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**FIELD OF DOCTORAL STUDY: MARKETING**

**A RESEARCH CONCERNING THE MARKETING IN ONLINE  
ENVIRONMENT OF ADULTS EDUCATION SERVICES**

**-SUMMARY OF THE PHD THESIS-**

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## KEYWORDS

*internet marketing, services marketing, online marketing, online promotion, longlife learning, adult's education, adult'education services, online marketing metrics, online marketing efficiency*

## INTRODUCTION

*'The higher the level of regulation in the training service field is (health, environmental protection, law) the lower, less difficult and vice versa the opportunities of marketing usage will be.*

*(Vorzsak, Paina, Pop, Pop, & Szego, Marketing în terțiar, 2005:31)*

### **The motivation for the chosen subject**

The internationalization of trade and services, the global context of technology and above all, informational society created the possibility of changes in everyday life that we wouldn't have thought about years ago.

Today we are witnessing the emergence of new challenges, favouring some and disfavoursing others. New specialties and crafts appear, while others disappear. Also new branches and specializations appear as others disappear. The phenomena, in a world based on fast communications specialization and free movement take place quickly, due to the easy access to technology.

The problem consists in what way will those disadvantaged individuals by these changes adapt. Are they completely ruined? No. Because we should not base our whole life on what I've learned as I graduated from middle school, high school or college. Lifelong learning creates the opportunity of not being obliged doing the same thing the entire life even in a context where there is no longer need and demand for the work of certain categories of workers.

This paper is a plea about opportunities of certain active people categories, which can adapt as a safety measure or in response to changes, occurring in the environment that surrounds them and which are likely to affect them.

It is also a motivation of importance, in this context of a relatively new economic branch in the current positioning: Adult's education services which unlike initial education, constituted of

compulsory education plus any other chosen forms of education for a future career, embodies Life Long Learning, which every active person in adapting to the labour market may follow.

In Romania there is still much to be done in this regard, on the one hand because the population is not fully aware that once the changes take place, not everything is lost and that retraining and rehabilitation are actually the solution, and on the other hand the education service market, which is still at the beginning, offers an insufficient diversity of training programs, while these training providers should be true supplier benchmarking, of best practices, an example to be followed in the professions and specializations they offer the market.

Today, when we find ourselves in an economy based on services, we are flooded by information more than ever. The essential scope of providing the information that we need is acknowledging the internet. Unlike the previous years of the internet, when information was sought / found with major efforts, nowadays by simply typing a sentence, by clicking or by simply touching the screen, waves of the desired information are revealed.

All of these are possible due to the easy access of each individual to a free higher technology. Who would have thought that the successor of the classic telephony from 18 years ago, the mobile telephony with its appealing terminals, represent today a way for everyone and everybody to communicate? The telephony took 40 years to reach 50 million users, while the internet accomplished this in only 4 years, due to digital technology, that provides highly effective communication channels for businesses and for transactions between consumers and suppliers.

Today Marketing and marketers can no longer ignore, and if they do it's on their own behalf, the quasipresence of technology, that affects more and sometimes less pleasant our everyday life.

Marketing policies must be adapted to the new technological and informational context, that has evolved since the beginning of massive penetration of Internet and in the mobile area by terminals of processing power that tend to equal the one of personal computers.

Marketing and marketers must now be open and interconnect their efforts with those of colleagues in the field of information technology in order to create beneficial synergies for optimizing marketing policy implementation and to reward efforts in this regard by obtaining feedback in real-time, so necessary to establish future directions in implementing marketing strategy.

The role of computer scientists and software developers is steadily growing and marketing must look with greater openness than ever for their final products, software interfaces which interact with the customer whether corporate or individuals to serve and meet the principles of marketing whose place and role are undoubtedly widely accepted today

Marketing divested from the 70s in two spheres: products or services.

In the US, which is the country where most marketing concepts were crystallized, three out of four Americans on average are working in the service-providing firms (Beckwith, 2010, p. 17).

This paper proposes as novelty to discuss marketing of certain services with a higher level of intangibility as the adult's education services through the internet marketing.

So far there are works that bring important novelties on specific internet marketing concepts in a way that we consider insufficiently structured, but all are focused on online marketing and online products and less on services.

This paper aims to broach in a pragmatically matter online marketing services in general and with focus on adult's education services in particular by combining notions of great novelty at the time of its writing with some contributions on tools and their aggregation mode by marketers and managers in this area of activity.

This paper is mainly on marketing intended, although it was quite difficult to avoid an approach in the technical field.

### **The structure of the PhD thesis**

For the paper's economy we chose to keep an equal proportion of information regarding *adults education services* as an important economic activity in services, of *theoretical concepts in marketing services*, of *online marketing approach in adults education services*, in the context of current evolution in online environment, ending of course with a practical study on firms providing training services in Romania, that is intended to give a touch of originality to this work and to show the level of applicability vs. the application of the concepts presented.

In our study we insist on two major aspects: the direct influence of the financial- economic effects of the online marketing usage impact and secondly we want to highlight and measure the difference between the perceived utility and the effective level of implementation of online marketing by the firms searched.

