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Marketing communications plan to support the launch of the MBA degree under the Federation University brand

Virtanen, Katriina

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**Marketing communications plan to support the launch of the MBA
degree under the Federation University brand**

Katriina Virtanen
Liiketalouden koulutusohjelma
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Katriina Virtanen

Markkinointiviestintäsuunnitelma Federation University brändille tukemaan MBA-tutkinnon lanseerausta

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli luoda markkinointiviestintäsuunnitelma australialaisen yliopiston, Federation Universityn Business Schoolin Master of Business Administration (MBA) -tutkinnolle. Opinnäytetyön toimeksianto tuli yliopiston Business Schoolista ja sen tarkoituksena oli keskittyä pääasiassa markkinointiviestintään. Markkinointiviestinnän suunnittelu keskittyi kahden yliopistokampuksen, Mt. Helenin sekä Gippslandin ympärille ja online-tutkintoon. Tarkoituksena oli laatia toteuttamiskelpoinen markkinointiviestintäsuunnitelma, joka lisäisi Federation Universityn MBA-tutkinnon sekä brändin tunnettuutta kuluttaja-asiakkaiden sekä yritys- ja kumppaniasiakkaiden keskuudessa.

Markkinointiviestintäsuunnitelmassa otettiin huomioon kuluttaja-asiakkaat (B2C), yritys- ja kumppaniasiakkaat (B2B) sekä online-tutkinnon asiakkaat (B2C). Opinnäytetyössä esitettiin sopivat markkinointiviestinnän menetöt molemmille asiakasryhmille.

Työn teoreettisen viitekehyksen tuli käsitellä laajasti markkinointia. Siinä syvennyttiin erityisesti markkinointiviestinnän keinoihin. Työssä käsiteltiin myös yleisesti ylemmän koulutuksen markkinointia ja tämänhetkisiä viestinnän trendejä, Federation Universityn nykytilannetta, toimintaympäristöä ja lopulta esitettiin markkinointiviestintäsuunnitelma. Opinnäytetyö päättyi aikataulutettuun toimintasuunnitelmaan B2C- ja B2B-asiakkaille.

Opinnäytetyötä kirjoitettaessa hyödynnettiin keskusteluja työn toimeksiantajan kanssa sekä häneltä saatuja julkaisemattomia yliopiston dokumentteja ja tilastoja. Benchmarking oli oleellinen tutkimusmenetelmä kilpailija-analyysin valmistelussa.

Asiasanat: markkinointiviestintäsuunnitelma, maisteritutkinto, MBA, Australia, Federation University

Katriina Virtanen

Marketing communications plan to support the launch of the MBA degree under the Federation University brand

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The purpose of this Bachelor's thesis was to create a marketing communications plan for the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree of The Business School of Federation University (Australia). The commission of the thesis came from the Business School. The marketing communications plan concentrated on the planning of the suitable communication methods. Marketing planning focused on two campuses, Mt Helen and Gippsland and also online-degree. The aim was to create a marketing communications plan that would be achievable, boost recognition of Federation University's MBA-degree and the brand and enhance demand within the consumer customers' and business customers.

In this marketing communications plan, attention was paid to the three customer points; typical consumer customers (B2C), partner and business customers (B2B) and online-degree customers (B2C). This thesis explored suitable marketing communication methods for both B2C and B2B segments.

The theoretical frame of reference describes the overall marketing but elaborates more on the defining the communication methods. The following chapters after the theoretical frame of reference in sequence are marketing of the higher education and its communication trends, description of Federation University's current situation and marketing environment and the marketing communication plan of Federation University. Thesis finished with the scheduled action plans for B2C and B2B.

The most valuable information sources during the writing process were discussions with the personal supervisor and the unpublished documents of business school. Benchmarking was one of the used research methods when making the competitor analysis.

Keywords: marketing communications plan, master's degree, MBA, Australia, Federation University

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1 Introduction

By accident or intent, the most successful businesses throughout history have always been those that were built around, and focused on, making their clients happy; and in such a way as to outperform their competitors. Every individual should understand the importance of a market orientation to organisations' success. (Elliott, Rundle-Thiele & Waller 2010, 3)

Generally, businesses have marketing plans with detailed tactical plans and budgets for some areas of marketing communications, for example an advertising plan. But unfortunately these tactical plans are never coordinated into a consistent communication plan for the whole business. (Smith, Berry & Pulford 1997, 10)

The major challenge in marketing is to transform a product or service idea into a successful business. Every idea needs a business and marketing plan to bring the idea to market. Service and product providers are constantly seeking for new tools to make their ideas and products commercially successful. These tools, together, can generally be called marketing. The entire marketing process begins with an understanding of the topical demand, which means the need to, for example possess services, goods and information combined with the ability to buy it. When organisations understand demand and they are willing to meet it, there will be supply, which can also be services, goods, information or ideas.

The most important objective of an organisations' marketing effort, is to make those needs and wants to their own incomes. By promoting their own services and goods for demand, the aim of the organisation is to influence customers buying behavior and, thus create demand. There are many ways to influence customers, but most often organisations use a strategy referred to as marketing communications to deliver messages that will increase awareness of offerings, promote demand and demonstrate the features and benefits for their services and goods. To achieve the greatest benefit, these communications need to be based on information about customers' learning and buying methods. Marketing communication has to be compelling and targeted to the potential customers the organisation is trying to reach (Bennett 2010, 2).

The purpose for this Bachelor's thesis was to create a marketing communications plan for the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree of Federation University and to boost Federation University's brand recognition. Federation University's Business School does not have a proper marketing plan for the MBA degree and currently the different marketing efforts in the organisation are fairly fragmented by reason of the recent amalgamation of the former University of Ballarat and the Gippsland Campus of Monash University. The Business School has a need for planned marketing communications. The Business School requested that this thesis

should concentrate particularly in the promotional and communications side of marketing. This consists of focusing on the promotion and sales, as well as defining the customer segments and marketing channels carefully. The Business School wanted help with acquiring new customers and building a stronger, more recognizable image for their degree.

The thesis concentrated on the planning of the marketing around the MBA degree for the Mt Helen and Gippsland campuses, business to business marketing for partners and potential partners of Business School and e-marketing for the new online MBA degree. There are two main objectives for this marketing communications plan: the first objective was to create a plan that would facilitate the operations of the commencement of MBA courses at the Gippsland campus, and the second objective was to improve the current lack of a marketing plan for the whole MBA degree.

2 Definition of marketing

Giving a simple definition for marketing has always been difficult because of its multifaceted and developing measures. Marketing is more than just selling or advertising, and it covers an extensive selection of different actions. Marketing planning includes all the decisions and activities required to create sales for a business (Brit 2013, 3).

The easiest definition for marketing is probably, that marketing is all those activities after the manufacturing phase which will promote and deliver the service or product to the customer. Bennett's (2010, 2) definition gives an interesting perspective: "marketing is the action, group of organisations and process for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large." In turn, Elliott, Rundle-Thiele and Waller (2010, 3) define marketing as: "The activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large." The next figure illustrates this definition.

Marketing



Illustration 1: Marketing defined (Elliot et al. 2010, 4.)

Marketing is a way of doing business that puts the market, customer, client, partner and society and competitors, at the middle of all business decisions. The whole process of marketing is cyclical in nature and includes understanding the market to create, communicate and deliver an offering for exchange. Marketers have to start by understanding the consumers' behaviour, the market and how they are currently situated. After achieving this understanding, the next task for marketers is to create solutions, communicating the offerings to the market and delivering it at the place and time that is convenient for the customers (Elliot et al. 2010, 31).

Marketing mix, which is called four P's model as well, include the ingredients that combine to capture and promote an organisations brand and services unique selling points. Clearly defining product (name, styling, quality etc.), price (pricing and its flexibility etc.), place (distribution channels, market coverage etc.) and promotion (advertising, publicity, promotional strategy etc.) must all be considered when developing a marketing strategy. Balancing these four elements is critical to marketers who are working hard to position a particular product or brand in the marketplace (Net MBA 2011).

2.1 Objectives of marketing

Marketing is a process that starts from customers' needs and wants (demand) and after understanding and identifying those demands some producer can fulfill those needs and wants (supply). That means both customers and organisations have their own objectives. Customers' objectives are to please their own needs; and organisations' goals are to supply a service or product that provides more value and will be beneficial to customers and provide employment for employees and profit to shareholders.

Gaining visibility for its product or services, and of course the company itself, is also one of the main objectives. Marketing communications will be created in a way that influences customers' minds and opinions and improves the organisations image. One of marketing goals is to build relationships with new customers and maintain them. Also, increasing sales and achieving a better position in the markets will be an important objective from an organisational perspective (Bennett 2010, 3).

