

Ignatian Mentoring Program

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Course Information

Marketing 801, Marketing Concepts

Marketing involves exchanges. The activities in marketing products, services, and ideas are examined within a framework of customer management. Topics include global marketing environment, market analysis and segmentation, consumer behavior, product development and management, pricing, promotion, and distribution. Marketing is examined from its role as a central function of business and non-profit organizations, and from its dominant role in a market economy.

Students: Graduate students (without recent business undergraduate degrees) very early in their programs.

Background

As an outcome of the thirty-second General Congregation (GC32), Decree Four, *Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice*, was published. Although some confusion existed over the meaning of the word “justice” in Decree Four, most agree that it includes social justice – “to change the structures of society which were depriving people of their human rights” (Tripole, S.J. 1994, p. 9). Calvez, S.J. (1991) states that although economic injustices are particularly pervasive, injustice includes any threats to “human life and its quality.” Similarly, Dulles, S.J. interprets justice as “the dismantling of unjust social structures, to conscientization, and to the building of a new and better society” (1989, p. 21). Indeed, Tripole, S.J. states “human beings cannot enter into union with God unless they enter into union with one another, and the degree to which they are alienated from one another will be reflected in an analogous alienation from God” (1994, p. 55). Hence, a commitment to justice is an integral part of evangelization as can be noted in the life of Ignatius. Justice, therefore, includes social justice, but it includes much more – the furthering of social justice leads to justice in all things.

The top item of the social justice agenda concerns the gap between the rich and the poor (Dorr, S.J. 1991). Although financial resources are obviously an important consideration, a focus merely on the material provides an incomplete picture of individual well-being. Instead, the “poor” can be viewed to be those who do not possess the resources, financial and other, to experience life to the full – they are the oppressed, economically, socially, educationally, or emotionally, and consequently, are those who are prevented from experiencing the freedom life affords. Tripole, S.J. states that the Society’s goals should be “the service of faith through the promotion of a Christian and human culture” (1994, p. 128), where culture is defined as “the way people think, how they understand themselves, why they do what they do, and how they seek fulfillment in their lives” (1994, p. 129). The project addresses this issue. Particularly, in the culture’s rush to maximize wealth, what is truly of value is being lost. Instead of freeing ourselves from economic deprivation, we are imprisoning ourselves to the very things that were supposed to free us.

Marketing, Well-Being, and Justice

Unquestionably, the exercise of marketing has added to the material welfare of modern society. It has significantly increased the availability and variety of goods, and it has significantly decreased product costs. As a result of marketing, consumers have access to, and can enjoy goods that could not be foreseen anytime in history. The global percentage of people living in abject poverty (though unquestionably a major social issue), is lower today than perhaps it ever has been. Individuals suffering from hunger (also still a major problem which requires concerted effort to combat) is also at historical lows as a percentage of the population. Several have equated these manifestations of marketing as an improvement in society's quality of life. Is this contention true? Has the increased availability of goods actually increased individuals' quality of life?

There is a widespread belief in our culture that happiness, or one's quality of life, is a function of the quantity of things that one possesses. This mentality is present in the widespread belief that happiness is based on one's income, or one's ability to acquire possessions and experiences without hindrance. Empirical research, however, paints a different picture. Numerous studies clearly show that once survival needs are met, additional income and additional possessions do little to improve one's level of happiness. The lack of a positive relationship between possessions/income and happiness raises two questions: 1) If possessions do not bring happiness what does? and 2) How has the apparent myth "increased possessions is the true road to happiness" become so ingrained in society's consciousness?

Empirical studies have left little doubt that few factors affect an individual's level of happiness for longer than a few days. The only issue that empirical research repeatedly shows to have the ability to affect an individual's long-term happiness is the existence of long-term close relationships with others (family, friends, and one's God). Interestingly, these are the very relationships which many individuals will so readily trade-off for the opportunity to make more money to acquire more things with the empty hope of achieving the sought-after goal of increased happiness. The supposed relationship between possessions and happiness, however, is well-communicated within today's society. This relationship is formed, or at least is significantly strengthened, through marketers' use of non-market need pairing. Non-market need pairing involves establishing a link between a particular marketer's product and a specific non-market need in the consumer's mind. (Non-market needs are those needs which cannot be directly satisfiable through the market, such as feelings of belonging, companionship, happiness, etc.). When the pairing is successful, consumers will view the specific non-market need in conjunction with the product – the product will be viewed as a means for fulfilling the non-market need. The key to this pairing is that the linking is not natural, but contrived. Indeed, the product is associated with a need which it, in fact, *cannot* truly fulfill.

