

Chapter 1

Integrated Marketing Communications and Their Application to the Open Education Field

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ABSTRACT

This section of the book is going to provide discussion on the utilisation of the knowledge economy in the information age has been promoted by various tools both for communication and marketing purposes. ICTs have proven their propensity to influence the flow, acquisition, and dissemination of information across the globe. The business and education sectors have been the most conspicuous of all beneficiaries of ICT applications, especially in the fast-globalising environment where interaction has become a necessity and an obligation rather than leisure. Enhanced tools for marketing and communication purposes have been coined whose efficacy and efficiency are unprecedented.

Among those communication and marketing tools that will inform the basis of this chapter will be the blog whose introduction into the ICT interface has livened communication and interaction among users. This chapter will therefore deliberate on the various marketing tools and their application to open education, with prevalence being on the blog tool.

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INTRODUCTION

As the pace of change of educational technology continues unabated, it is essential to reflect on those transferable principles of our practice that will be of benefit to others. The implications of e-learning are that learning and teaching have been moved to the desktop, where teaching and learning can take place in self-paced (asynchronous) formats or in virtual classes through the use of synchronous tools. As e-learning technologies have become more advanced, learning can be customised automatically based on an initial assessment of learner needs. Some experts also see the evolution of learning content toward shorter learning chunks. Technologies that enable threaded discussion groups, chat rooms, synchronous meeting tools, and other collaborative software are among technologies being adopted in e-learning settings. More advanced tools, such as knowledge databases that archive unstructured knowledge resources in ways that can quickly be searched through keyword, form the next step in developing e-learning. E-learning emerges from the current needs of the knowledge-based society. Basic requirements for knowledge-on-demand learning are presented: anyone, anytime, anywhere delivery of education and training, adapted to the specific requirements and preferences of each individual citizen within different e-learning setting <http://www.hkwebsym.org.hk/2003/panel2.htm> (Accesses 10 November 2008) (Wong, 2003 Online).

This section will discuss forms of communication tools as well as the impact of globalisation in an increasingly volatile and ubiquitous environment where spaces have opened up for interaction, irrespective of distance. The introduction and vital role that ICTs have played across the globe in attempting to connect different people and spaces have reached unprecedented levels and will be discussed in this section.

In the education sector, appropriate pedagogical approaches had to be coined in tandem with changing technological innovations as

demanding by the increasing demand for higher education opportunities and an influx of students have continuously sought to improve their skills. All these exerted much pressure on technology demands to deliver and to come up with more efficient methods and approaches to information dissemination and approaches that are not only user-friendly, but convenient for students, both full time and part-time students. This is where online distance education has stolen the limelight as the best option to reach out to students and to defeat the challenges poised on students who have work commitments or impeded by distance for the institution of learning. This is where technology has come in handy as without technology, no meaningful communication between students and their lecturers would be realised. This section will also deliberate on cutting-edge communication and marketing eTools such as blogs, chat-rooms, and discussion forums; as well as various social utilities (face-book and twitter) that help to promote the whole learning process as an integral part of communication.

Globalisation and ICTs

Co-existence between and among different people with different needs and desires has necessitated the need for interaction, especially in an environment where people have found themselves among different cultures and personalities. The need for efficient communication tools has also been necessitated by globalisation.

The process of globalisation has necessarily encouraged closer economic, political and social interaction. This in turn necessitated the activation of multiplicity of levels of analysis in the fields of economics, politics, society and culture. In most basic terms, the globalisation of the world economy is the integration of economies throughout the world through trade, financial flows, the exchange of technology and information, and the movement of people (IMF, 1997). Globalisation is characterised by the fact that distance and national

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