In this way, we will be able to confer the required standards of a PhD thesis by providing and explaining conclusions through indicating their efficacy both managerial and academic.

This paper is designed as a set of tools for each manager/marketer of the adults' education service by helping them take the adequate marketing decisions.

This approach is a topical issue, that takes into account the changes that are happening on the market, the penetration of new technologies in close contact with the virtual environment, the

internet that tends to become a parallel world, undermining a series of classic activities of individuals, by replacing them partially, phenomena to which marketing and marketers cannot remain indifferent.

We also add that the website of the firm itself is an important channel of obtaining information that acts as a virtual window of a company. A website evolves from a collection of pages about products and services to a retail distribution channel, where clients purchase products and services and the company collects information about their interests and buying habits (Blejoiu & Căpățînă, 2006, p. 9). The website functions as the springboard of many internet marketing activities.

The issue of causal relations between the importance given to internet business, its effective usage and the positive impacts brought by this new approach is extremely complex, which is why we treated this subject in two distinct chapters.

The paper ends with a set of conclusions that lead to a bidirectional revealing of their implications, both on theory and managerial level.

We propose that through this brief introduction, without claiming to be comprehensive, being aware that any human endeavour is submissive to subjective limits but especially to targets generated by heterogeneous data sources, quality and their format must be brought to a scientific level to live up to a PhD work and not least, to introduce the reader into the atmosphere of specific issues in adult's education services provided via the Internet.

## **Chapter I. The concept of adult education service**

Until 2000, there wasn't any acknowledgement of the term professional training. With the emergence of this concept, confusions interpretations and controversies related to this issue began to rise. Until then each individual, who wanted to study, had the opportunity of learning in public institutions or they could appeal to the existing training companies on the market which were based on the empirical experience of trainers, former sales people who often shared former personal experiences and successful stories. However, some of these companies have appealed to the Ministry of Education and obtained authorizations on some categories of courses. This activity was carried out by private firms operating on the basis of a permit given by the Ministry of Education, but the purpose of such permits was just to offer credibility to training programs given by these private providers.

In 2000 appears O.G. 129 which establishes the basis of a new economic branch: private education services under state which chooses to decentralize professional education and self-

development by giving the opportunity to free market to develop and regulate itself in this regard. From now on it is the moment for the best to succeed.

It is imposed a differentiation between initial education and LLL (Lifelong learning).

Today we are witnessing profound economic and social changes, primarily because of the belonging to the European Union, which puts pressure on countries, particularly on new members to harmonize their legislation with the Community aquis.

Therefore, even education, under the aegis of this wave of reforms has undergone many transformations. This context of rapid achievement and the under pressure of reforms led in fact to many provisions to be taken over without too many changes of the European Union practice and beyond, in Romanian law.

### ***LLL vs permanent learning.***

Worldwide, LLL (Lifelong learning) is seen and interpreted differently. In the US, LLL is seen more as an alternative form, and as alternative means - learning based on educational brokerage, whereas in the U.E, LLL is associated to work, being an open, recurrent and continuous process.

The transition from initial training to adults' lifelong learning training is defined by the skill levels that are the most important stage in the formation and definition of a National Qualifications Framework through defining national qualifications levels which consist of a clear indication of the significance given by Romania to different acknowledged levels.

Active individuals learn by any means, even working, that way it comes after a period of activity to individuals to gain new skills, which are not acknowledged or to be required for new skills which they do not possess. Therefore we are not only discussing about ***formal education***, achieved in a ***proper learning institution*** or from a ***professional trainer provider***, but also about education achieved in an ***informal or non-formal*** way.

***The legal framework and entitled institutions.*** The number of normative acts in the field of education shows the effort of the Romanian state to accommodate to the needs in this area and harmonising the legislation to the existing European context. In 1999, by Law 132/1999 it was established the National Council for Adults Education Services, as tripartite body with an advisory role in policy making and strategies for adult education services, and has received since 2003, the responsibility of coordinating the process of authorisation of professional training providers, at national level. Furthermore, the Council for Occupational Standards and Assessment (COSA) was included in CNFPA. This took office to coordinate the work of development of occupational

standards, of authorising skills assessment centres and training providers and of achieving National Registry FPC Qualification quality assurance system. In June 2004 the transformation Memorandum of CNFPA was signed in the National Qualifications Authority (NCA) and in February 2005 the Tripartite Agreement regarding National Qualifications Framework Act no. 559 republished for amendments and supplementations of the law no. 132/1999 was closed.

The legislation in the field of LLL had as a purpose to carry on the educational system reform by implementing European principles concerning quality assurance, decentralization, social partnership and system transparency, institutional strengthening of the educational training system.

Since adult training in Romania is a relatively new field, we started an original attempt in this scientific approach, dedicated to this type of service, an own classification, which we desire as relevant possible, *depending on the weight the provision of adult training occupies in turnover / in all adults' education services, the source of income, the types of training programs offered, coverage forms of adult training* and as well as according to *organized training programs and their structure*.