Profit will be an objective of all business organisations. Organisations exist ultimately to generate wealth for the organisations' owners. Market share growth is linked with profit, but it should not be assumed these are one and the same thing. Successful business organisations are long-term entities and they operate with a view to sustainable operation. Consequently, organisations might be willing to sacrifice profit to establish a market share. This is common in situations where a business enters a new market: it has to undercut the prices of existing competitors to attract trial customers and win a market share. And once customer loyalty is established, it will gradually increase prices to ensure long-term profitability (Elliott et al. 2010, 501-504).

Customer retention is important for organisations to ensure profitability and achieve market share growth. A business cannot only seek to win new customers; it must also retain the loyalty of its already existing customers. To get new customers is usually difficult, so the aim should be to generate customer loyalty and encourage repeat business, once a customer has engaged with the business initially. This may happen by providing outstanding service, acting quickly on problems and undertaking customer relationship management (often abbreviated to CRM). Elliott et al. (2010, 502) defines CRM as follows: "the processes and practices put in place to identify, track and use customer information and preferences to provide superior customer service and sustain long-term relationships". In order to retain customers and make extra business from existing customers, customer relationship management may be a very valuable tool. But it is important to remember that this practice leads to much higher expectations from customers. When customers expect a business to know more about them but that business fails to know enough about these long-term customers, they will be in danger of los-

ing that customer. Societal objectives means objectives aimed at the good of society. This is linked to corporate social responsibility, which means corporations are obliged to act in the interest of society, for example protecting the natural environment. (Elliott et al. 2010, 501-504)

Elliott et al. (2010, 503-504) are using the SMART -model in considering the characteristics of effective marketing objectives. In the SMART -model, objectives have to be:

- *Specific*; objectives need to be defined clearly so that it is easy to understand what is to be achieved and what will be considered successful. Example of a specific objective is; increase brand awareness (measured by unaided recall) by 10 %. When the measure of the brand recall is stated, managers will know what needs to be achieved.
- *Measurable*; the measure must be stated and the objectives need to be able to be measured through some means.
- *Actionable*; the organisation has to ensure that its marketing managers have the authority and resources to take the actions necessary to achieve the objectives that are set.
- *Reasonable*; objectives have to be realistic.
- *Timetabled*; because marketing is an ongoing process that changes in response to the marketing environment, objectives should have milestone dates set, to ensure that progress can be measured.

2.2 Marketing planning process

A marketing plan is extremely important and should be the first functional plan prepared when structuring a business plan. The marketing plan provides the whole base of the entire operation. It will determine the type of business activities. Elliott et al. (2010, 57) gives the following definition for marketing planning: “an ongoing process that combines organisational objectives and situation analyses to formulate and maintain a marketing plan that moves the organisation from where it currently is to where it wants to be”. In this thesis, a marketing plan is created for the next three years. However, it is difficult to create a plan for longer periods, as there can be no real certainty about conditions beyond this time. Marketing planning needs flexibility because of the constantly changing and uncertain environment. These kinds of significant unexpected changes could be, for example; changes in demand outline, entry of new competitors, increases in the cost of business resources or sudden economic downturns (Brit 2013, 174).

There are a few base goals for marketing planning which evolve from the general organisational goals. Marketing is responsible for planning activities that will increase the value of the business through results, such as increasing sales and profits, improving quality and reducing

risk. Creating product or services that are unique and difficult to copy or reproduce has been shown to gain competitive advantage. When observing beyond the current product range and served markets, it is useful to ask a couple questions: What are we going to sell? What new customers could we approach? What new service capabilities could we develop or acquire? (Bennett 2010, 40.)

As illustrated in Illustration 2, the process of marketing planning is multi-staged. In the following chapters below, marketing planning process will be explained precisely.



Illustration 2: Marketing planning process (Bennett 2010, 40.)

Determine planning structure

The whole marketing planning process starts with determining a planning structure that includes planning approaches, time frames and participants. There are three basic planning methods to the process: top-down, bottom-up and the team approach. In top-down planning marketing, the senior executives create the plans. They are communicating with the rest of the staff to implement the plans. Companywide perspective and the ease of administrating the process are definitely advantages, but the disadvantage in this method might be the distance between senior executive and the product development and customer.

Bottom-up planning methods work in the opposite way. People, who are working at the operations and field level, do the marketing planning. After that, plans will be presented to senior

executives. The advantage of this method is that the people working in these field level positions in a company are often closer operations and actual customers. Sometimes these people also have a better feel for the current market. However, a lack of overall understanding of the company's operation may cause disadvantages.

Because in every department there are early and continual interactions like sales, marketing research, manufacturing and financing, the team approach method is often appropriate. The major advantage of team approach planning is the assurance that everyone associated with managing the business shares the same vision. But organising meetings is a difficult process. (Bennett 2010, 41)

Planning time frames and participants are also part of determining the planning structure. There are three basic time frames considered in planning: long-term, short-term and continuous, and usually most businesses are using a combination of these three. Different time frames and planning methods induce participants from different levels of experience and areas. (Bennett 2010, 41)

Define the customer need/target market

For business it is essential that customers' needs are defined clearly and succinctly. Using marketing research, a business will understand demand and buying behavior. Organisations should decide through marketing research and analysis of the core competencies, if the organisation wants to target a mass market or a niche market. Bennett (2010, 42) describes that mass market is the largest possible grouping of potential customers and niche market is only a subset of the mass market.

Define organisational offering

Businesses must define what services or goods they are going to offer to their customers. There are three steps to defining the organisational offering: defining the core competencies, matching the core competencies with the customer needs and defining the value proposition and differentiation benefits (Bennett 2010, 43).

Perform situation analysis

In this phase, organisations have to create an analysis or evaluation of the business itself and the business and social environment in which the company is operating. In general, this step is about an ongoing process. Internal variables naturally originate from inside the organisation and they are within the control of the organisation. Generally, internal variables consist of the current mission of the organisation, the current business capabilities and the current marketing mix. In turn, external variables affect the organisation from outside of its control

and include the competition, the economy, societal norms and culture, government regulation and the change of technology (Bennett 2010, 47-48).

Determine marketing strategies

The optimal strategy is the one that best supports the corporate objectives, has the highest probability of being successful and makes best use of the organisation's resources. This phase is very significant because it determines almost the entire operation of the business. In the strategic business plan, an organisation specifies its objectives, market conditions, expected financial performance results and targets, product plans, organisational structure, budgets, schedules and critical success factors (Bennett 2010, 48). This phase also includes positioning, which means the targeting of the product's attributes and demand, promotion toward a definable target segment that produces the best profits, and marketing mix strategies are both one of the core issues in determining marketing strategies (Bennett 2010, 48).

Implementation / Control of strategies

When the organisation has selected an optimum strategy for itself, the next phase is the control process, which is to assure successful implementation. In the control process, the core issues are establishing goals, responsibilities and activity schedules; delegating tasks and motivating personnel.

Feedback / Evaluate / Adjust strategies

When the marketing plan has been constructed, it is important to receive feedback indicating actual performance (Bennett 2010, 52).

2.3 Relevance of marketing communications in the organisation

Marketing is a rapidly changing field that has an enormous influence on the world. Effective marketing is vital for an organisations' success. Marketing communications is one of the important competitive advantages and a key function of any business operation. The general purpose of marketing is to generate profitable incomes for the organisation. In case of resource limitations, an organisation must choose customers to target with its business offers. By utilizing different marketing communications channels, an organisation determines what kind of picture it is going to give of itself. In other words, the aim of the marketing communications is to get more visibility to the organisation and its products, and insert profitability (Brit 2013, 2).

There are various marketing practices that have been linked to company performance. There has been a body of research that shows that companies using certain marketing practices

have better profits, sales volume, market share and return on investment when compared to their competitors. Organisations that undertake the following marketing practices have been found to perform better than organisations that do not:

- conduct formal marketing planning
- undertake comprehensive situation analysis
- adopt a proactive approach to the future
- conduct frequent market research studies
- set more aggressive marketing objectives
- offer superior products and services at comparable or higher prices than their competitors
- introduce new ways of doing business
- innovate
- use marketing intelligence gathering system to monitor changes in competitive and customer behaviour, technology and general trends (Elliott, Rundle-Thiele & Waller 2012, 26).

In a summary, marketing creates employment and wealth for the individuals and society as a whole, and an understanding of marketing will help business to make better decisions as to the relative value of products offered to consumers. Organisations with a decent marketing orientation have been found to perform better than other organisations (Elliott et al. 2010, 32).

