

EMIC : European Marketing and Innovation Centers

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ABSTRACT

Marketing is one of the fundamental competencies in terms of the business sector. Despite all the conceptual and empirical research showing their interface, one aspect of marketing that has been fundamentally neglected is its relation with Innovation. It is too small the attention given to this synergy by universities, their teachers and students and companies.

The goal of the European Marketing and Innovation Centre project is to create a set of new tools to ensure that **universities, students and companies work together to achieve and incorporate this new relationship between Marketing and Innovation.**

These tools are explored through a **Network of Marketing and Innovation Centres**, each located in each partner university, with different but complementary competencies, according to the local and national demands and capabilities.

These Centres offer:

1. **National Good Practice Observatory** which gathers information and analysis on national innovative approaches to Marketing (the network of Centres will allow an extension of this concept into a European comparative overview). This observatory will focus on:
2. Setting up **Communities of Practice (CoP)** in Marketing and Innovation, including experts, teachers, professionals and students. These CoPs will be enhanced by the use of adequate information and communication technologies
3. **Student support in the transition to the professional world**
4. Setting up **new forms of education and training** to prepare students and professionals for Innovation in Marketing
5. **Promoting the idea of Marketing and Innovation**

Each Marketing and Innovation Centers (MIC's) has a physical existence through a dedicated office in each institution which acts mostly as a reference location for information but also as a working point for student's research and work.

Key words for Topic:

Innovation Process , Product Development Process , Market/Customer Requirements, Entrepreneurship , Business Intelligence and Social Media/Data Analytics, Collaborative Partnerships, Marketing-Information Systems Interface, Product Introduction Strategies

Key words Methodological Areas : Conceptual modeling, Delphi technique, Structured interviewing, Survey research,

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of and background to the Project

“There is only one valid definition of business purpose: to create a customer . . . It is the customer who determines what the business is . . . Because it is its purpose to create a customer, any business enterprise has two – and only these two – basic functions: marketing and innovation. Marketing’s role in innovation is to provide the “concepts, tools and infrastructure to close the ‘gap’ between innovation and market positioning to achieve sustainable competitive advantage”.⁷

Marketing is one of the fundamental competencies in terms of the Business sector. Despite all the conceptual and empirical research showing their interface, **one aspect of marketing that has been fundamentally neglected is its relation with Innovation**. It is too small the attention given to this synergy by universities, their teachers and students and companies. There have been many studies in the area of marketing and innovation (1-11).

Looking at the reports produced by the major association and networks in the areas of Marketing and Innovation this issue is clearly evident: the PDMA (Product Development and Management Association) and PLM Associates research report Customer-Centric Innovation: How Companies Engage Customers in Product Development and Radical Innovation (2009)¹², there is a growing evidence of the positive impact of the VOC – Voice of Customer on the successful New Concept/Product development. A provocative insight points that: “**Companies engage customers more extensively when undertaking radical innovation** than when developing less innovative products. This finding partially refutes a popular notion among certain pundits that customers have limited vision and that listening to customers stifles innovation” .

Entrepreneurship is almost always only associated to the so called “technology based” projects. Service Dominant Logic (SDL) seems to counteract this oversimplification, demanding a much more comprehensive approach of the “perceived value-in-use”. And this is new, or even out of the Universities (Teachers/Students) and Companies strategic mind set. The consequence is that all the **players that don’t recognize themselves as “tech-based” are excluded and only react face to the market and innovation** challenges.

We believe, based on the observed power of VOC as strong new concept/products innovation success driver, **marketing can be one of the main instruments, triggers and instigators of innovation**. But at the same time, Innovation is required to change Marketing – new approaches, new methods, new tools can give the edge to a product in a different Society, based on digital tools, mobile devices, social networks, omnipresent information delivery, etc. Are companies prepared for this? Are Universities preparing their students for this reality? We are certain **there is a huge work to be done to implement a true innovation/marketing interface as a sustainable source of competitive advantage** for the new products (goods and/or services). And what we are seeing is that Europe is lagging behind in this aspect to the United States and to some fast developing countries.