**The European context** requires harmonization of legislation on adult education services to the European principles because the enlarged Europe has more than 75 million young people with ages between 15 and 25 and the investment in the young means richness of our societies today and tomorrow. (Ministry of Labour, 2007).

According to the study PIAAC (Program for International Assessment of Adult powers) the average rate of participation of adults in lifelong learning is 8.9%, although in seven Member States, it is 5% or less (including Romania).

CEDEFOP projections show that the share of EU jobs that require tertiary level qualifications from 29% in 2010 to 34% in 2020 will increase.

**Flexicurity** is a new concept to which social security no longer guarantees employment but ensures the possibility of finding a job by dynamic training - adaptation of workforce to new changes.

Concerning **the national context** of the Adult's Education Services in Romania, studies and reports from Europe and across the country show unequivocally that the changes that the Romanian economy endures are closely related to the European economy. This changes have generated important modifications in the reorganization of entire industries. This phenomenon has led to substantial changes in labor demand concerning specific skills and professions, that have emerged vs. others disappeared. Adults Education Services is currently conducting their activity on a law and

superficial market. The demand is dominated by the small individual consumer with low solvency, generally influenced by costs and not quality. (National Qualifications Authority, 2013)

**Chapter II** is dedicated to marketing concepts of training services in Romania through the online approach, specifically to their integration into the information society.

The Internet as a resource – in the philosophy of the whole paper- is considered a current opportunity to promote efficient service, fact that led in the current context to the study of the influence of environment on marketing policy and strategy of differentiation of supply in Adult's Education Services field.

Literature review is focused on interactivity in marketing services as reflected in the literature from the point of view of several authors and even schools/ current marketing schools: marketing Nordic School, American School of Marketing and indigenous approaches.

*basic level* – the lack of any contact after sale is a situation of companies providing services without a website

*reagent level* - encouraging the client's return to the company

*responsible level* - contacting the client after the sale, to find out his level of satisfaction

*proactive level* - regular contact of the customer to get suggestions - partnership level - permanent contact with the customer is successfully working through a website (G.Tocquer & M. Langlois)

*5 phases model*, "SICSA" – inveigles the customer, influences the customer, concludes the transaction (buy), assists the customer, anchors (ensures the customer's return, in view of his loyalty) (G.Tocquer & M. Langlois, Alain Jolibert)

"The mind in action", "Transactional Analysis is a theory of personality and a systematic psychotherapy in the interest of personal change and growth." (Eric Berne, 1961)

*Transactional marketing* – takes into account management and the client relationship dynamics, the stimulation of transactions and the efficiency of marketing activity overall, including through the internet as a virtual space. Initially, transactional analysis was seen as a theory of personality, but now it is also seen as a communication theory, with opportunities of analysing systems and organisations. Steve Marriott and Carolin Glackin (Marriott & Glackin, 2012) develop this theory in "CCEL" five stages pattern (awareness, search of information, assessment of alternatives, purchase decision, purchase assessment).

The guidelines on marketing information system with implications in creating business models in the services were often approached. It is hard to predict the future but the trend is obvious. Many more than now interconnected computers will work together to give us the information we require.

It will be “the age of ubiquity “when we shall be surrounded by million computers. (Google OMA, 2014) and the internet shall become omnipresent in people’s lives, that no one shall notice it anymore. Eric Schmidt –president Google, 2015.

The digital revolution (Sheehan, 2010) but especially in the post dot.com period (Kalyan & McIntyre, 2002) lead to treating the issue of modern marketing, in which many economies have changed their basis from product to services (Gay et al., 2009) by throwing a look on traditional marketing. The digital revolution and technology provide important opportunities for education by improving the quality of education and access in the educational field. The digital revolution is a prerequisite for effective learning and reducing restrictions to education, especially social boundaries. People can learn anywhere, anytime, following flexible and individualized pathways through the latest trends in the field of educational resources available to permanent access and in most cases free of charge. These are called "open educational resources" (OER; en. Open Educational Resources) that have produced fundamental changes in of traditional patterns of education by opening new means beyond the traditional ones. (European Commission, 2012)

By their very essence, adults’ education services are based on information from several perspectives: firstly it comes to information transferred from the supplier to the customer, and secondly the held information is a differentiating and highlighting factor of economic competitiveness.

Internet is "the first most challenging and significant emerging marketing tool that increases in the coming years" (Strauss & Frost, 1999, p. 3) for several reasons:

Due to the development of technical conception possibilities of websites provided by the transition phase from web 2.0 to web 3.0, we are able to consider suitable for Adults Education Services an eight level hierarchy of implication degree of a firm on the internet:

**Level L1** – having an internet connection.

**Level L2** – having an own website.

**Level L3** – the existence of a data base associated with the own website.

**Level L4** – the practice of online marketing.

**Level L5** – the regular use of traffic reports.

**Level L6** - the use of measurement indicators of the online marketing activity to formulate an own marketing strategy.