2.4 Tactics and elements of marketing communication

Marketing communications is a generic term for all those competitive measures that an organisation exploits while informing its customers and interest group about its product and services. In other words, marketing communications are designed to deliver messages that increase awareness of offerings, promote demand and drive preference for the organisation's services and products. This means that an organisation's marketing communication includes that marketing mix which is the most optimal for them to achieve their marketing objectives. Organisations select marketing communications tactics based on their own objectives, which they are interested to achieve. Even though organisations may use several tactics to promote demand, the two primary marketing communication categories are personal selling and mass communications. Both of these elements can be used individually or mixed, as a part of either business to business, or business to consumer, marketing efforts. Personal selling involves direct personal selling, inside sales, telemarketing and retail sales, whereas mass communications includes advertising, promotional marketing, public relations and direct marketing. (Bennett 2010, 152-154)

The different ways in which marketing communication mixes are selected, will vary according to the type of marketing targeted. For example, in industrial marketing and business to business marketing, salesforce normally has the primary role and is possibly supported by exhibition and database direct communications. This means that advertising is only a small proportion of the business to business marketer's budget. Whereas with consumer markets, the situation is reverse. Advertising is taking the largest share of the communication budget, supported by sales promotions (Smith, Berry & Pulford 1997, 57). The primary criteria for selecting the right advertising media elements, includes the target audience, the contact price, the ability to deliver the message and 'eye-catching ability' and also achievement of good advertising space or advertising time (Elliott 2012, 315-318).

2.4.1 Personal sales

Personal selling is the use of personal communication with consumers to encourage them to buy services or products. This is the most expensive way of promotion because it requires the full commitment of salesperson or representative to customer. But the benefits of personal sales are significant because in the selling situation, the salesperson is able to tailor the promotion to the customers' needs (Elliott et al. 2012, 329). Personal selling works together with the other elements of promotion, but it is the only method that can respond immediately to customers concerns and thoughts. This method is most advantageous when customers need some specific supervision and instructions with unique and custom items (Bennett 2010, 155-157).

Salespeople play a very important role in some organisations and they may be known also as the public face of the business. When an organisation is managing the sales force, the sales manager, who has the major responsibility, needs to establish sales force objectives and targets, define the right size and location of the sales force, recruit good salespersons and additionally train, monitor and motivate these people (Elliott et al. 2012, 340).

Despite the fact, that personal selling is very relevant for an organisation's operation, the other elements of marketing communications are vital to the foundations of personal sales work. The idea that personal sales activities could be enough to take care of the entire marketing communications is definitely wrong. This means that personal sales are rarely enough by themselves for covering the whole marketing communication. Personal selling, like all the other elements of marketing communications, should be seen as a long-term process to create, maintain and strengthen the customer relationship. Sales is not just a single action, but rather, customer concentrated activities in the long term (Bennett 2010, 159-165).

2.4.2 Advertising and media

Bennett (2010, 180) defines advertising as: “the placement of announcements and persuasive messages in a time or space purchase in any of the mass media by business firms, nonprofit organisations, government agencies and individuals who seek to inform and/or persuade members of a particular target market or audience about their products, services, organisation or ideas”. In other words, advertising is the paid promotion of a business or brand of product, to the biggest possible audience; mass audience. It can include the typical mass media: television, newspaper, magazines and radio, or some other media such the internet, billboards, direct mail, email, SMS and even signs on busses, trucks and taxis. In addition, for example celebrities, political parties and charities are among an enormous range of non-business organisations and individuals that use advertising to promote their idea, product, message and themselves (Bennett 2010, 179; Elliott et al. 2012, 311).

The advantages of advertising compared to the other elements of marketing communication, are: it is possible to achieve a large target audience at the same time, the target audience might be geographically dispersed, contacting costs can be kept low (how much it cost to contact a one person), there are several advertising medias and it is possible to select the most suitable one for the target audience. Thus, during the planning it is not necessary to consider the suitability of a reference to a specific business area, but rather more, what is in each case the most effective way to implement advertising (Bennett 2010, 185-191).

2.4.3 Direct marketing

Direct marketing refers to those activities that are personalized sales, which are delivered directly to the consumer or customer, via telephone, mail or email. Used properly, direct marketing has a high success rate in that it offers a potentially useful product to a chosen target market that has earlier expressed a need for a product or service of this type. When direct marketing has been done incorrectly, its activities are better known as a junk mail, email spam or annoying telemarketing and it may harm the brand (Dann & Dann 2004, 283).

The capacity to deliver timely information to people who are interested and who have willingly requested to be contacted by the company is the strength of direct advertising. The weakness, is the high level of message burnout felt by customers, who have to constantly delete junk mail and misdirected targeted messages. However, successful direct advertising is always based on comprehensive and up-to-date customer data. Because the better organisation knows its customers, more personalized messages can be sent (Dann et al. 2004, 286).

2.4.4 Electronic marketing

Throughout history, technological changes have come along, which have fundamentally changed the way humans live, for example mobile telecommunication technology and internet present such a technological shift. Practically all business are online in some capacity, ranging from having a simple email address as a freelancer and conducting internet banking transactions through the multinational corporations. E-marketing allows consumers to interact deeply with the organisation without the need for dealing with an actual person. All the activities involved in planning and implementing marketing in the electronically environment are defined as electronic marketing. And just like all the other elements of marketing communications, e-marketing is just one part of a marketing plan, and it has to be coordinated with the overall plan (Elliott et al. 2012, 421).

The e-marketing environment involves the internet and the web, mobile phones and other information and telecommunication technologies. The internet and other technologies offer various opportunities for e-marketing, and these opportunities are only expected to increase in the future. Elliott et al. (2012, 421-422) have listed the following examples actions of e-marketing:

- the product sale via an e-commerce website
- the texting of potential customers about a new offer or sale
- an email sent to an existing customer asking them to click and link to participate in a survey for the opportunity to win a prize
- the use of magazine advertising to encourage consumers to subscribe to an SMS horoscope service
- the inclusion of discount vouchers on takeaway food websites that encourage people to visit the website, knowing they will be able to access a lower price as a result (Elliott et al. 2012, 421-422).

There are numerous specific methods used in electronic marketing. Two very common forms of online advertising are banner advertisements, advertisements that appear on websites and pop-up advertisements and advertisements that open in a new 'window'. Brochure sites usually present a product and contact details, but offer few other functionalities. Viral marketing is the use of social networks such as: YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, to spread a marketing message. Search engine optimization (SEO) means tailoring certain features of a website to try to achieve the best possible ranking in search results returned by a search engine. But there is also search engine marketing that means paid advertising that appears simultaneously with search results on a search engine page. Email, SMS and MMS marketing are all classic methods of e-marketing. Application software, or just casually 'apps', have coincided with the increased availability, affordability and consumer uptake of smartphones. Apps are either

entertainment-based or information-based and they are usually priced very cheaply or even free, with software developers hoping to achieve volume publicity or sales (Elliott et al. 2012, 430-436).

2.4.5 Public relations

Bennett (2010, 210) defines public relations as that form of communication management that seeks to make use of publicity and other non-paid forms of promotion and information to influence the feelings, opinions or beliefs about the organisation, its services or products or the value of that service or product, or about the activity of the organisation to buyers, prospective buyers or other stakeholders. A public relations is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its public; customers, employees, neighbors, shareholders, regulations, governments, competitors, the media and society in general (Bennett 2010, 210; Elliott et al. 2012, 339).

One of the most effective public relations outcomes is publicity, which means unpaid exposure in the media. Organisations may generate publicity by promoting something newsworthy to news media, via for example, a media release, which is a very suitable tool for this. Another approach is to organise a press conference, where media reporters are invited to attend a presentation involving speech, written materials, possible demonstrations and the opportunity for questions and photos (Elliott et al 2012, 322).

3 Marketing of higher education

Higher education marketing in Australia can require very different approaches to general or schools based marketing. Marketing of education is gaining momentum with the entry of private organisations, change in people's attitudes towards high education and the changing scope for the different course selections being offered. Prospective students will be looking for different experiences and outcomes and responding to different messages depending on their background, their situation, and their motivations and objectives. Nowadays quick technological changes and shrinking global boundaries have increased the significance of marketing for education services. The education service can be described as a high contact, consumer and people based service.

Understanding the higher education product offering and then to communicate this to potential students have become more important all the time. This can involve delivering information about higher education which matches a potential student's search, or it can involve alerting a prospective student to possibilities and options available which they have not considered previously.

By offering education with enhanced features like updated program and industry interaction, they can improve the quality of the product. With franchising and better infrastructure facilities and experienced instructors, marketers can meet customer expectations.

Technology has helped universities to offer better service to bigger range of customers. It has enabled instructors to deliver the service in less time and efforts and this is why online degrees are becoming more popular by time. It has enabled them to concentrate more on knowledge management rather than on preparation of teaching notes (Education Marketing 2014; ICMR 2012).

There are also trends in marketing communication styles. In London, the Future Index opened the UCAS Digital Marketing and Social Media Conference with a fast paced session highlighting 25 digital and social media trends that Higher Education marketers should know about. By using examples from both the education and wider consumer marketing arenas, conference were able to establish which 4 trends were demanding the most attention in the room which were following.

1. Co-creation

Co-creation is the big trend at the moment and its popularity reflects the power of sharing development with a customer base, in all aspects of marketing, from product design right through to promotional campaigns. Universities are co-creating digital and social marketing communications more and more. Right now, there is a big focus on working with students, often indirectly and informally to create videos to bring to life the real campus experience. For example Duke University collected over 1,000 videos and messages filmed by students in a day and edited the highlights into a inspiring clip called 'One Day at Duke.'

