, research design and data collection and analysis techniques are put forward to strengthen the validity of the findings.

The findings indicate that sales personnel do in fact play an important role in marketing planning, from the perspective of marketing management. However the extent to which sales participate in this process varies and is threatened by the long-standing controversial relationship between the sales and marketing functions. The most unanticipated and interesting finding was the effect that the present unstable economic condition has had on numerous aspects of marketing planning, including the people involved in this process. Future research to further explore this new and evolving issue is highly recommended.



Consuming Sex: A Discourse Analysis of how Young Irish Men Consume Newspaper Coverage of Prostitution.

Author: Joe Fitzgerald

Supervisor: Brendan O'Rourke

Abstract

This study aims to gain an insight into how young men consume newspaper coverage of prostitution. Prior to commencing the primary research, a synopsis of the literature on sexuality and prostitution was carried out. The literature on these areas is vast, therefore, this study concentrated on literature concerned with sexual equality. To generate primary data, two focus groups were conducted in an informal setting, one of mixed gender and the other consisting exclusively of men. The mixed gender group was conducted to add a greater variety of discourse for analysis. During the focus groups, the participants were presented with five pieces of stimulus material. These discussed various topics surrounding prostitution, including abuse of a prostitute, the legal status of prostitution and the growth of prostitution in Ireland.

Discourse analysis was then used to analyse and interpret the men's responses. This analysis found four reoccurring themes within the data; distancing, moral dilemma, categorisation, and the role of newspapers. Men were at ease in using feminist discourse and demonstrating traditional feminine traits. They also demonstrated both egalitarianism and patriarchy towards prostitution. The conclusions of this study were directed at interest bodies; academia, public policy makers, prostitutes and prostitute unions. Areas for further research were also identified, with a concentration on 'the buyer' and the sex-worker being recommended.



Spreading the Virus though the Irish Market. How Irish Advertising Practitioners View the Current Status of Viral Marketing Activity in Ireland.

Author: Aoife Garvey

Supervisor: Joe McGrath

Abstract

Viral marketing is still a relatively new concept having only emerged in 1997. The author acknowledges the limited amount of literature available on the topic at present. To allow the reader a better understanding of this new form of media, examples of viral campaigns are discussed throughout this study. The author has also created a digital appendix, which illustrates many of the viral campaigns discussed throughout the literature review and data analysis chapters.

The author interviewed eight advertising practitioners from various agencies in Dublin to examine the current status of viral marketing in the Irish market. The author focused on particular themes such as the demise of the traditional forms of advertising, the current state of viral marketing in the Irish market, successful viral campaigns, viral marketing in the recession and the future of advertising in Ireland.

Among the findings, the author identified a divide in opinion in relation to viral marketing activity in Ireland. The author believes this divide stems from the different agency types, mainly with the opinions of traditional advertising agencies contrasting with the opinions of digital media agencies. The nature of the Irish client is also discussed in terms of their attitudes and behaviours towards viral marketing.

The author concludes this study by commenting on the current status of viral marketing in Ireland, both in relation to advertising agencies and their clients. Recommendations for future study are also outlined.



The Changing Face of Marketing Communications: An Evaluation of the Promise of Viral Marketing.

Author: Geraldine Hogan

Supervisor: Gerry Mortimer

Abstract

This study aims to explore the perceptions of those working in advertising agencies concerning the changing landscape of marketing communications and to evaluate the promise of viral marketing as a means by which to achieve message conveyance within today's dynamic environment. The proliferation of digital media is functioning as a catalyst in regard to the dynamics of the media landscape and is working to underscore the changing face of marketing communications. Within this there is an assertion that viral marketing represents a 'silver bullet' that can counter increasing fragmentation and accountability issues, whilst achieving effective message conveyance. The predominant aim of this research centres on identifying whether viral marketing has the potential to deliver on such expectations and become a mainstay medium with respect to the future of advertising

The primary data was collected through adopting a qualitative research orientation and more specifically, through the use of in-depth interviewing. Within this the interviews followed a semi-structured format. A non-probability sampling method was utilised with a total sample size of five agencies located within the greater Dublin area.

Overall the findings of the research highlight that viral marketing represents an increasingly important constituent of digital media. However the general consensus indicates that, in its current form, the medium lacks the ability to become a core medium and achieve the 'core status' reserved for some of the more traditional media vehicles such as TV or radio.

An obvious limitation of the current study is that it was beyond the scope of this piece of academic research to undertake expansive research to include both smaller agencies and agencies operating outside the Irish Market. Therefore future research into this area should incorporate the analysis of agencies based outside the Irish Market. Furthermore it must be noted that the researcher lacks extensive experience with regard to conducting in-depth interviews. However, the researcher did consult the relevant literature with a view to increasing her familiarity with the nuances of the technique.