For the partners in this project this is clearly an opportunity and a challenge. All but one are Higher Education entities and they recognize that university students must be prepared to face and adopt innovative procedures in Marketing to contribute to the development of the industry. In this way universities must relate with the surrounding entrepreneurial world to assess their demands and needs,

to propose solutions and to adopt measures that allow students to have a quick and correct transition from the academic into the professional world. At the same time, the adoption of the Bologna declaration is now fully in place in Higher Education but its paradigm is far from being fully implemented. **Projects like EMIC can introduce new forms of contributing to the autonomy of students, increase their sense of responsibility and their connection to the outer world.** They need to understand the commercial aspects of innovation, both in small entrepreneurial firms and large multinationals but they must also be aware of the challenges faced by marketers, business managers, and consultants in conceiving and bringing innovative new products or services to market. They must be ready to prevent market failures and foster a cohesive understanding of how marketing activity at all phases of the innovation process can maximize ultimate commercial success, that is, develop insights and skills regarding the development, launch, and management of innovative products. They must grow (1) knowledge for the market related set of factors to consider in the new product planning phase - when innovation strategy is set, (2) an understanding of customer behaviour and its impact on the adoption and diffusion of an innovation, and (3) the skills needed to launch and manage an innovative new products.

Partners of the project have been involved in several networks related with Marketing and Innovation. The needs identified in this project have been extensively debated in those forums and possible solutions have been discussed. Therefore this project results from those conversations and discussions. It is based on common activities between partners along the last few years, including staff mobility and joint curricula programmes and projects. It also results from the participation of the coordinator and some partners in the ENTER (LLP-LdV) and PREMIO (LLP-ERASMUS) highly successful projects (final evaluation around 90%). The EMIC project reuses some of the contents developed in those projects but, most importantly, it adopts a similar project strategy and methodology leading to the same degree of success.

All but one of the partners are **highly respected academic institutions** with strong expertise in the fields of Marketing and Innovation. TWG is the only non-academic entity but has a **long record of consultancy in these areas** and a close relation with major players in the Marketing and Innovation areas. All the partners are involved in specialized networks in these fields, have produced articles and communications on the subject. More important, they have close connections with the enterprise world so they are aware of the industry requirements for Marketing and Innovation professionals and they can easily transmit that to their students.

The partnership itself was established respecting some basic criteria:

- The **definition of a nucleus of partners** which have worked together before, guarantees the stability of processes, communication and the attainment of results;
- The inclusion of **countries where the issue of Marketing and Innovation is a major concern**, especially because their industrial/services sectors are very traditional and lack a focus on Innovation. This is typically the case of Portugal, Spain, Lithuania, Latvia, Turkey and Estonia;
- Partners with a **strong involvement in the academic world and with the industry**;
- A **reasonable and manageable number of partners**. Partners concentrate in central activities, where their expertise is most crucial and leave secondary tasks to subcontracted organizations or individuals. In such a way it is possible to assure a coherent partnership, keeping a consistent level of activity between all the partners;
- A **large coverage of European countries and cultures**, including countries that are not yet members of the EU for increased diversity of cultures and different approaches to the subject;
- In each partner (considering that they are large academic institutions) ensure that the **representatives are experts with Marketing and/or Innovation**.

Investigation of the field (state of the art) and innovative character

Marketers know that innovation through new product development is vital to remain competitive but innovation also affects all other marketing areas. In particular, the evolution of the Internet transformed how all functional areas of an organization work and Marketing is one of those. Over the next decade it is expected that the Internet's effect on marketing will continue to grow and

marketers are well served to embrace this. Unfortunately, **many marketers don't have the knowledge to do it right**. They are unable to connect Innovation principles to the new social reality of Internet networking. And that is also true for students during their academic study years. And yet these new Innovation means affect the way we see Marketing (<http://www.knowthis.com>):

- Marketing Research - New ways to conduct research including more sophisticated methods for monitoring and tracking customer behaviour and analysing data.
- Targeting Markets - Extreme target marketing where marketing-to-person is replacing mass marketing.
- Customer Service - Easier to manage relationships and rapid response to customer's needs.
- Product - New digital products/services. Incorporation of innovation into existing product/service enhances

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METHODOLOGY

These tools are explored through a **Network of Marketing and Innovation Centres**, each located in each partner University, with different but complementary competencies, according to the local and national demands and capabilities.