2. Telling stories

The video supports the individual stories available, including how one of the university's alumni has gone on to become one of the most influential people in world technology and currently working on solutions to computer illiteracy in the developing world.

3. Takeovers

One of the trendy terms is 'rotation curation' and this is definitely a trend that is booming in the Higher Education world. Lecture from George Mason University describes: 'We feel that one person can't capture the complete picture of our complex and fascinating community. With a new voice each week at @GeorgeMasonU, we hope to begin to understand the many layers of the university community. Everyone has a story to tell.' This project brings together staff and students in pushing out a university voice and brings the fresh ideas, enthusiasm and networks out of people.

4. Applications

As the numbers of devices increase and the platforms get better then expect applications (app) to trend for a lot longer yet. There will be more of a shift to targeted, interactive, creative, apps, where apps really work well, and a pull-back of web content led apps into simple mobile responsive websites (The Future Index 2013).

4 Case description

Federation University Australia (FedUni), formerly University of Ballarat is the result of collaboration between the old University of Ballarat and Monash University's Gippsland Campus. It is headquartered in the city of Ballarat, Victoria. FedUni offers leading Higher Education and TAFE (Technical and Further Education -institution) programs to regional Victoria and beyond. Now having campuses from Gippsland in the east, to Horsham in the west of the state, the scope and capacity of an expanded regional university is very wide. This is how FedUni maximised recruitment potential, regional reach and marketability. To provide a new and different university, the Federation University Australia federated a network of campuses in regional areas in Victoria. Even the name was selected to reflect the partnerships, collaboration and co-operation (Federation University 2014).

The objectives of Federation University are to develop a reputation, nationally and internationally, for delivering relevant, high-quality programs that meet the needs of employers and industry. FedUni has excellent employment forecasts and careers for its graduates. FedUni is regionally focused, national in scope and international still in reach.

This thesis will concern only the operations of the Business School of Federation University. Programs offered by the Business School range from certificate, all the way through to doctoral level. These programs will prepare students for different professional careers in the business industry, for example, management, commerce and IT. Already graduate students hold impressive positions in industry, government and education, in both Australia and overseas. The full range of business programs is available at the campuses at Mt Helen and Gippsland. The Business School also offers a selection of programs off campus, both within Australia and overseas through partner-providers (Federation University 2014.).

This marketing communications plan is made for the Business School to offer new ideas for its marketing operations around the MBA program. The current MBA degree-marketing plan scenario is shown in illustration 3 and explained on the chapter below.

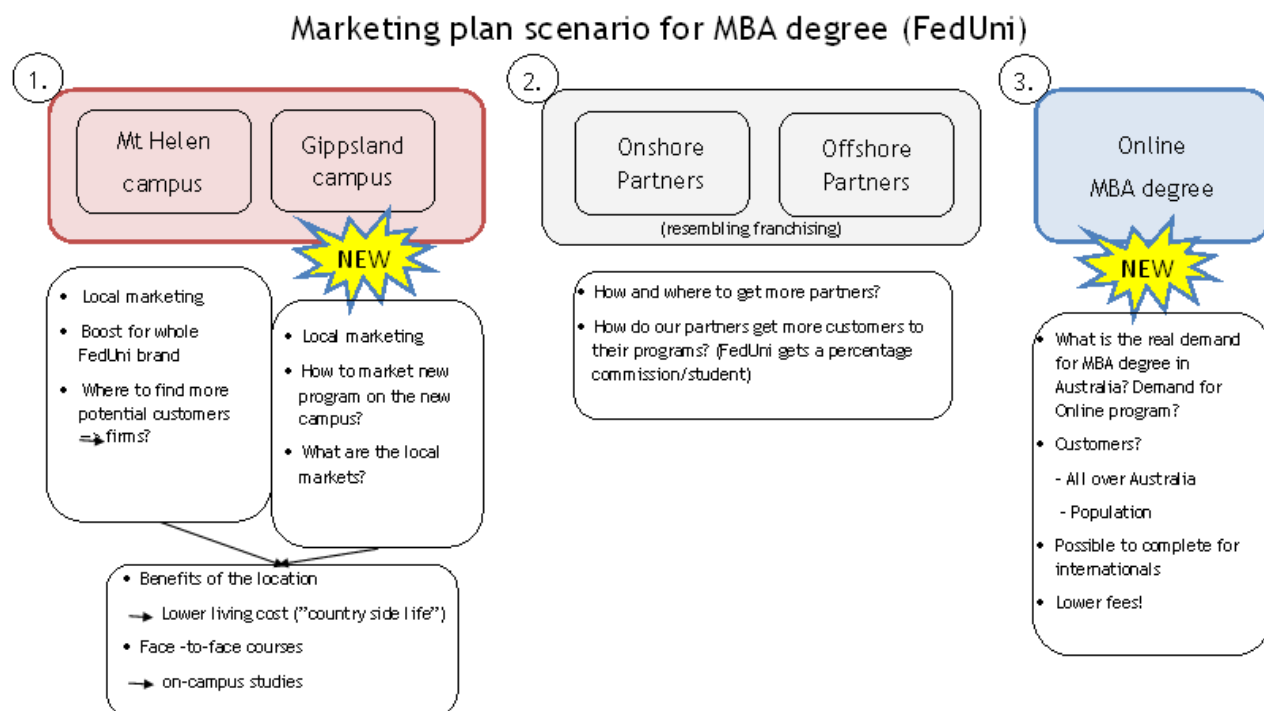


Illustration 3: Marketing plan scenario for MBA degree (Federation University)

The marketing situation is easier to separate in three channels. Each channel has different customers and needs for marketing. The first channel includes FedUni's two campuses, Mt Helen, where the MBA degree already exists, and the new Gippsland campus where the MBA degree is totally new and not yet running. Both of these campuses offers face-to-face teaching for full-time and part-time students. This means that local marketing around both the campuses will be the cornerstone, while marketing the MBA degree for customers around Ballarat or Gippsland area. But there will be differences in the marketing operations because Mt Helen campus is old, the original FedUni campus and there have been MBA programs running for years. The Gippsland campus has not had an MBA program running so far, and the campus is completely new for FedUni as it was previously under the Monash University brand. The new program, under a new brand, will need different, highlighted marketing.

The second channel includes all the partner institutions of the Business School, other institutions who are willing to buy the MBA degree program from FedUni and arrange the delivery from their own resources. This style may sound much like franchising. These partners may be located either onshore or offshore. Obviously, marketing for partners, business to business relationships, will be something different than normal consumer customers. But during the b-to-b marketing, it is important for FedUni to take into consideration their partners capabilities and opportunities of gaining more customers, which would benefit FedUni.

Finally, the last channel is concerned with FedUni's intentions to offer the MBA degree online to whoever, anyone who is able to full-fill the requirements, despite the location of the po-

tential customer. This means, that potential customers can be from all around Australia and overseas. Before starting an online program it would be necessary to find out what the real demand for the MBA degree is in Australia.

Either Business School or MBA degree do not have any previous marketing plan. All the information about current actions around the MBA degree are based on conversations with my supervisor and representative of Business School, Adam Baker. I have been able to see some of the unpublished documents and data of Business School. Based of that knowledge the Business School has had a few previously used marketing methods for the MBA degree. These have been interest meetings every six months (twice a year) for potential MBA students, advertising in Hobson's Handbook (University guide), some online advertisements through partner websites, just having a very basic webpage together with Federation University of course and having some printed brochures available at the Business School office.

4.1 MBA degree of Federation University: product and price

Commonly, the MBA is the globally recognized graduate management program. It is created to provide specialist professionals with diverse perspectives which are imperative to succeed in a general management role. The MBA extends the theoretical framework graduates learn in their former undergraduate studies, and covers all that with a core curriculum of strategy, finance, marketing and organisational behavior. The MBA program is intended for people who have an undergraduate degree and/ or extensive working experience within an organization (Federation University Australia 2014).

The MBA degree program at Federation University is designed for:

- Managers or aspiring managers who might have a degree already but who need to broaden their management skills.
- Established middle managers who do not have an undergraduate degree but who still seek an applied management qualification.
- Tomorrow's entrepreneurs and leaders in the private and public sector (Federation University Australia 2014).

The curriculum of the Ballarat MBA program is delivered in a context of ethical behavior, organisation social responsibility and sustainability, as detailed in the United Nations PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) initiative. The Business School is a committed signatory to this UN global initiative. Students will learn theory with practice by working individually and in the groups through a process of analysis, discussion, reflection and action, preparing themselves with the skills and knowledge. After graduation they will be able

to undertake senior general management roles confidentially both in Australia and abroad (Federation University Australia 2014).