This research may provide a greater understanding of the changing face of marketing communications. This research may also lead to future research within the area, focusing specifically on the client side of the industry as it was identified that there is a clear need to access the attitudes and perceptions of clients.



The Evolution of Social Media

Author: Gary Murray

Supervisor: Joe McGrath

Abstract

This dissertation seeks to explore an exciting new phenomenon known as electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). There have been many technological advances over the recent years and the Internet is by far the most impressionable. Amongst its many offerings, the Internet facilitates the communication between consumers. E-WOM involves consumers communicating with other consumers online, and educating one another on the marketplace. Its predecessor, word-of-mouth (WOM), has been proven to be by far the most influential information source thus far, suggesting that e-WOM may be equally as effective, if not more so. Although both forms of social media share many similarities, they are also quite unique in their own right. The most obvious distinction is the greater scale and scope provided by e-WOM.

This research is two fold. Firstly, it aims to explore e-WOM and discover the driving force(s) behind its predominance. And secondly, it aims to explore the impact of e-WOM on traditional WOM as an information source. A quantitative investigation was chosen to explore these areas. Despite the limited research on the concept of e-WOM, there is a significant amount of literature available from other relevant theoretical areas, which provide a more than adequate framework to warrant quantitative approach.

The objectives of this study are unique; some of the objectives have never been attempted whilst others have received modest attention in the literature. Not only are the findings from this study insightful, they should also prove very beneficial for practitioners in this modern era. Furthermore, the comprehensive insight into e-WOM provided by this study, represent a large contribution to the limited research on the topic. This study can act as a reference point for future studies into this new and exiting trend.



The use of Rhetorical Figures in Television Advertising and Consumer Meaning: An Exploratory Investigation

Author: Robert Dunne

Supervisor: Dr. Katrina Lawlor

Abstract

A review of the literature has not fully investigated the nature of various consumer meaning processes through the use of rhetorical figures. To that end the literature has to date investigated consumer responses to rhetorical figures in print media. As a result this research study is an exploratory investigation of the consumer responses generated from rhetorical figures in television advertising.

The theory of meaning is introduced as an alternative scope with which to view consumer responses to advertising. This represents a shift from the well-established paradigm of viewing the consumer as an information-centred individual. A number of meaning based models are presented and critiqued. Their contributions to the understanding of meaning which consumers generate in response to advertising are discussed in detail. Gaps in the various models offer the rationale for this particular research.

A time-honoured theory is introduced as a means of addressing the specific shortcomings in the meaning based models, the theory of Rhetoric. Discussion is provided based on the literature to date on consumer responses to rhetorical figures with regards to print advertising. This discussion leads to the areas of neglected study within the consumer research tradition and highlights the niche which this research explores.

An interpretive approach was taken in this research study as a result of the extant positivist inquiry that is present in the area of discussion. A taxonomy of rhetorical figures was used as the basis for the primary research.

Findings indicate that the taxonomy of rhetorical figures used in the research may be transposed from print media to television advertising. The reference points, pleasure and focus paid to ad elements by consumers in response to rhetorical figures and development of meaning are presented. Implications for practicing marketers are discussed and avenues for future research are introduced.



Sustainability in Business: A Case Study of Airtricity

Author: Aisling O'Sullivan

Supervisor: Gerry Mortimer

Abstract

As we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century, the repercussions of our previous unsustainable activities remain evident. Global economies are struggling to recover from the current financial crisis, polar ice caps continue to melt due to global warming and humanitarian crises engulf regions like Darfur and Somalia. Society as a whole needs to ask itself, 'how do we create a more sustainable global environment?'

Although leading academics and world leaders have failed to reach a consensus on the specificities of creating sustainability, most would agree that we must live in a way that meets present-day needs, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. In essence this means endeavouring to curb and manage western consumption whilst simultaneously raising the standard of living of the developing world without increasing its resource use and environmental impact.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher employs Elkington's (1997) 'Triple Bottom Line' definition of sustainability, which envelopes environmental quality, social equity and economic prosperity. By applying this three dimensional notion of sustainability to collected data, the researcher explores the embodiment of sustainability in the renewable division of a leading energy utility. This study investigates the theory of 'ethical economics' – in essence taking greater account of the social and environmental consequences of market behaviour.

Following the comprehensive review of sustainability literature, a number of research questions are extracted relating to the incorporation of sustainability into businesses. These research questions are then utilised in the creation of a data analysis structure, to achieve the overriding study objective. In the data analysis section, case study evidence is used to answer the research questions arising from the literature review, under Elkington's Triple Bottom Line criteria.