**Level L7** - managing an online marketing budget.

**Level L8** - tracking the rate of return of investment in online marketing.

**The marketing mix of services** has persisted for more than 40 years, as it was exposed by McCarthy in the 60'. Kotler approaches summarily the service marketing, without being able to draw a reasonable conclusion, therefore other new approaches are needed: (Beckwith, 2010, p. 132) shows four opportunities for Internet commerce in addition to purely technical ones, such as message encoding, its transmission, decoding and related services: communication and collaboration, networking applications, real-time multimedia and e-commerce.

Some authors identify the service marketing mix with marketing online (Neagu, 2012), having in mind the intangible features, that exemplify the services coming from McCarthy (1960), and Borden (1964), who have divided the marketing mix into the 4P to which they added the 3P to services.

Richard Gay (2009) introduces the theory of the 10C for internet marketers: Customer, Corporate Culture, Convenience, Competition, Communications, Consistency, Creative Content, Personalization Control and Coordination. Referring to the brand, firms, products image and their services from the consumer's perspective, (Beckwith, 2010, p. 137) shows the positioning against the competition, by establishing it on attributes, service consumer, competition, purpose (creating microsites to get the consumer acquainted with the service and product, by redirecting it elsewhere ) and price.

The literature is full with similar approaches on the mix of e-marketing (Chaffey & Smith, 2013, p. 53; Neagu, 2012, p. 81; Akroush 2011, p. 119; Chaffey, 2009, p.; Dominici, 2009, p 19; Kalyaman & McIntyre, 2002, p. 22; Schwede, 2006, p.13) out of which results the same mix of marketing services and which completes this idea of this current paper by explaining explicitly each component of the marketing mix on the internet.

The online marketing strategy of Adults Education Services, unlike the traditional marketing, provides accurate measurement tools with direct implications in determining the costs with display. In online marketing it is only charged what is actually seen by targeted users.

**Versatility** occurs often and easy because the switch from the virtual to the real environment is easily made, when business procedures require it. The spare time usage of users is huge, especially

by means of mobile marketing but also by means of traditional platforms such as desktop and laptop, where “traffic moves in the digital environment”. (Kovatchev, 2014)

The Internet operates mainly with visual information; in general about 90% of people are designed to visual thinking. (Jones, 2014)

*The ubiquity of information* can be considered both an advantage and a disadvantage; this phenomenon is present today on the Internet more than anywhere else, affecting us both cognitive and emotional. The images emphasise and affect our emotions and attitudes. (Levie & Lentz, 1982).

**The impact of information technology and the online environment - a new development opportunity**

**Web 0.0** – 1991 – read only (Fleerackers, 2011; Berners-Lee, 2011).

**Web 1.0** - 1990-2000 – static, of the shopping cart, notional (Sheehan, 2010) dot.com

**Web 2.0** - 1999 -” Internet content and participation” (Fleerackers, 2011)

**Web 3.0** – 2010 - Semantic Internet, smart internet (Fletcher, 1990)

**Web 4.0** – 2020 – will become mobile Internet "Web Mobile" (Berners-Lee, 2011)

I’ve studied different approaches of the marketing concept based on the internet as shown below:

*The new economy or the digital economy* (Neagu, 2012, p. 9) requires the use of electronic digital technologies as a means of communication and the usage of internet as communication platform as or as communication infrastructure.

**Web marketing** encloses three main subfields: newsletters, promotional emails and online banners (Blejoiu & Capatina, 2006, p. 7) a new business model: e-marketing, e-business, e-commerce (Neagu, 2012, p. 9).

*A parallel world* “Two side market” (Ellison, 2005)

*The internet: “The child of marketing”* (<http://crazywebshop.com/online-promotion-guidelines-in-internet.html>)

**Electronic marketing** – embodies all online activities or based on electronic, which facilitate the production of goods and services for satisfying the customers’ wishes and needs. (Prada & Negrut, 2002, p. 174)

**Digital marketing** – embodies the usage of all instruments, digital technologies which create market channels (mobile phones and smart, digital television, electronic commerce, mobile commerce) to achieve the firms goals through satisfying and exceeding the customer needs better than the competition (Marketing Institute, 2013). **Digital Marketing** - includes five areas: Positioning

SEO and SEM, Email Marketing, Mobile Marketing, E-commerce and S-commerce, Social Media Marketing. This approach was based on the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, in other words, the transition from static Web content to dynamic. (Marketing Institute, 2013) Internet marketing - E-marketing

*Internet marketing – E-marketing -Online Marketing* - due to the instantaneous feature (internet marketing) it embodies the achievement of marketing objectives through the application of digital technology (Chaffey, 2011) and includes website, promotional techniques, search engines, email marketing, affiliate marketing, interactive advertising. The concept of online marketing covers a narrower range of activities because digital media (web, email and wireless environments), and digital data management systems (CRM, eCRM) are the only one included.

The model of online communication or “new” is bidirectional to traditional media si it already accepted in literature(Chaffey et al., 2009; Gay et al., 2009; Sheehan, 2010).