These Centres offer:

1. **National Good Practice Observatory** which gathers information and analysis on national innovative approaches to Marketing (the network of Centres (Figure 2) will allow an extension of this concept into a European comparative overview). This observatory will focus on:
 - a. Good practice implementation in companies
 - b. Good practice academic implementation
2. Setting up **Communities of Practice (CoP)** in Marketing and Innovation, including experts, teachers, professionals and students. These CoPs will be enhanced by the use of adequate information and communication technologies
3. **Student support in the transition to the professional world**
 - a. Through support to student curricular placements and traineeships
 - b. Through support to research for academic purposes (thesis and such)
 - c. Through support for student traineeship in companies
4. Setting up **new forms of education and training** to prepare students and professionals for Innovation in Marketing
 - a. Webcasts with European scope
 - b. Analysis of possible ECTS equivalence between academic partners
 - c. Setting up lifelong learning actions, a modular post-graduation programme (using e-learning/b-learning)
5. **Promoting the idea of Marketing and Innovation**
 - a. Creation of dissemination tools including newsletters and events
 - b. Organizing local/National Seminars and Workshops (Figures 5-8)

Each Marketing and Innovation Centers (MIC's) have a physical existence through a dedicated office in each institution which acts mostly as a reference location for information but also as a working point for student's research and work (Figure 2). However, the most important tasks take place in a Virtual space: that is the case of the Observatory, the Communities of Practice, the Webcasts and the e-learning actions. The European Marketing and Innovation Centre represents the Network of these MICs and gathers all their Virtual components in a single connected point, accessible in all the partners languages and where the access and exchange of information bring together experts, teachers, students and practitioners from all over Europe (Figure 1).

The project followed a development methodology that started with an analysis stage, then a design stage, followed by the development, implementation, test and exploitation. In parallel there have been

project management activities, quality assurance and dissemination. This last set of activities was fundamental as it brought new stakeholders into the project, be they individuals or organizations. There were several groups, Project partners (Figure 3), working in the different aspects of the Project based on their area of expertise in addition to the participation of the entire project. These groups were;

Project Management for project planning, resource control, administrative and financial management. It was led by the coordinator with the help of the Steering Committee that includes a representative of each partner.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring of the Project: It was accomplished through a continuous process of monitoring, internal and external evaluation and product validation.

Specification and Design Group handled the specification and design of the whole model for the EMIC, the individual MICs and each component. It was implemented through collaborative work with the teams formed for each specific task (involving brainstorming, activities of exploration / discussion group, etc).

Observatory Group integrates the tasks related to the creation of the National Observatories, including the activities to identify data sources and data collection and analysis of several hundred questionnaires sent to the companies in Europe.

Student Support Group includes all the tasks related to the design and setting up of the structures to support the students in their transition to a professional life.

Lifelong Learning Group includes the tasks related to the design of lifelong learning activities including the webcasts, the short e-learning modules and the structure of a post-graduation.

Implementation and Testing Group corresponds to the implementation and test of the EMIC as an integrated entity, after the creation of the individual MICs.

Dissemination Group aims to spread out information on the project and its results, in particular for the target-audience but also to managers of institutions (industries, associations, chambers of commerce, etc).

Exploitation Group consists of the determination of processes of multiplication and generalization of the results achieved in the project, either by widening the geographic scope of project, expanding to other knowledge areas and its possible commercial exploration. We organized European wide contests among the high schools students about marketing and innovation and also student research among the university students in the same area to be delivered in student conference on marketing and innovation. We also sent brochures, news letters, and related documents to several hundred small and medium size companies (SMEs) in Europe including Turkey.

RESULTS

Added Value of the project is very high as it addresses common European challenges:

- 1) **developing the relationship between Academy and Industry;**
- 2) **facilitate the student's transition into the professional life;**
- 3) **reinforce Marketing and Innovation concepts** so that European companies can reinforce their presence outside the EC.

The approach of fostering Innovation from the learning context into the professional context, giving relevance to Marketing and the VoC, **follows the new European Agenda for Innovation** with a strong impact in the organization of Higher Education and lifelong learning activity. The project also addresses entrepreneurship, identified as a major challenge for Europe.