Federation University's MBA program's outline states: *"The Master of Business Administration (MBA) is a generalist degree intended for those with some practical experience who now wish to widen their managerial knowledge and skills. The Master of Business Administration has been designed to enable you to deal with the many facets of management. The program aims to develop skills in critical thinking, research and analysis through individual and team based work. A feature of the MBA is that it focuses on critical areas of integration but facilitates some specialisation to accommodate specific career paths."* (Program Finder 2014).

There are also different ways to complete the MBA degree. The common way is do it by face-to-face learning on the campus and this involves normal lectures and tutorials. The program can be taken full-time or part-time, depending on students' working situation. Those students who already have a full-time job might find it very challenging to organise time for both work and studies, so, in these cases, part-time studies may be more suitable for them. But there is another way too. For those Australians, or Internationals who are living in Australia, but don't have ready access to the physical institution, and also for those potential students who are living overseas, an online MBA degree could be the best option. Many of the universities offer an MBA degree via an online program. This allows students to study via their home computers. An additional benefit of an online MBA degree: most of these online MBA degrees cost far less than traditional institution fees. This adds to the benefits of the flexible hours and ease of use of this program (Australian Institute of Business 2013).

MBA degree fees vary greatly in Victoria. When customers are choosing an institution to take their MBA program, price consideration will be one of the crucial factors. There are institutions which charge per semester, courses or total degree. For example an MBA degree in University of Melbourne, which is Australia's number one university and ranked 43rd in World Ranking, costs AU\$75 000 in total. Federation University's MBA fees are just AU\$23 850 total. The location of the university, the university's reputation, the duration of the course and the structure, all affect degree fees.

4.2 Demand of MBA degree in Australia

According to a new survey of more than 4000 employers globally, Australia tops the world in salaries paid to MBA graduates with employers paying an average of AU\$120 229. By comparison, master of business administration graduates in the US earn AU\$105 840, Germany AU\$100 890, Japan AU\$79982 and China AU\$72 679. The QS TopMBA.com Jobs and -Salary Trends Report for 2013-2014 said that the high salaries reported by Australian business schools are part-

ly a function of the strengthening Australian dollar. International education is Australia's largest service export. "But even adjusting for this effect reveals an increase in MBA salaries in Australia, driven by the strong demand for MBAs among multinational employers across Asia, and the strength of Australian business schools in recruiting and placing Asian candidates throughout the region," the report said. (Financial Review 2013; Australia Universities 2014; QS TopMBA.com Jobs & Salary Trends Report 2013).

In the Asia-Pacific region, in which Australia is included, TopMBA.com report found strong demand for MBA graduates, where MBA hiring rose by 20 per cent in the past year and was the main factor driving world growth of 14 per cent in MBA-hiring. The Asia-Pacific region was ahead of the Middle East, Latin America, and also Central Europe. Employers all around the world predicted higher growth in the number of MBA graduates they hire in the coming year. Employers in the Asia-Pacific region are the most optimistic, forecasting a 38 per cent rise in MBA hiring (Financial Review 2013; QS TopMBA.com Jobs & Salary Trends Report 2013).

Australian universities are very international; Melbourne Business School alone, welcomes 30 different nationalities. Students are advised to find a certain aspect of business and to specialise in it. Also 'global readiness' is considered to be an important skill, so MBA degree students need to focus on worldwide business affairs. However, Australian schools offering MBA degree programs already focus on global matters better than the universities of any other nation. The top colleges in Australia are seeing a dramatic increase in demand for MBA degree programs. This is because students are perhaps looking to take a break from employment to invest in education for the improvement of their future (Australian Institute of Business 2013).

4.3 Marketing environment: availability

The marketing environment includes all of the external and internal forces that affect a market's ability to communicate, create, deliver and exchange offerings of value. It deals with the market situation and the competitive situation of the industry. All changes in the future will affect the organisation operations; sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. When the organisation stays aware of the market situation, it can easier prepare itself for the possible changes in demand and supply.

The forces within the marketing environment can be divided in three sections: the internal environment, the micro-environment and the macro-environment. The internal environment is directly controllable by the organisation and it refers all parts of the company, the people and its processes. The micro-environment are the forces playing inside the industry in which the marketers are operating, these are for example clients, customers, partners and competi-

tors. The macro-environment comprises the large-scale societal forces that influence all industries. These includes political forces, economical forces, technological forces, sociocultural forces and legal forces, and that is the reason why the macro-environmental framework has been called the PESTL (political, economic, sociocultural, technological, legal) framework. Both micro-environmental and macro-environmental forces cannot be directly controlled by the organisation because they are outside the organisation (Elliott et al. 2010, 40).

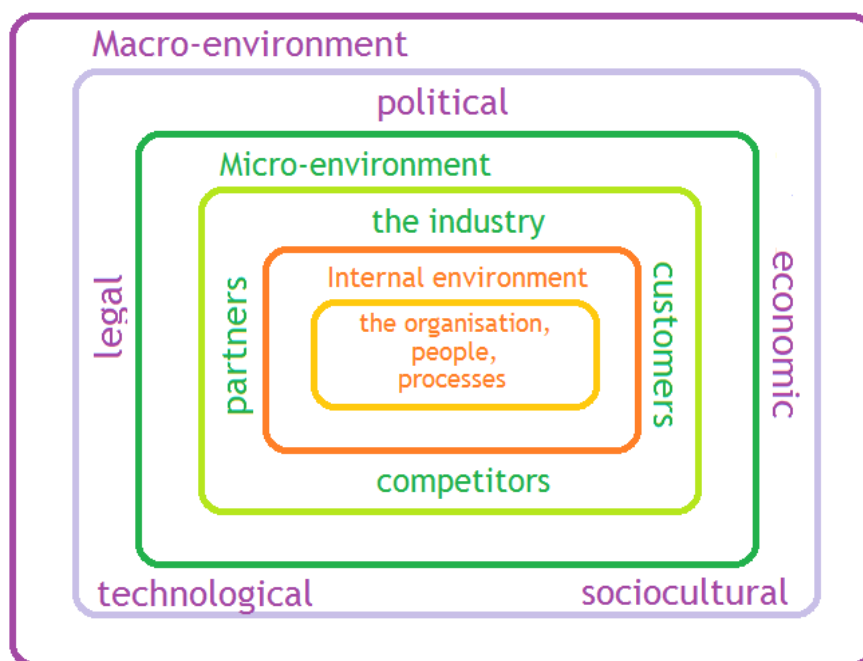


Illustration 4: Marketing Environment (Elliott et al. 2010, 41)

The MBA program of Federation University is delivered in global locations by partners of Federation University. It is delivered in over ten locations in Australia and the Asia Pacific region, which include Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Sri Lanka, plus of course, in Melbourne and Sydney. Because of this, the operating environment is very wide. In every location, FedUni promises to keep their quality high by selecting staff carefully, offering exciting and diverse programs and a genuine sense of interaction, leadership and involvement. MBA programs can be offered in many flexible study modes and are also available to a range of organisation client groups. Recent examples of these companies are IBM, Dell Computer, Ericsson Telecommunications and Mars Confectionarysp. The Business School's strategy is to concentrate on quality, rather than on big volume or size, and the motto is "thinking global but acting local" (Federation University Australia 2014).

This thesis focuses primarily on local marketing planning for Mt Helen and Gippsland campuses, marketing for partners and online degree marketing. Considering campus MBA marketing, the marketing environment consists mainly of regional Victoria, in the western and eastern

sides of urban capital. The universities in the Victorian sector are mainly focused around the City of Melbourne, but there is also a representation of universities in the regional cities and Federation University is one of them. Just like FedUni, some of the universities have multiple campuses and they offer more possibilities for their students to choose where the studies can be done. Both Mt Helen and Gippsland campuses are located close to Melbourne and therefore compete with universities near to the city. In Victoria, there are 10 universities and only 9 of these universities offers MBA degree programs (Australian Universities 2014).

The marketing environment around online degree and partner institutions is harder to define. Online degrees will be offered to customers, regardless of location, which means a worldwide environment. Partner institutions can be located anywhere in Australia or overseas. In particular institutions from Asian countries have been interested in Australian provided education.

4.3.1 Competitor analysis

To achieve a successful business, marketers need to make sure their offerings provide their target market with better value than their competitors are offering. Marketers need to think broadly because there are many different levels of competition. Total budget competition is the result of customers' limited financial resources, and generic competition is a consequence of selection of alternative ways to meet their product needs. Product competition arises when products are broadly similar, but have different benefits, and brand competition is the result of products that are very similar with the same price, benefits and features to the same target market (Elliott et al. 2010, 50).

The Master of Business Administration degree is a globally recognized graduate management program and various universities around the world offer this degree. There are 39 universities in Australia and 10 of them are located in the state of Victoria (Universities Australia 2014). Nine of these Victorian universities offer MBA degree programs. That means the educational market is very competitive. But there is a lot of variation in the university range and the most significant differences between universities offerings, consist of program fees, location, quality and course duration and structure.

A selection of the primary target market competitors is found in following table 1.