*Defining the customer profile online* or "personas" as they are named (Chaffey, 2009) can be done by obtaining detailed information on these customers. Therefore marketers must find answers to the questions below, which entered in a database could lead to defining this detailed profile of the online buyer to design increasingly effective marketing campaigns.

The conclusion lies in a possible response model that could be *the motivation for choosing a training program:*

- To increase their adaptability to the job description / job
- To update their knowledge
- To professionally improve on their basic occupation/ related occupations
- To acquire advanced knowledge, modern methods and procedures
- To change in response to economic restructuring qualification
- In order to increase social mobility
- To promote workplace
- To develop their career
- To prevent the risk of unemployment

**Chapter III** relates to online promotion of adults’ education services, as the theme of this paper is to discuss the online approach of promotion in online environment through advertising. Particularly in we have dedicated in the content of this work only on issues that make a difference in the online environment between classical traditional and online methods namely:

- The used online channel (spot, layout, poster banner)
- Purpose of communication in the digital environment (information, positioning reminder, comparison)
- Targeted objectives: (commercial, corporate, social-humanitarian)
- the format of the advertising / promo message (life scenes , lifestyle messages, animated, fantasy, demonstrations, testimonials, benefits and differences messaging, dramatic messages, adventure type messages, message which refer to traditional culture)
- Type of the used message: rational, emotional
- The purpose of online communication with its advantages and disadvantages

The methods of online promotion are in a constant process of diversification both in terms of presentation but especially in terms of their administration in ways of becoming more efficient.

As we discuss about a new field, there are attempts of various authors to structure the concept of advertising through the Internet.

Strauss & Frost are the authors that tried by means of the Internet a division of internet advertising. They identified 4 major categories of advertising methods: promotion based on text, images and multimedia-based promotion, sponsored promotion and interlaced advertisement. (Strauss & Frost, 1999, p. 44)

Obviously, since then other ways of advertising format on the Internet have emerged, mainly due to the increase performance of this communication: I would add in the second category, video advertising, and rich media applications such as animated commercials.

The main techniques (Neagu, 2012) or online advertising methods are:

- Advertising
- Advertising sales promotion techniques
- Public relations techniques
- Online brand promotion techniques
- Virtual communities
- Search Engines
- email marketing
- Viral marketing
- Affiliate marketing

By merging methods and techniques towards the idea of traffic sources, we turn to a measurable component which brings net and direct value through the visitors brought to the site, that can then be included in the measurable online marketing strategy of the firm by specific measurements until the final stages of assessment of Conversion Visitors in loyal customers with major implications in the previous process of customer loyalty post purchase.

In conclusion, we opted for a personal distribution of online promotion based on text, images and videos and other media.

Online advertising, alike traditional advertising also needs to be planned carefully because its plan is more important than the one offline (Haig, 2001, p. 176).

If each step isn't carefully planned, there is a risk that our advertising will not reach its intended purpose and amounts of money will be spent for an uninterested public.

An increasingly common approach in the online environment is the 4 phases of web-marketing. This approach is still insufficiently grounded in theory only by few authors, but very much approved by practitioners, which particularly recommends it to small and medium enterprises, due to its simplicity. The 4 phases of web-marketing are now (mainlinemedia.com, 2015):

- **Attracting** - creating and driving traffic to website
- **Employment / engagement** - building a user-centered website that caters to the desires and needs of the audience
- **Conversion** - after prospects were gained on site and were drawn to get acquainted, they have to be convinced to act.
- **Multiplicity** - once customers are satisfied, the Internet is the easiest, cheapest and most effective way to encourage recovery and positive creative "word of mouth" advertisement by using the Internet as the most convenient and effective networking tool.

The question is set upon of how to achieve all of these. To assess and quantify concepts, effectiveness and efficiency and also ways of measuring online activity through indicators, generating data and reports to establish the rate of return on investment in promoting the online environment have been approached in:

#### **Chapter IV. Marketing measurements concerning online promoting of adults education services.**

Efficiency, in all the forms it embodies, represents the key elements of the internal environment, which are imposed to be investigated in an strategic online marketing analysis:

- **Business efficiency** shows how the online activity supports or contributes to the overall goal of the Business
- **The effectiveness of marketing** is characterized by the sales, retention and customer loyalty, market share online, enhancing brand and customer service in this way. Drucker sees effectiveness as doing the right thing, right. In business area, efficiency is perceived from the perspective of development, precisely in which way the performance leads to reaching the purposes of the organisation (Yuhui, 2010)
- **Online efficacy** - measured by indicators.
- **Resources analysis** - financial, infrastructure, human, organizational structure
- **Marketing performance** in view of several authors is a multidimensional process that includes three dimensions of effectiveness, efficiency and adaptability of the marketing activities of organizations concerning the intents on the market: income, sales and market share (Yuhui, 2010; Ambler & Kokkinaki, 2004);
- **Marketing Audit** is generically treated by quoted authors but is perfectly applicable even for online marketing
- **Marketing Measurements** - sometimes known as the metric of marketing