A Brief History

Contrary to popular thought, a consumer culture amongst the masses has not always existed. In pre-modern times, product acquisition was not a priority, or even a possibility, for most. When excess resources were acquired (more than that required for subsistence living), the excess resources were typically saved or were used to acquire additional leisure time – not to acquire additional products. Furthermore, during this time, one's self was often passively assigned. Everyone knew who they were and everyone knew who others were, and there was often little chance for significant changes in the self. Relationships with others (family and community) and with God (religion) provided the basis for the self. As a result, identity problems were virtually nonexistent.

With the industrial revolution and the rise of modernism, however, the permanency and the level of influence which family, community, and religion exerted on individuals declined significantly. The social and geographic mobility afforded (or mandated) by the industrialization process acted to slowly sever

individuals' ties with family, disrupted entire communities, and caused many to question the need for religion. Furthermore, with a growth in the importance of science, dependence upon a Supreme Being seemed to become unnecessary. Under modernism, individuals were forced to make or develop their own identity – it was no longer merely inherited. The basis of the self also changed. The self was left to be fulfilled through transient, physical realities, primarily through one's own actions – personal achievement, and to a greater extent, the acts of acquisition and consumption. Indeed, the marketplace became a primary channel through which a self could be acquired. Individuals began to become what they owned. One's self then, could often be viewed as the result of an explicit choice which was often fulfilled through shopping and consumption activities. This marked the origins of the consumer culture.

More recently, modernism has been replaced with postmodernism. In a postmodern environment, the presence of relatively permanent anchors upon which to base the self have vanished. Actually, in postmodernism, the self, as a single concrete reality, simply does not exist. Instead of speaking of a singular self, it is more common to refer to multiple roles or images, where individuals are encouraged to consume symbols consistent with the role or image desired at any particular time. The self, therefore, exists merely to display – to display the articles which portray a desired image. As a result, consumption becomes the defining feature of postmodern societies and the consumer culture reigns supreme. In postmodern societies, the acquisition of physical possessions is viewed as the primary, if not the only, source of individuality, happiness, and satisfaction. Within postmodernism then, marketing has achieved an unforeseen level of societal significance. Instead of focusing on identifying and meeting consumer wants and needs, the focus is instead on providing consumers with the building blocks necessary to build personal images and to construct desired realities. The logical outcome then, is a focus on pleasure and on attempts to acquire it during this earthly life – clearly a primary quality of today's culture. Similarly, as pleasure in itself proves to be insufficient to meet the fundamental needs of individuals, a logical outcome is a growth of hopelessness and despair, again common qualities in today's culture.

All indications seem to point to fatal problems in the basis of a consumer culture – the consumer culture appears to be unable to deliver what it has promised. Although it has very successfully increased standards of living beyond initial comprehension and has provided products which offer forms of comfort and entertainment alternatives which were inconceivable only a few years ago, it has been unable to bring increased happiness and increased fulfillment to people's lives. The continuing desire to increase consumption necessitates ever increasing levels of income. The need for ever-increasing levels of income in turn, leads to the need to maximize time spent in work activities, usually at the expense of leisure and social activities. This is why, even the face of significant gains in productivity, the amount of time spent working has risen steadily and substantially over the past forty years. We have become prisoners to the need to make greater incomes – relationships and the needs of others have been cast aside in the strivings to obtain more belongings.

In summary, Tripole, S.J. speaks of our students: “They have been influenced by our society to such an extent that they take it for granted that life is fulfilled in terms of the values our secular culture provides them, the values that are largely a product of our production-consumption society. In that society, human value is defined by the amount of money made and the degree of power and the kind of reputation enjoyed: greed is accepted as a legitimate human virtue, and one's own needs take precedence over the welfare of the community” (1994, p. 132). Tripole, S.J. further states that service activities, although valuable, have little effect on the point-of-view of students – “In spite of the efforts at justice, the basic structures remain untouched, ... our understanding of who we are, what the meaning of life is, and where we are going remains the same” (1994, p. 135). In addition to not being in a position to attend to the justice and faith of others, students themselves as prisoners – prisoners to a mindset which prevents them from experiencing true happiness and which prevents them from truly helping others in need. “What is necessary, then, is to change the inner lives of people, to restructure their dominant motivating values, the values by which they formulate their own criteria for self-fulfillment” (Triple, S.J. 1994, p.137).