UNIVERSITY	Fees for MBA program	Course duration	Notes
Australian Catholic University	\$22,040 (annual)	1,5y full-time or equivalent part-time	
Charles Sturt University	\$21,632 (annual/on campus)	1y full-time	Available by distance education or on campus through CSU's Study Centres located in Sydney and Melbourne
Deakin University	\$22,970 (annual)	1,5y full-time or equivalent part-time	
Federation University	\$23,850 (total)	1,5y full-time or equivalent part-time	
La Trobe University	-	-	Do not offer MBA degree
Monash University	\$60,000 (total)	2y full-time	
RMIT University	\$10,085 (annual)	1,5y full-time or 3y part-time	
Swinburne University of Technology	\$24,240 (annual)	1,5y full-time	
University of Melbourne	\$75,000 (total)	1y full-time	Australian no 1. university, no 43. in World ranking
Victoria University	\$35,310 (total)	1,5y full-time	

Table 1: Competitors - Universities in Victoria

After analyzing the competitors, an organisation needs to decide what competitive advantages they will use in their business offer. Competitive advantage can be any part of the total business offer that gives it an edge over its competitors. Sometimes it is easier to determine your own competitive advantage after observing competitors offers (Brit 2013, 167). All the MBA degrees around the world have similar frames for their program structure. Core courses have to include courses from accounting, marketing, business economics, organisational operations, HRM, competitive analysis and business society. After the base courses, there are elective courses that students can choose according to their own interest. Universities are able to affect the program structure via study tours, internship possibilities and content of elective courses. Universities are responsible to select the most suitable professors for lectures to keep their quality high for the brand.

The MBA degree at Federation University has several competitive advantages:

- FedUni offers a high quality MBA program for a lower price.
- Provides study locations out of Melbourne, surrounded by a peaceful environment and lower living costs.
- Offers the possibility to combine work and study.
- Provides programs to corporate client groups.
- Provides an MBA degree via partner institutions in various locations.

- A smaller university can provide a more personalized study environment.

The competitive advantages will be beneficial only if they are based on the organisations strengths, valued by its target market or sustainable for a reasonable period (Brit 2013, 168).

The competitor environment for the online MBA program would be worldwide, because taking an online MBA degree would not define the location of student. This means that all the universities, especially within Australia but also in Asia, America and Europe can be counted as competitors. Program fees, materials, length of program and the language in which the degree will be taken would become advantages to be distinguished from the competitors in the MBA online degree markets.

4.3.2 Customers

The typical MBA degree student is between 25 and 34 years of age. This age range offers the optimum combination of suggested work experience and remaining career opportunities. Recently undergraduates often search for a few years of recommended work experience before they will enroll in or seek an MBA degree. Similarly, older professionals often more carefully weigh the return on investment that can be achieved through their pursuit of an MBA degree. And understandably, the older the person considering advanced study, the fewer years are available to earn the substantial financial investment that an MBA degree requires for the future (Australian Institute of Business 2013).

While MBA degree students might be impossible to fit into a one specific demographic, industry background or academic history, they seem to always share a single, critical feature: they have a clear understanding of their reason for seeking an MBA degree. This usually goes well beyond the increased financial compensation, the opportunities for advancement, the status of the office and the lifestyle that is almost certain to accompany it all (Australian Institution of Business 2013).

Because the Masters of Business Administration degree is a postgraduate degree, there are several entry requirements for students. The MBA program is aimed to people who already have an undergraduate degree, bachelor degree or equivalent, in any discipline and/or extensive working experience within an organisation. Those candidates who will not meet the criteria may apply to enter the program if they have 5 years relevant experience of working at a management level. Furthermore, these candidates need to be assessed by the Graduate Programs Coordinator as being able to successfully complete the program and make a positive contribution to the learning environment. International candidates are required to demon-

strate proficiency in English. International students will be required to have IELTS 6.0 or equivalent (Federation University Australia 2014).

As it has already been written earlier about three different marketing channels, I would like to separate the FedUni MBA degree program's customers by those three channels as well. The first customer segment includes channel FedUni's two campuses, Mt Helen and the new Gippsland campus. Both campuses offer face-to-face teaching for full-time and part-time students and that means that potential customers will most likely be local individuals around both campus areas. Mt Helen campus is the Federation University's main campus and has had an MBA program running for many years. At the moment, the Business School has 88 current MBA student (unpublished information from Adam, excel document) and also already graduated students. However, the Gippsland campus has never had MBA programs running before, thus there is no existing customer base and it is a brand new campus and new location for FedUni. Similarities for these campuses are that they are offering the benefits of a regional lifestyle with easy city access to their customers.

Another customer segment includes all the partners of the Business School; those institutions that are willing to buy the MBA degree program from FedUni and organise all the rest by themselves. These partners may be located either onshore or offshore. FedUni has 27 partners in total; 9 TAFE partners, 8 onshore partners, 6 of them offering the MAB program, and 10 offshore partners, 7 of them offering the MBA program. Consequently, 660 MBA students are currently taking the degree via partners. These partners are the Business Schools business customers and the students are partners' customers. It is important for FedUni to take into consideration their partners capabilities and opportunities of gaining more customers for them, which would logically benefit FedUni.

The last customer segment comprises of potential online customers for the online MBA degree. And because it is on online, this means that any individual who full-fills requirements, despite their location, can be a potential customer. FedUni has not organised an online MBA program before, so there is no existing data of its customers, even though it is already a common way to complete an MBA. Online programs make it easier to fit studies and work life together. Customers can decide and plan their study times by themselves and they can do it from a home computer. Also online program fees are often lower.

But (consumer) customers should be able to make decision between studying MBA degree online, or at the University. Online programs enable distance learning and that's the reason why online MBA degrees are becoming quite popular. Australia is a large region, and not everybody has the possibility to access an institution. Some people find that the only way they can pursue their MBA degree is via their own computers. They need to ensure that the MBA

degree course they choose, is properly qualified, or their degree will have little value because the traditional MBA degree programs still have a better reputation. Nearly any ranking that can be founded on Australian MBA programs still rates the traditional MBA degree programs higher. One of the main reasons is the invaluable live interaction with professors and other students. Also, often, a famous university's name carries its own weight (Australian Institution of Business 2013).

4.3.3 Partners

Partners of business school have been mentioned already in earlier chapters. The style is a little like a franchising business. At the moment the MBA program of Federation University is delivered globally in over ten locations in Australia and Asia Pacific region, which include Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Sri Lanka, plus of course, the biggest cities of Australia.

Marketing operations for partners will be different in some cases. Business to business marketing needs more direct marketing and sales than normal consumer marketing. But it is important for FedUni to take into consideration their partners capabilities and opportunities for gaining more customers. Gaining more customers via partners would naturally be beneficial for the Business School because every student who is assigned with their partners will create profit.

4.3.4 SWOT Analysis

To develop a marketing strategy, an organisation needs to identify its key factors. Marketers must be able to understand and see the current opportunities that are available in the market, the main threats that the business may face in the future, or what it is already facing, the strengths that the business can trust on and all the possible weaknesses that may affect to the performance of business. The method called SWOT analysis is used to identify these factors. SWOT is short for strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

An organisation's strengths are those attributes that help it achieve its core competencies and competitive advantages. Weaknesses are those attributes that obstruct it in trying to achieve its objectives. Both strengths and weaknesses lie within an organisation's internal factors, and therefore, are possible to control directly. Opportunities are those attributes of the organisation that are potentially helpful to achieving the objectives. They are only of benefit if the organisation responds effectively to them. An organisation may be able to have some influence over its opportunities, but they are factors that are mainly beyond the organisation's direct control. Factors that are potentially harmful to the organisation's efforts to

achieve its objectives are called threats. And like opportunities, they are beyond the organisation's direct control. Both opportunities and threats can arise from many various factors in the organisation's environment. (Elliott et al. 2010, 63-65)


<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elective courses • Quality • Locations + new Gippsland campus • Programs available to the corporate clients • Combine work & study • Globally recognised program • Personalized study environment 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of marketing and promotion • Unfamiliarity 	<p>I N T E R N A L</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased demand of higher education programs • Lower cost of living (outside of Melbourne) • Peaceful town (Ballarat), close to nature → optimal for families • New fresh brand  	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location, many universities in Melbourne • The online degree faces a large competitive environment • The popularity of the online degree may suffer from the better reputation of original face-to-face learning degree 	<p>E X T E R N A L</p>

Illustration 5: SWOT analysis for Federation University MBA degree

Strengths: The MBA degree is a globally recognized program and FedUni offers this degree in various locations via partners. Mt Helen (Ballarat) and Gippsland campuses offer a regional, urban city location. The MBA degree is also offered for corporate clients. The possibility to study part-time helps combine work and study, and, additionally, FedUni is preparing an MBA online program. FedUni promises high quality to students through its staff, programs, interaction, leadership and involvement. Smaller university can provide a more personalized study environment. The degree fees are much less costly than competitors in Melbourne.