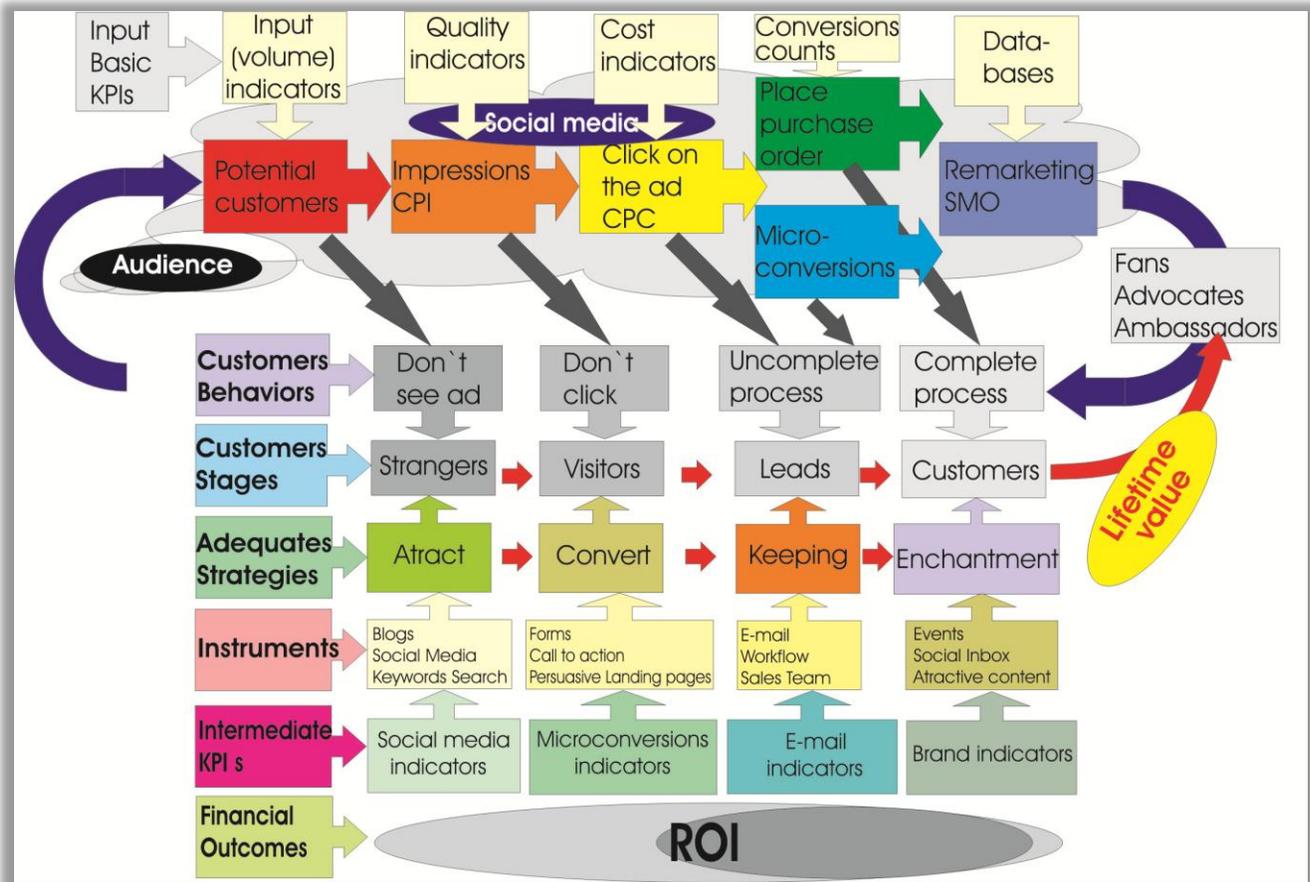
Marketing professionals are under constant and increasing pressure to justify the expenditures of the company in marketing (Yuhui, 2010). They are exposed to the risk of marketing losing confidence among managers and other stakeholders; this state of facts is a call to measuring marketing performance.

Before actually discussing indicators, we must first group them by forms of expression of the results they represent. (Farris et al., 2010, Clifton, 2012):

- **Counter (#)** expressing the absolute number of actual results detected
- **Monetary value (RON)** are indicators expressed in currency, money
- **Percentages, rates or proportions (%)** are used to show fractions and decimals
- **Average( $\bar{X}$ )** is the statistical average of a series of data
- **Scales (S)** reflect a qualitative judgment transposing scales or preferences in numerical form, are often present in case studies
- **Time (T)** is the number of time units chosen on during which it takes a studied phenomenon

- **Index**, this type of indicator is useful in comparing indices which according to the specialized authors can be often seen as percentages, although the fixing algorithm of indicators is more complex.