Course Component

The course component of this project is subject-based. It consists of integrating a new content section into the “understanding consumers” part of the MKTG 801 (Marketing Concepts) course. This course is one of the first courses taken by students entering the MBA program. It is required of all students entering the program who have not pursued a business undergraduate degree. As such, the students generally have no background in marketing or in understanding the consumer and the consumer culture. The course component includes the following issues:

- 1) Provide an historical basis of the development of a consumer culture (to break the commonly held myth that the consumer culture has always existed). This includes an examination of the alternative conceptions of the substance and meaning of life that have been dominant in the past and the basis of each.
- 2) Develop an understanding of today’s postmodern consumer culture, its impact on the individual, and its inability to positively affect an individual’s well-being. This includes 1) truly understanding the role of marketing in the consumer culture and the process of non-market need pairing, and 2) gaining an understanding of the prevalent product-based identity structure.
- 3) Provide students with a basis for understanding the role of products in their own personal lives and to help them be able to critically analyze the effects that marketing activities have on culture and on the lives of individuals. This is accomplished through extensive discussion and reflection in class.
- 4) Develop an ability to examine marketing activities and choices within the context of the effect that they have on the lives of individuals in society.

An explicit object of the course component of this project is to develop students’ reasoning abilities – to provide students with the insight necessary to truly evaluate the outcome of marketing activities and choices on society.

The effectiveness of the course component in conveying knowledge is assessed during the midterm exam.

Whether the course is effective in affecting student’s attitudes and opinions is assessed by a before-and-after questionnaire (described below).

Scholarly Component

The scholarly component of this project directly relates to the course component of this project. Specifically, the scholarly component of this project examines the effect that the course component has on students’ views toward money and belongings in their personal lives. This is accomplished by a pretest and posttest. On the first day of class, students are immediately required to complete a questionnaire that includes scales to measure the following constructs:

- 1) Love of Money
- 2) Possession Satisfaction Index
- 3) Materialism
- 4) Time Orientation Toward Money

- 5) Ethics and Social Responsibility
- 6) Prestige Sensitivity
- 7) Desire for Unique Consumer Products
- 8) Need to Belong
- 9) Social Connectedness/Social Assurance
- 10) Importance of Connectedness

Students are required to complete the same questionnaire immediately prior to the final exam to permit an assessment of the effect that the course may have on individuals' attitudes and beliefs.

Results

Attempt #1 801-81A

Discussion

Several students were very defensive.

Exam

Question on the midterm exam (1/4 of the exam) went very well – students knew the material.

Questionnaire

Problems were encountered – students were unwilling to participate without compensation.

Attempt #2 801-84B

Discussion

Revised discussion went very well.

Exam

Question on the midterm exam (1/4 of the exam) went very well – students knew the material.

Questionnaire

“Before” and “after” questionnaire administration completed (points were awarded).

Although the sample size was very small (22), t-tests were run to test whether differences exist in the “before” and “after” responses (See Table 1). Significant (at the .05 level) differences were observed for four of the 25 pairings. As a result of the course,

- 1) Students were more likely to consider money as an indicator of success.
- 2) Students were more likely to believe that success equals possessions.
- 3) Students were less likely to be envious of other's possessions.
- 4) Students were less likely to believe that social responsibility and profitability are compatible.

The results were surprising. Although it is difficult to draw conclusions from the relatively small sample size, in three of the four instances where significant results were observed, results were opposite of that hypothesized. This result may indicate the need to

adjust the classroom component of the course.

Table 1
Results

Scale	t-Value	Level Significance
Love of Money		
Overall	-1.580	.129
Factors		
Budget	-.934	.361
Evil	-.458	.652
Equity	-.289	.776
Success	-2.209	.038
Motivator	.847	.406
Possession Satisfaction Index		
Overall	-1.494	.150
Factors		
What Possessions Can Do	.794	.436
What Possessions Cannot Do	-1.121	.275
Public Image	.755	.459
Success Equals Possessions	-2.241	.036
More is Better	-1.517	.144
Materialism		
Factors		
Possessiveness	.208	.837
Nongenerosity	1.530	.141
Envy	2.137	.044
Time Orientation Toward Money		
Overall	.357	.725
Ethics and Social Responsibility		
Factors		
Social Responsibility & Profitability	4.454	.000
Long-Term Gains	-.678	.505
Short-Term Gains	-1.646	.115
Prestige Sensitivity		
Overall	-1.204	.242
Desire for Unique Consumer Products		
Overall	-1.563	.133
Need to Belong		
Overall	.305	.763
Belongingness		
Factors		
Social Connectedness	-.440	.664
Social Assurance	.209	.837
Importance of Connectedness		
Overall	-.335	.741