Research findings arising from this study indicate that Airtricity is successfully integrating sustainability activities into its core business strategies. The evidence presented indicates that sustainability in the organisation is understood and applied under all three dimensions of the triple bottom line; environmental, social and economic. Whilst the development of the company has been significantly altered as a result of its acquisition by the Scottish and Southern Energy group, a significant emphasis on sustainability remains evident.



Celebrity Misdemeanours – Do They Really have a Negative Impact on Consumers' Purchase Intention?

Author: David Moore

Supervisor: Jennifer McDonnell

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate whether a celebrity's negative behaviour can have an impact on consumers purchase intention. In order to examine all aspects of this problem a number of steps were carried out. Firstly a literature review was undertaken. This provided a solid body of work relating to the topic of celebrity endorsement. This allowed for the development of four sub-objectives that would facilitate in answering the overall research objective.

The four sub-objectives of this study were as follows:

To assess if consumers believe that celebrity endorsers can play an influencing role in their purchase intention

To establish whether consumers will rate living celebrities more appealing than posthumous ones

To identify whether consumers view self-inflicted harm by celebrities more favourable than actions that affect others

To establish if a celebrities negative behaviour impacts on a consumer's perception of them.

In order to obtain answers for each of these objectives primary research was carried out. This research consisted of administering questionnaires to a sample of one hundred respondents that were chosen carefully in accordance with Central Statistics Office figures from the 2006 census. This provided an accurate representation of the population of Ireland. Respondents were asked to answer questions relating to celebrities that had been subject to varying degrees of negative publicity. This data was then inputted into the computer program SPSS and analysed. The results provided some interesting findings. Overall It was established that a celebrity's negative behaviour only has a minimal impact on consumers purchase intention.



Reconceptualising Online Brand Community - a detailed Investigation into the Consumer-driven Ford Bronco Online Community – www.FullSizeBronco.com

Author: Emma Naylor

Supervisor: Roger Sherlock

Abstract

‘I think that the "brand loyalty" has very little to do why we are all here. We came together under a common umbrella [Bronco], but stay together as a family’ (parttimer, FullSizeBronco Community member, 15-05-2010)

The purpose of this research study is to introduce a new construct of online consumer community, namely a consumer product community. The author defines a product community as a specialised, non-geographically bound community that exists based on members’ appreciation of, and utilitarian involvement with, a specific product and is both reinforced and strengthened by members’ commitment to each other.

Having familiarised herself with extensive literature in the area of brand community, the author of this research study conducted a netnographic investigation of an online community called FullSizeBronco.com which revolves around the Ford Bronco automobile.

Based on both observation of and interaction with the FullSizeBronco community, the author’s findings suggest that there is evidence of another type of online consumer community in the virtual world, which is not accommodated by the three main constructs of community in the current literature.

The author is referring to this emergent type of community as an online, consumer-run product community. The defining characteristics of this community include information seeking behaviour, altruistic/empathetic behaviour, a hierarchical structure, a transformation of the self (in terms of members’ motivations for remaining committed to the community) and, most importantly, a sense of loyalty towards each others as a pseudo-family.



Are Subcultures of Consumption the Future of Marketing? An Investigation into the Irish Heavy Metal Subculture.

Author: Emma Tallon

Supervisor: Adrienne Czerwin-Abbot

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the Heavy Metal subculture in Ireland and how it interacts and reacts to marketing. Established studies regarding culture and various different subcultures of consumption are explored, and this forms the basis of the research. The industry review describes the history of Heavy Metal, and provides an overview of the music industry as well as documenting the effects of the Internet and downloading music. The review also examines the different Heavy Metal magazines used by this subculture.

The research methodology chapter presents the research objectives, the sample used and how the research was conducted. The methodology uses previous subcultural studies as a guideline, and takes an interpretivist approach to conducting research. Phenomenological interviewing methods were used, as well as participant observation at gigs to gain a deep understanding of the subculture.

The findings chapter detail the key findings from the research, and the emerging themes. The data shows that the Irish Heavy Metal subculture has social hierarchies, unique jargons, community and a linking value (affecting clothes, places to socialise and rituals), maintains boundaries and is only partially affected by levels of alienation and sensation seeking. The findings also reveal the subcultures reaction to marketing that it is aimed towards them and outsiders.



A study on the Exchange of Information in Online Mountain Biking Communities

Author: Kevin Power

Supervisor: Mary Lawlor

Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the effect of online communities in contributing to offline gatherings. Specifically, the downhill mountain biking community in Ireland has been chosen as a study sample. So far there has been little research on the effects online communities have in facilitating community interaction in an offline setting. Downhill mountain biking is a relatively niche sport in Ireland with fewer than 250 members actively participating in the community. The research for this dissertation consisted of a quantitative survey with a sample population of 100 mountain biking enthusiasts who were active in the community. The data collected in the research was analysed using the SPSS statistical software package, and a combination of frequency, cross-tabulation and Correspondence Analysis were employed.