There are several references in the literature on indicators measuring economic activity in general and marketing in particular. One approach worth considering is that of the authors (Farris, Bend, Pfeifer & Reibstein, 2010) that we have developed as follows:



**Online marketing measurements. Multistage approach.**

Source: Own research starting from (Bendle et al., 2010, p. 295) model

Based on this approach we can study the indicators of the company's performance analysis on the internet, according to several angles such as: **traffic sources** from which the quantities to be measured or the measurable come, **the complexity and nature of these indicators**

**Basic indicators** - are based on the inputs, the gross primary data to be processed in different forms

**Intermediate metrics** are the measures of memory (awareness and usage satisfaction, and attitudes) (Ambler, Kokkinaki, & Puntoni, 2004).

***Financial outcomes:*** costs indicators, revenue indicators resulted in Marketing efficiency

If in the traditional marketing the lack of data was a problem, in online marketing the abundance data is a certainty and the problem lies in the condition of triggering big data, by not meaning anything else than a big quantity of data. Concerning this, already exists the model 4V: volume, variety, speed and reliability, (Reina, 2015)

The peculiarity of measuring online marketing activity in the digital environment. From targets to Key Performance Indicators.

***Preparing KPIs presume tagging everything, all activities and marketing actions so that they can be measured. (Clifton, 2012)***

Measuring process enforce to clean data for errors, data segmentation, define goals and a key results (Clifton, 2012) that need to be measured..

## **CHAPTER 5. Study on the opportunities of increasing the efficiency of online services to promote adult training**

The purpose of this scientific approach was to show the usefulness of the link between adult training services and online marketing by emphasizing the advantages of the use and effective implementation of the latter. We do not sustain the exclusion of the classic marketing from marketing online but the changes generated by the new form of marketing are quite obvious.

***The general objectives*** of this study were:

- characterization of "actors" who operate on market training for adults
- identify the types of companies providing adult training services
- main types of customers both in terms of their origin especially in terms of source of funds
- identify size service enterprises training adults
- assessing the dynamics of companies' revenues over the previous year (2013/2014 comparative approach);
- the evolution dynamics of competitors (2013/2014 comparative approach);
- the evolution dynamics of the number of customers (2013/2014 comparative approach);
- market average age of the FPCA service enterprises;
- identifying the origin share customers online vs offline
- comparisons between the desired and actual implementation of a marketing
- development expenditure dynamics on the firm's web presence perception involvement

- Internet customers to improve operational costs
- intentions regarding the evolution of budgets in online marketing
- the way firms manage their online presence
- a study on search engines predominantly used

### *Specific objectives*

- perception of assessing the number of clients coming from online including through the use of measurement tools and indicators specific to this type of activity;
- perception on expanding business online marketing directly related to the increase of financial results;
- perception of the business environment on the evolution of the number of customers as a result of using the Internet as a marketing tool;
- identify sources of traffic towards the company website and use of information in this regard;
- perception regarding the impact of online promotion on costs

To highlight the purpose of the study in a logical manner we have proposed a conceptual model based on the empirical categorization correlated intuitively with variables, proposed to study as they result from the literature review. We proceeded to a grouped analysis of online marketing processes, that firms can implement and lead, processes to which we assumed that have financial implication and also operational implication with influences in marketing's final decision.

These processes of marketing are to identify:

***Traffic Sources*** by its components, as they emerge from the literature review. It refers to the origin of site users on separate channels, facilitating analysis and usefulness of each source

***Optimization to the websites*** - the optimization elements that contribute to improving website traffic. It refers to external efforts to facilitate access of users to the website. As shown in the performed study, this work is outsourced to 47.9% of the studied companies, either to a specialized person (34.1%) or to specialized agencies (13.8%),

***Microconversions*** - through their component elements, meaning the summary of their actions, which a visitor brought by specific marketing methods, undertakes during his visit, which raise his interest, answer to his needs, forming his surfing experience on the firms site, as they were highlighted by various skilled authors in the literature Review. In fact, it creates the value that a website provides in the most effective way possible. As shown by their name, they do not lead

directly to proper conversions but remain necessary steps that lead to actual conversion, after completing the education stage of the customer.

In our study we focused mainly on establishing the importance of each component, from the financial and operational point of view, namely to the decision on online marketing policy of the studied firms both direct and indirect.

The final impacts in marketing decision are: of expansion, of maintaining or relocating budget allocations, and thus of ongoing in an expansionary, restrictive or of maintaining the firms' online marketing policy manner.

*The online questionnaire* was the tool that we used, which closely relates to the researched subject: online involvement of firms providing adult training services.

- We considered this online tool the most suitable – the company's staffs is one with an above average training education including the ability to use online tools.
- It is easy to manage but also to complete through email, by using a few clicks, with a filling period under 10 minutes
- The administration costs are low compared to other survey methods
- The online questionnaire has the advantage to overcome "spatial and temporal boundaries" by its large and national coverage (Grossek, 2004, p. 45)
- Data integrity. E-mail questionnaires "can be sent only to known addresses, and if the addressee is a group, a single sending is enough" (Grossek, 2004, p. 46).
- Although from the interviewer's point of view, questionnaires can be grouped in self-administrative and administrative by a interview operator, the online questionnaire retains the advantages of both administrative methods, eliminating any antipathy between the operator and the subject of the investigation that resulted with an unusually high rate of answers with "I don't know" (Chelcea, 2001), Still there is additional help through the administrative platform in comparison with the self-administrative method.