Opportunities: Demand for MBA graduates is increasing, which brings more potential customers. Gippsland and Mt Helen campuses offer optimal locations in urban cities. The area offers lower cost of living, peaceful small town environment and is close to nature. After the launch and name change, Federation University has a new and fresh brand to market, they are Australia's newest university.

Weaknesses: The MBA degree, the Business School in Ballarat and The School of Business and Economics Gippsland, all lack promotion. FedUni's offering of its MBA degree is still unfamiliar.

Threats: The distant location of Mt Helen and Gippsland may prune some customers. Competition is tough and there are various institutions which offer the MBA degree. The online degree also faces a large competitive environment. And the popularity of the online degree may suffer from the better reputation of original face-to-face learning degree.

4.4 Marketing objectives

The most common marketing objectives for organisations are considering its profit, market share growth and customer retention. The Business Schools' marketing objectives for the MBA degree are customer acquisition, achieving more recognizability for the MBA degree, Gippsland campus, and the online program, finding effective ways to advertise already existing partners and new potential partners.

To ensure profitability and achieve market share growth, an organisation must not only win new customers, but also retain the loyalty and satisfaction of its existing customers. This will be accomplished when the organisation puts customers at the center of its decision making. Customer relationship management (CRM) is the process and practices put in place to identify, track and use customer information and preferences to provide superior customer service and sustain long-term relationships. This thesis will not research the Business Schools CRM operations.

5 Research

In research, new information is built upon existing theory. For any business, market research is one of the useful tools. It helps organisations to find out what customers and potential customers need, want and care about. Benchmarking and conversation and document analysis are the research methods that have been used on this thesis.

Benchmarking is the process of comparing one's organisations processes and performance metrics to industry bests or best practices from other companies. For example, quality of an organization's products or services, strategies, policies etc. will be normally under comparison. The objectives of benchmarking are to determine what and where improvements are called for, to analyze how other organizations achieve their performance levels and then to use this information to improve their own operation (Business Dictionary 2014).

To be able to understand the situation in of Australian University degree supply I benchmarked all of the Victoria's universities that offered MBA degree. If this research had been more extensive it would have been interesting to study the possibilities of the online degree in more detailed.

Document analysis was the other research method on the thesis. Document analysis is a social research method and is an important research tool in its own right. Documentary work involves reading lots of written material. A document is something that we can read and which relates to some aspect of the social world. Official documents are intended to be read as objective statements of fact but they are themselves socially produced. There are different sources of documents; public records, media, private papers etc. (Business Dictionary 2014).

I analyzed some of the universities private documents which included some essential numbers of student data and private and public reports. I also used conversation analysis as a one similar method during all the meetings and conversations with my supervisor.

6 Marketing communications plan

The preliminary marketing communication plan for FedUni's MBA degree is introduced in this section and it is the outcome of the entire thesis process. The compilation of the marketing communications plan began with the present state analyses that have been made earlier. Necessary information about current marketing has been gathered from conversations and short meetings with my representative from the Business School.

The emphasis of the Business School's marketing plan is now on new customer acquisition, but more importantly plan a clear preliminary marketing communication plan for the MBA degree which will be offered in a three different ways (original campus program, via partners and online). Since Federation University Australia is a big organisation itself and has its own marketing group operating on at a higher level of organisation, this plan, which is made only for the Business School and only for one degree, should still be suitable for the university's general marketing operations. I have not researched an entire marketing plan for Federation University and this thesis only outlines the Business School's marketing functions. However, I would still recommend to the Business School to organize a better connection to Federation University's marketing group, to ease and intensify its marketing operations. This would gain value for both parties.

Planning the marketing communication mix is a question of which communication methods will be used in the selected target groups. All the selected methods should be reasonable and the starting point of selection is the objectives of the case organisation. By mixing the follow-

ing communication methods, the Business School should achieve their objectives for MBA marketing.

6.1 Advertising

The Mt Helen and Gippsland campuses should use local newspapers and radio channels for advertising to arouse awareness of degree and customers' interest. The best time for these actions would be during high marketing season, before both semesters begin, during applying time. Examples of these newspapers could be *Gippslander* and *Gippsland Times* around the Gippsland campus area and *The Courier* and *Ballarat Times* in the Ballarat region.

The Business School has previously had advertisements in Hobson's Handbook, which is an Australian wide university guide. This is a very good place to advertise because the reader of handbook is presumably already considering some degree or just interested about studying and also having an open mind. Information will be found by potential students. But at the same time it excludes potential students who do not know about the guide, so this will not be enough. Some potential applicants may not have a university background and these kinds of guides are not familiar to them.

Federation University already has television and radio commercials and that works more like overall marketing for the whole FedUni brand, which is good. The more familiar the brand is for consumer, the better. TV and radio commercials reach a great number of people and play the role of daily remainder. Because of high prices for these advertisements creating a commercial just for one specific degree may be beyond the capacity of the budget.

Advertising the online MBA program in newspapers may not be the most effective way. Of course, in those MBA newspaper advertisements that are supposed to promote campus studies, there should be a little mention about online course possibilities; in the same way as FedUni's TV commercial, which has a little mention at the end of the advertise. All the campuses are listed and then it mentions: online. However, I would recomendate to focus more on e-marketing with the online degree.

6.2 Sales

Personal sales is the most expensive marketing method to use, but may have very profitable consequences when it is well planned, directed and performed. For every potential consumer customer, personal sales will not be possible or even reasonable, but when Federation University Business School offers its MBA programs for corporate clients, it should contact companies directly. The Business School could tailor suitable education offers to companies

around the Ballarat and Gippsland area and get more customers to campuses. The Business School have recently had very well-known clients as IBM, Dell Computer, Ericsson Telecommunications and Mars Confectionary, which just increases reliability.

All the groundwork communication, like advertising and other sales communication methods build an important basis for personal selling. Personal sales work will be fairly easy if all the other communications methods have succeeded and the Business School has succeeded in building a strong and positive brand image. The Business School has not used much personal selling previously, but I think this is the most effective way, especially with partner institutions (B-to-B sales), and it is also useful with basic customer sales process.

Quick action is an assets for personal sales, because competition is high and a competitor may otherwise intervene between the company and the customer. That's the reason for arranging the face-to-face meetings as soon as possible. These meetings are also the most efficient and it is easier to convince the customers of the worth of the degree.

Telephone and direct mail sales could be potential ways to reach partners and prepare for personal selling. These methods would save the salesperson travelling around the country and avoid the travelling costs. Direct mail should be tailored to the selected groups and the message well-structured, and also it is important to direct the mail to the right person in the organisation. The purpose of direct mail is to arouse the interest of the potential partner and get them familiar with the MBA program offered. It is also meant to remind current customers of their existence.

Telephone communication may be the most effective way of making personal contact. Usually phone calls should be prefaced by direct mail and other marketing communications to make convincing the customer easier. The main objective of telephone communications is to arrange a meeting with potential partner for sales negotiations.

6.3 Promotions

Sales promotion is short term activities that are designed to encourage consumers to buy a product or service. They are often used on an irregular basis to increase demand together with advertising. Promotion can only be an effective inducement if consumers know about it, so it typically needs other marketing methods for support, like advertising. There are a few sales promotion methods I have planned for potential MBA customers.

Business School office could give away free MBA - Federation University memory sticks with FedUni logo on it and the MBA degree information report contained on the memory stick.

There will be more information becoming later on chapter 4.1.6 about information letter. This could be an easy way to promote the university itself and share important information about the MBA Degree for example almost graduated business bachelor students. Memory sticks could be given away from the office every time when students who are interested in the MBA. The same memory sticks could be shared on the interest meetings, on personal sales situations or even exhibitions.

6.4 Public Relations

The main purpose of publicity management is to increase the awareness in the minds of interest groups and maintaining relationships between the marketing organisation and its stakeholders. Informing is important in organisations and it usually has a positive effect on attitudes towards the company. Since Federation University is quite well-known in its region (Ballarat), it could get good results from informing. This would be a way to inform different interest groups about their topical areas and also upcoming news.

As soon the Business School has something to inform, they should prepare a press release and distribute it to appropriate media. This could be a professional magazine or website in the educational field of business, for example Campus Daily.com.au, which is Australia's University News Website. A good press release should be informative, factual and announce a contact person for further information. These releases should also been published on the university's own webpage.

The main benefit of public relations promotion is the significant credibility of word-of-mouth communications. With word-of-mouth it is easy to build wide networks. Especially for Mt Helen and Gippsland campuses, using of local networks and personal contacts would be beneficial. When the key people in organisations have extensive networks, it is more likely that potential customers hear about the degree through word-of-mouth.

Alumni reference acquisition could be one method to spark the customer's interest in the degree. The Business School could cooperate and interview some of the MBA degree alumni from FedUni and write "real life success stories" to inspire potential customers. These profile stories would increase perception of program quality. And if alumni have been satisfied with the MBA program, it should not be difficult to organize interviews. These stories would be reasonable to publish on the Business School webpages too, and even in the information report.

