

Internationalization of Entrepreneurial Marketing Education: Three Nations Project

Dr. Andrea Reid and Prof. Audrey Gilmore, Ulster University Business School, Ulster University, Jordanstown Campus, Northern Ireland

Prof. Arthur Kolb and Prof. Katrin Stefan, University of Applied Sciences Kempten, Bavaria, Germany

Dr. Esa Jauhola, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Finland

Abstract

Entrepreneurial marketing has been defined as the "proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging and value creation" (Morris et al., 2002:5). Entrepreneurship education is defined as education that equips the student with an entrepreneurial mind set and skills set that will enable them to facilitate social change, to think and/or behave entrepreneurially as an everyday practice, and/or to transform ideas and knowledge into feasible opportunities including the creation of new ventures (Timmons and Spinelli, 2008; Rauch and Hulsink, 2015). This paper presents a pilot project on the internationalization of entrepreneurial marketing education through the development of a collaborative three nation's project undertaken by master's students studying Marketing, Global Business and International Business Management.

In order to exploit international partnerships Ulster University (UK), the University of Applied Sciences Kempten (Germany) and Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Finland) have developed a pilot project to test the capability of master's students (from all three countries) to work together on a virtual entrepreneurial marketing project. The aim of this project was to foster an entrepreneurial marketing mind-set within the student cohorts as they participated in enterprising learning activities. The objectives were to develop entrepreneurial capability and confidence through guided experience and practice, to increase entrepreneurial marketing

effectiveness through independent self-direction and to progress individual goals and approaches.

Rationale

Over the last decades, several studies of entrepreneurial marketing education provision have addressed skills requirements and actual or perceived educational deficiencies (Kyndt and Baert, 2015; Morris et al., 2015). In particular communication and digital skills, transferable skills, employability and entrepreneurship skill have been cited as being important for graduates to enter the employment market (Little and Marandi, 2003; Morris et al., 2015; Melhorn et al., 2015). There is a recognition that employment prospects for university graduates are changing and the long-term public sector employment is decreasing, and with an increase in outsourcing, many employees are expected to move to self-employment or work within small to medium size businesses. Additionally, the creation of new knowledge-based or social enterprises is seen as important in maintaining competitiveness in a globalizing world and to address social and environmental issues effectively (Melhorn et al., 2015). Therefore, 21st century graduates are expected not only to be job-seekers, but to be job-creators (Miclea 2004).

Pilot Project

The 'Three Nations' project was developed by academics from all three locations and the task students were given was to work on a business development project for the full academic year. The students were required to develop a new 'disruptive' business idea and present their 'pitch' to a panel of business angels from all three nations. This project tested both the entrepreneurial skills of the students by asking them to develop a new 'disruptive' idea and their marketing skills as they were required to develop marketing communication materials suitable for a start-up business within the chosen industry.

The lifecycle of the project began by giving the students intensive three day workshops in their own University to introduce them to business strategy and innovation, such as the Business Model Canvas. Following the three-day workshops the students met for two day face to face workshops with the international partners, half met in Finland and the other half met in the UK.

The aim of these two-day workshops was to allow students to get to know each other and explore the differences in culture and business practice. Additionally, the workshops allowed the students to use various business tools to brainstorm ideas and to eventually agree on an idea at the end of the two days.

The next stage of the project was to develop a project proposal in a virtual setting. Students worked virtually in their teams using Skype, Google Hang out, WhatsApp and other social media tools to communicate over a four-week period. As soon as the project proposals were agreed, the students began developing their ideas and conducting the necessary research to prove their concept. They were given ten weeks to undertake this task in the virtual environment.

All of the students then travelled to University of Applied Sciences Kempten, Bavaria, Germany to spend one week developing marketing communication tools suitable for a start-up business. At the end of this week the students will attend a pitch event called, 'The Lions Cave' to present their business idea and associated marketing communications to a panel of business angels from all three countries.

Summary

The findings from the pilot project will be analysed after the 'Lions Cave' event in spring 2018. The initial findings from the project are that the students are fully engaged in the project and are enjoying operating in a 'virtual' project. Some of the disruptive business ideas are very innovative with most revolving around technology solutions. This will provide an interesting and engaging discussion for the future of internationalization of the EM curriculum.

In the autumn 2018 new groups of Master students from the three universities will meet in Northern Ireland or in Germany to start the brainstorming in transnational teams. The 'Lions Cave' will then take place in Lapland in April 2019.

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