#### **Restrictions of online questionnaire usage**

- The online questionnaire is self-administrative, therefore additional explanations regarding the filling method were required
- The online questionnaire's administration cannot be controlled or supervised by any interviewer
- Due to the lack of interviewer, we registered rejections of filling the questionnaires

The methodology used to conduct the analysis of these issues was the central tendency of the studied sample analysis followed by Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and finally with Cluster Analysis (CA) (Chapter VI); Data processing was performed with IBM – SPSS utility.

As a result, by analysing the rounded components, starting with initial variables through the correlation of coefficients we obtained the main components (CP):

- **To the content of the website are associated (CP1):** online registration forms, optimization through interspersed links to other sites, e-mails sending engine, documents to download, the associated database (CRM), optimization by interleaved advertising to other sites, optimization through advertising on mobile devices, discussion forum, newsletter subscription box;
- **To traffic sources are associated (CP2):** social media traffic, search traffic from search engines (SEM), traffic from campaigns, traffic from paid promotional campaigns (PPC), direct traffic and traffic from referrals from other websites;
- **To the optimization of the website are associated (CP3 ):** SEO optimization, news about the latest services, site optimization through social-media advertising, site optimization through paid advertising, images, enriched media and contained video
- **To Ad Video/Blog site (CP 4)** are associated: site optimization through a personal blog, site optimization through video advertising and video presentations

**The final conclusions presented in CHAPTER VII are:**

- Among firms providing training services in Romania - there is a direct link between the usage of the Internet in business and improving financial results, by using the internet in the belief that it will lead to better financial results
- The main premise consists in increasing the number of customers online and not necessarily improve the position against the competition
- Last year in addition to the previous year, it was recorded an increase of the amount spent for online presence, sums which were earmarked in marketing budgets, that will increase in the future.
- Firms are able to do online marketing and effectively do this, mainly through personal blogs associated to the website, or with intense personal promotions, followed by SEO optimization and promotion by paying per click through search engines.

- The tools of the websites most often used for promoting and engaging consumers online are databases associated websites, documents to download, discussion forums, online registration forms and information via automated e-mail
- The most important tools for a significant connection with the customers are the e-mail and forms of collaboration with the possibility to be downloaded
- It were noticed strong links between the appreciation and the actual use of implication elements which a website has on the Internet, such as the usage of measurement indicators of online activity, databases associated websites, the usage of traffic reports, management of online marketing budgets and more
- Concerning the 3 groups with similar and homogeneous activities, obtained through cluster analysis, it is noticed a reverse correlation between the size and the focused activity of groups regarding the involvement on the Internet.
- Among the units that express a desire of online marketing expansion, 16,2% intend an increased growth whereas 50,5% intend a moderate growth.
- The studied units are weakly orientated to mobile marketing and its benefits
- There still is a massive orientation, derived of inertia, toward social media promotion, without awareness of the need to adapt to the mature stage that this promoting channel has reached. This is followed by SEO optimization and the content enriched on website.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Our challenge is to bring an important element of novelty and knowledge as we highlight the compatibilities of the following:

- The online marketing approach in services, as most of the works in this regard were orientated towards the online sale of goods, with the help of the conceptual model based on the analysis of central tendency, followed by the analysis of main components and the links between them, and the cluster analysis, in order to determine similar activities of the created homogeneous groups.
- The online approach of adults' education services, a category of services that addresses par excellence to public eager to learn, that is open to novelty, and that strives to self-improvement
- The need for legal regulation in terms of adult training, new forms of learning through the Internet and e-learning

- Customers' involvement in the act of marketing through the new technologies

### **Managerial Implications**

Orientated towards digital business it will lead to:

- *Certain changes in management approach*; it will be flattened against the traditional view of management.
- *Drawing people with visions and digital skills in marketing teams*
- *The consideration of clients' opinions is made in real time* through available databases, which also require a response reaction in real-time
- *The policy expansion tendency awareness of profile firm managers in marketing online (66, 6%), out of which 16,2 % with intensive expansion*

### **Restrictions and future research targets**

Concerning conceptual restrictions, it is required an additional motivation study of the component units of groups, constituted with the help of Cluster Analysis by measuring them more accurately, motivation of which understanding and study would cause a major impact in marketing policies of profile firms.

The practical restrictions of this study derive from the used processing technics, which have been imposed by the nature of variables and received messages. A weak spot of the current study, which may be improved in the future, is the online promoting measurement effects, processes which was left to the studied audience's appreciation by reason of ergonomics.

Future research directions should move towards developing a probabilistic model, intended to measure the effects produced by online promoting, with the possibility of assessing these effects on business processes and financial results.

As a result of our study, mobile marketing is insufficiently exploited and even acknowledged. Firms are still very much focused on social media, but now it has reached maturity, and requires appropriate structural approach within companies as discussed in this chapter.

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