Information exchange has been identified as a major contributor to online activity in many online communities. For a niche sport like mountain biking, participants are reliant on a network of weak-ties for dependable information. The mountain biking community in Ireland has been identified as particularly active in a virtual setting. This research therefore aims to identify the key motivators for influencing mountain biking enthusiasts to participate in online communities. Further it was found that online communities were identified as the most important information channel for promoting offline events, indicating that they can play a role in facilitating offline communication between members.



An Exploratory Study of Sales-Marketing Integration and it's impact on Marketing Strategy in the Irish Fashion Retail Industry

Author: Orla Keogh

Supervisor: Laura Cuddihy

Abstract

The overall aim of this undergraduate research dissertation is to examine the relatively unexplored notion that Sales-Marketing integration has a significant impact on the delivery and implementation of marketing strategy within an organization.

An assessment of the literature provides a detailed insight into what exactly Sales-Marketing integration and marketing strategy refers to, who is ultimately responsible for the delivery of an effective strategy and how collaboration between the two business functions, sales and marketing, paves the way for this. Having examined the literature, it became immediately clear that Sales-Marketing integration is essential in order to deliver and implement an effective marketing strategy where responsibility and accountability is equally shared among the two business functions. With organizations implementing their marketing strategies in a series of different styles, “research investigating the different styles of implementation is scarce” (Thorpe and Morgan, 2006: 660).

Academic thought focuses largely on the concept of Sales-Marketing integration in terms of improving business performance and organizational operations (Le Meunier- FitzHugh and Piercy, 2006). Having reviewed the wide-ranging literature surrounding the area of marketing strategy, it has become clearly evident that there is a significant link between the notion of Sales-Marketing integration and the delivery and implementation of marketing strategy within the organisation. Therefore the research question proposed is, To what extent does Sales-Marketing integration impact the implementation of marketing strategy within an organization operating in the Irish fashion retail industry?

Qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviewing was conducted with five key members of an organization operating in the Irish fashion retail industry who work between the Sales and Marketing functions of the business and are directly involved in the delivery and implementation of marketing strategy. Qualitative research was the selected research method, as an in-house perspective was necessary to gain a valuable insight into the internal operations of the organization from both a Sales and Marketing standpoint. Justification for all decisions made in the research methodology including research design research approach and data collection and analysis techniques are put forward to reinforce the authenticity of the findings.

The findings indicate that sales and marketing do in fact work collaboratively within the organisation, however this is not operationalised in the traditional sense. The most unanticipated and remarkable finding was that management are in fact the key developers of marketing strategy where their input into the formulation has immediate priority even though the marketing role examined takes a more senior role within the organization. Future research to further investigate this modern and evolving issue is highly recommended.



Permission Marketing: An Empirical Study on the Factors Influencing Consumers' Adoption of Mobile Phone Service.

Author: Tarik Velic

Supervisor: Mary Lawlor

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the key factors which consumers consider before giving permission to mobile network operators to provide them with mobile services. In particular the study examines the influence of message relevance, consumer interest, incentives and perceived risk on consumers' willingness to adopt mobile phone services. The study tests if there is a relationship between relevance of mobile service and consumer interest in the content of the service. The impact of incentives on consumer willingness to opt-in to the service is also considered. Finally the research also tests whether ease of opting out has an effect on consumer willingness to opt-in to a mobile service. This study also investigates how consumers perceive mobile services provided by their mobile network operator and examines the characteristics of mobile service subscribers.

Data is collected by means of a questionnaire administered to college students. The data gathered from the questionnaires is examined using principal component analysis, cluster analysis and crosstabs. Findings from the PCA analysis show relevance of service and incentives are the most significant forces which respondents consider before adopting a mobile phone service. The cluster analysis portrays that a relationship exists between relevance of the service and consumer interest in the content of service. This can be seen in the formation of the clusters as the respondent's hobbies matched their chosen mobile phone service. The crosstabs also confirm this finding with a large proportion of respondents ranking a service as "most relevant" based on their selected hobby.

Results from the PCA analysis also indicate that ease of opting out does not have an effect on consumer willingness to opt-in to a mobile service. Generally the variables "age" and "ever subscribed to a mobile phone service" had an impact on consumer perception of mobile services provided by MNOs. In terms of characteristics, most respondents preferred "playing sports", "watching movies" and "listening to music". This coincided with their rank of service by relevance with "sports updates", "mobile music" and "entertainment" services receiving the highest ranks.

As results indicate operators and companies collaborating with them should focus on providing consumers with mobile phone services that are consistent with their needs as well as offer an incentive for the consumer to subscribe to such a service. The incentive could be used to entice customers to try the service and making the service relevant to them would help retain those consumers.