6.5 Online communications

Online communication is an important method for groundwork communications, since the internet has an essential role in everyday marketing communications. Organisations hardly ever have a clear idea how to implement online communications and how much time, resources and money to use for it. Webpages are one of the most important online communications methods for the Business School. Webpages are fairly easy to maintain but the Business School could concentrate more on the content.

Once you find Faculty of Business (Federation.edu.au) you will be able to click the link to go to The Business School Ballarat, School of Business and Economics Gippsland or go straight to the MBA -link. When you choose to open you open that MBA link, there is only a plain program description for the degree. That is not really tempting and will not give a very professional image of the course. On webpages like this, there should be more attractive and interesting information about the courses, the benefits of them, specialisation options and wise words about the degree, that could arouse interest to read more and get excited about the program. And again, using previous students, alumni interviews and comments about the degree as a real-life examples, as I mentioned earlier.

The Business School could also use some of the most common forms of online advertising. Both banner advertisements, advertisement that appears on websites, and pop-up advertisements, advertisements that open in a new 'window' could be useful ways. FedUni already has a few banner advertisement on its partners' webpages, but they could easily have more. For example, mbanews.com does not even mention Federation University even though it lists and offers information about all the Australian universities that offer the MBA. This is a good MBA webpage and FedUni is not even mentioned on that page.

Viral marketing is the use of social networks (such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook) to spread a marketing message. Federation university has its own YouTube channel but that does not support the marketing of MBA degrees very much. Viral marketing could be connected to alumni success stories as well. Making a short interview video about MBA alumni and sharing it on YouTube or FedUni's Facebook page, could be good support for a written article. But there could be even more of these YouTube videos. Videos would work as inspiring and informative clips about the MBA degree, Mt Helen campus, Gippsland campus and the coming online degree and these should be linked to the Business School webpages, under the MBA link. Visual image remains longer in people's mind, and sometimes it is just easier to receive information by listening.

The Business School could use both search engine optimization and search engine marketing to get higher ranking positions in search results returned by search engines. Especially when Business School launches the new online MBA degree, they should definitely consider the use of search engine marketing to get a good start for the program.

As mentioned earlier, there are webpages for the educational field, and Campus Daily .com.au - Australia's University News Website is one example. Marketing operations for partner customers are a little bit different and they need to be directed more precisely. Finding those university and institution industry online channels and be activated and those targets would be valuable from b-to-b marketing point of view.

6.6 Marketing materials

At the moment the Business School's marketing material consist basically of MBA degree brochures. The current brochure is actually really good, simple and informing. It is brand new and printed January 2014, straight after the name change. But that brochure would need something else along side it, as it will not be sufficient by itself.

During my research I found a few really informative, well-made and interesting information reports about MBA degrees from some other universities' webpages. Those reports were on PDF files and possible to download and save to your own computer or print out if wanted. After saving it, every time you would like to read or look for some information in the document you would not have to search for it from internet, I found this easy and clever. The reports included headmasters' words, benefits of the degree, ratings, course and study tour possibilities, fees, alumni profile, specializations, application details and application closing dates and all contact possibilities. This information report could be set on FedUni memory sticks and in this way, easy to give to interested customers at the university office, meetings, exhibition and even promotional events.

The best example of this information letter would be Deakin University's MBA handout, which contains all considerable information and it is very tempting at the same time. The link for this document will be found from the list of the internet references below.

6.7 Action plan

This chapter is presenting a preliminary schedule for the marketing communications mix I have chosen for Business School. The action plan is based on my own personal ideas about MBA marketing and it should work as an example and help the Business School to develop more detailed schedule.

The timing of marketing communications is very important and it should be planned properly, in order to get the most out of it. Because of the semester structure at universities, the most aggressive marketing should happen in spring and autumn just before, and even during application time. It is possible to begin the MBA program either on Semester 1, which is from early March until early June or Semester 2 which is from late July until late October. Therefore, the overall groundwork communication should be done during late summer and mid-winter. That is the best time to affect the minds of potential customers, and still leave some time for their own thoughts.

Marketing communications should exist all year round but not all of the methods are necessary to be active during the year. For example e-marketing methods like FedUnis' webpage, MBA page and search engine optimization have to work constantly. There have to be information about online program available all the time. It is critical to remember, especially when selling a degree, to continue the marketing communications process even when the university starts to get customers, since they need new students also for all the next years too.

In the end of the work in appendix I have first described the schedule for the consumer customers (B2C) and then to the partner customers (B2B). There will be really any marketing communications activities during January and December because of the summer holiday time on Australia. Marketing actions always escalate towards the beginning of the both semesters and achieve their highest action point during that time.

Appendix 1 includes all the marketing communications method for consumer customers. Tools of advertising are newspapers, radio, Hobbsons' Handbook and TV. Promotional activities are office service, possible exhibitions and simple meeting which can be connected on personal selling in this case. Press releases, word-of-mouth and alumni stories would be the activities of public relation. Online marketing includes FedUnis' webpage, MBAs' own webpage, banners and pop-up advertising, social media and SEO. As marketing materials there would be brochure, information letter and memory stick.

Appendix 2 is the same kind of table for business customers and partners (B2B). Hobbsons' Handbook is the most appropriate place for business advertising. Sales styles like telephone, e-mail, group sales and also personal sales will be very important. Some meetings and possible exhibitions are the methods of promotion. Press releases, alumni stories and Campus Daily.com.au would be the PR activities for business and partners. As mentioned earlier Online marketing is important during the whole year and FedUnis' webpage, MBAs' own webpage and SEO will be important for B2B marketing.

The university should also be monitoring their marketing communication results and use that information when planning the next year's marketing activities. The purpose for implementing follow-up is to collect and analyze information about the marketing methods used. In this way, the university could get a comprehensive image of what should be changed in their marketing communications for the coming years.

7 Reflection

Marketing is constantly developing and taking more digitalized forms because of the constant growth of the internet services. Demand for higher educations is growing worldwide and shrinking global boundaries and has increased the possibilities for customers to choose different study options.

The aim of this thesis was to create a comprehensive marketing communications plan for MBA degree and understand the current situation of the university's brand after the new organisation launch. However, the situation straight after the name change was new for everyone but it was a great chance and also challenge for me. The study was conducted through online resources, competitor analyses, benchmarking, data analyses, literature of marketing theory and the conversations with the FedUni supervisor. Commission was everything I wanted to do and I had planned earlier. Completing this work in English has been a true opportunity for me to improve my language skills and also my overall working and communications skills because of international study environment.

The marketing communications plan was created during my exchange student period in the Federation University. All of my experiences in Australia have influenced in my thesis work, especially Ballarat city, where I lived and got to know the Australian lifestyle.

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Illustrations

Illustration 1: Marketing defined (Elliot et al. 2010, 4.)

Illustration 2: Marketing planning process (Bennett 2010, 40.)

Illustration 3: Marketing plan scenario for MBA degree (Federation University)

Illustration 4: Marketing Environment

Illustration 5: SWOT analysis for Federation University MBA degree

Tables

Table 1: Competitors - Universities in Victoria

Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 1 - Action plan for consumer customers

B2C	Marketing method	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Semester dates				Sem. 1. (3.3.-6.6.)					Sem. 2. (28.7.-31.10.)				
Advertising	News paper		High		Normal	Normal	Normal	High			Normal	Normal	
	Radio		High				Normal	High					
	Hobbsons' handbook		High	Normal			Normal	High	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	
	TV		High				Normal	High					
Sales	Personal selling (meetings twice a year)		High					High					
Promotion	Office service (memory stick)		High		Normal	High		High			High	High	
	Exhibitions		Normal								Normal		
Public Relation	Press Release		Normal			Normal		Normal			Normal		
	Word-of-mouth	Normal			Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal
	Alumni stories		High					High					
	Campus Daily.com.au		Normal					Normal					
Online	FedUni's webpage	Normal											
	MBA page												
	Banners/pop-up ad.		High					High					
	Social media; Youtube Facebook, Twitter		High					High					
	Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	Normal	Normal					Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal
Materials	Brouchure		Normal	Normal									
	Information report		Normal	Normal									

= high intense level of the marketing
 = normal level of the marketing

Appendix 2 - Action plan for partners and business customers

B2B	Marketing method	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Semester dates					Sem. 1. (3.3.-6.6.)			Sem. 2. (28.7.-31.10.)					
Advertising	Hobbsons' handbook												
Sales	Personal selling												
	Telephone												
	E-mail												
	Group sales												
Promotion	Meetings												
	Exhibitions												
Public Relation	Press Release												
	Alumni stories												
	Campus Daily.com.au												
Online	FedUni's webpage												
	MBA page												
	Search Engine												
	Optimization (SEO)												
Materials	Information report												

= high intense level of the marketing
 = normal level of the marketing