The **main target groups are University students and teachers in Marketing and related areas like Business and Entrepreneurship.** Secondary target groups are the Universities involved, the surrounding enterprises and their regional economic context.

Students and teachers were interested in taking advantage of the more concrete project results, like the observatory data and contents, the e-learning actions, the discussions and expertise of the Communities of Practice. Students, in particular, were able to benefit from the support structure designed to facilitate their transition into a professional life.

Universities were interested in replicating the model, creating their own MICs (Figure 2), developing their educational offer and adding value to the relationship with their business and economic context.

The development of the educational offer of Higher Education Institutions would be seen in the offer of modular lifelong learning programmes, in the integration of new contents built on the relation Marketing-Innovation, on the integration of new methodologies and technologies to enhance learning involving CoP and e-learning, as well as through the integration of an international and European dimension, especially relevant for the contents being worked.

In the project scope it was possible to directly reach about 20 Universities from the different countries involved, for a total number of 1500 students. Other stakeholders were involved in a lesser scale (fewer activities), in the project, so that it was possible to reach about 500 more students. Project results could easily be multiplied to Universities in other countries extending the geographical scope. These numbers can even grow faster in some of the other participating countries. The partnership was formed by 8 Universities and 1 Consulting company (Figure 3) with extended relations and networking capacity in the field of Marketing and Innovation. Therefore the expected numbers were reasonable and realistic as the target group (in the partners) was immediately available. It was expected that each university could integrate other partner institutions during the project lifetime doubling the impact of the project.

All the partners were involved in networks and associations, either related to Marketing or to Higher Education. It was possible to disseminate project results very quickly and effectively and the expectation is that project success can mean a rapid progression of 10 (from 1500 to 15000 students) in the 3 years after the project lifetime.

Through dissemination actions, other Universities became interested to participate and use the created resources. For that purpose a strong dissemination activity will be conducted towards European Universities and their associations.

The project **dissemination approach increased the range of adopters of the Marketing and Innovation Centres** by creating the interest on the Observatory contents, the Community of Practice Discussions and Insights, the e-Learning activities and on the European network of MICs. Dissemination actions were used to promote the coverage of the contents in European level and resulted in: Project Web site (including information on the project, objectives, methodology, partnership and results. Registered users receive the newsletter) (Figure 1); a Facebook social network focused on Marketing and Innovation; a Newsletter (electronic) with periodic update of information; Flyers, brochures, booklets and other elements for publicity and image promotion; Articles and presentations in conferences and seminars.

The dissemination focused on Higher Education to promote the Centres and their activities. The dissemination strategy was based on several different activities, concerning the main target group. It started in the beginning in the project with the creation of the project portal and accompanied the project throughout its duration.

The major dissemination events were:

- Creation and maintenance of the project portal: The portal had a guest level where anyone can enter, get acquainted with the project goals and results. For a registered user (free) it was also possible to get information on events, news and activities related to the project main goal. The portal allowed project partners to connect to the electronic platform for communication and workflow (Figure 1);
- Implementation and promotion of a Facebook social network focused on Marketing and Innovation, build on the community of practice but enlarged to a wider public;
- An electronic newsletter were sent to every registered user and other entities at European level;
- Communication in the press: To create a motivation and curiosity for the project, local press were invited to assist and report on the implementations and results;

- Direct contact with Entities at National and Regional levels: These Entities were directly contacted for a presentation of the project with electronic and printed materials (Figures 6-8).
- Participation in European networks in this area.
- Publication in journals and conferences related with the area, at European level.

CONCLUSION

The **methodology is expected to be reusable in several linguistics and cultural environments** and the most concrete developed results will be produced in accordance to the specification for cultural differences but with a European perspective. Therefore, the success of the project can lead to quick replication and a strong European impact in addressing those challenges. Furthermore, the project's geographical coverage of Europe brings the multiculturalism and multilinguistics aspects of Europe into play. Getting the target groups to meet their peers in other countries will reinforce the European spirit. For the academic partners it will also be the opportunity to develop new forms of cooperation and to intensify physical mobility between staff and students.

The European Marketing Innovation Centre will be supported after the project lifetime by the leading partner (ISMAD). This represents maintaining the platform that supports the Observatory, the e-learning delivery and the Community of Practice for each participating country.

The physical conditions to support the national MICs were ensured by each partner that commits to provide the conditions at least three years after the end of the project. In any case, **as the results from the project will be integrated in the normal activities of the partners it is expected that the MICs will be supported for a longer period** and become formal structures.

The concept of a MIC (structure, organization, contents, etc.) will be made available freely to any other University that plans to replicate the Centre. For individuals, joining the EMIC will be free. All collected data (Observatory) and registration to Communities of Practice will be also free. Free or paid use of e-learning contents will depend on the courses. For institutions, adhesion to EMIC will be possible through a symbolic fee for Universities and a small fee for other organizations. This will help maintain and update the EMIC.

An intellectual property agreement were established amongst the partners upon the start of the project to rule the use of the environment, the experiments, the contents and the tools during the project lifetime. Later on, a business plan will define the exact conditions of that use afterwards.

It is expected that countries and regions involved in the project will be addressed but also neighbouring countries and regions will be contacted when travel cost and language issues are not a problem.

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Figure 1. EMIC web site URL: <https://e-campus.ismai.pt/EMIC/default.aspx>

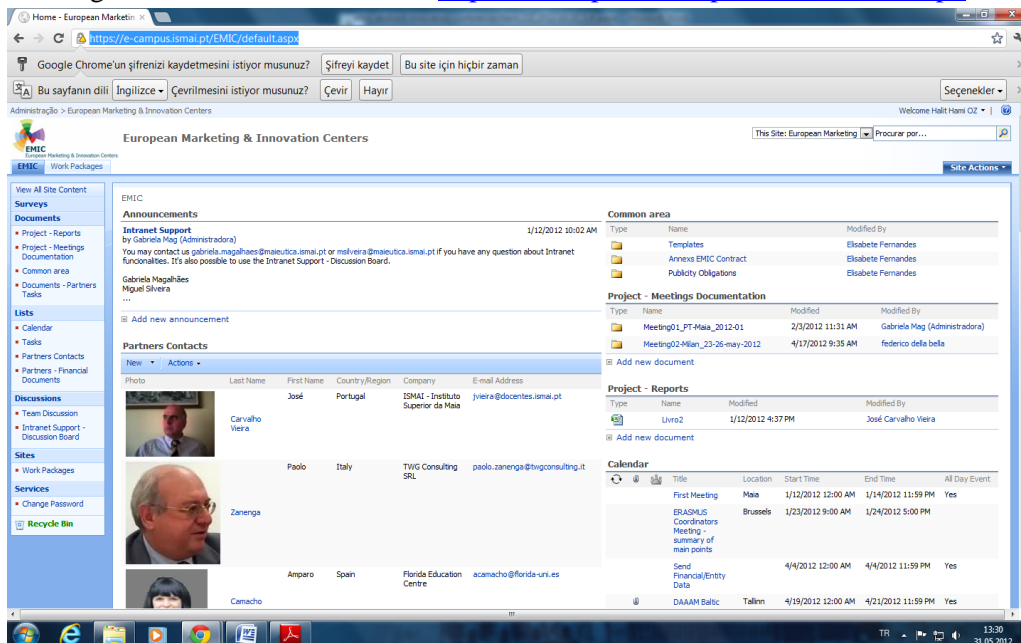




Figure 2. Marketing & Innovation Center, Istanbul Office



Figure 3. EMIC Project partners in the 1st meeting, Porto, Portugal, 13 Jan 2012



Figure 4. EMIC logo



Figure 5. International Conference in Porto, Portugal, 13 Jan 2012.



Figure 6. Dissemination of the EMIC project in Hakkari University



Figure 7. Dissemination of the EMIC project in Hakkari University: Conference about Innovation in Hakkari University delivered by Doc. Dr. Halit Hami ÖZ, EMIC partner



Figure 8. Dissemination of the EMIC project in Hakkari University: Conference about Innovation in Hakkari University delivered by Doc. Dr. Halit Hami ÖZ, EMIC partner