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A Practical Approach for Developing Social Consciousness and Responsibility in Marketing Students

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8.1 Introduction

There is a need for marketers who can drive change at organizations by coming up with new product or service ideas supported by business models that also help to address societal needs (Doyle 2008). Addressing grand societal challenges demands changing existing social paradigms, innovations that must create new social networks and capacities that evolve into new social structures and systems (Benneworth and Cunha 2015). This corresponds to a shift in society's expectations of business, forcing marketing educators to rethink curriculum content (Borin and Metcalf 2010). All the more since marketing has often been perceived as part of the problem, rather than the solution to societal problems such as pollution, overconsumption, the depletion of natural resources, unhealthy lifestyles, and human rights abuses

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(Markley Rowntree and Koernig 2015). After Schumacher (1973, p. 64) described education as the 'greatest resource' for achieving a just and ecological society, the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987) and *Agenda 21* both singled out education as an instrument for bringing about the social change necessary for sustainable development. If developing learners' capacities for social innovation has become part of universities' objectives and if particular courses have been designed in business schools to develop students as agents of change (Nicholls et al. 2013; Hesselbarth and Schaltegger 2014), the biggest part of core marketing modules taught in business schools throughout America and Europe still consist of strategic marketing, principles of marketing, marketing research, and marketing communications (Küster and Vila 2006). The field of nonprofit or social service marketing is less frequently included (Harrigan and Hulbert 2011). Socially conscious marketing practices are however no longer just a 'perk' or selling point for PR purposes. Both from a business and profitability standpoint, and from a moral standpoint, being socially conscious should be a requirement. Linked with the theme of this book on 'Responsible People: the Role of the Individual in CSR, Entrepreneurship, and Management Education', this chapter discusses what being socially conscious means for marketers and draws on the experience of enhancing social consciousness and responsibility within marketing students in one UK business school, with the aim of gaining deeper understanding of the role universities can play in developing future responsible marketing managers.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, the authors articulate their definition of social consciousness and draw upon literature on the aspects of social consciousness that are of importance to marketing learners. The authors then report on how qualitative data was collected via a case study approach, to capture how CSR and sustainability issues are incorporated into the marketing curriculum of Brighton Business School (BBS) in the UK. The third section of the chapter elaborates on the methods used by marketing lecturers of this institution to embed social consciousness within their teaching. The last section of the chapter explores how this case study can help inform the issue regarding the

role of marketing educators in disseminating a CSR culture. The chapter concludes with identifying areas for future research.

8.2 What Does Social Consciousness Mean for Marketers?

Dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, with the earliest use found in *The North British Review*, the concept of social consciousness can be defined as 'awareness of and concern for the problems and injustices that affect society' (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com). Cooley (1907) defines it as the conscious awareness of being part of a larger whole, namely society. It includes the level at which one is aware of how one is influenced by others, as well as how your actions may affect others (Schlitz et al. 2010). Ammentorp (2007, p. 39) describes the development of social consciousness as a 'process involving increasing awareness of social-historical context, the ability to think abstractly about time and place, and beyond the immediate everyday conditions to understand individual experience as embedded in a broader system of social relations'. However, beyond the 'know-that' that social awareness refers to, Schneider et al. (2010) insist that management education also needs to address the more difficult 'know-how' and 'know-why' of socially responsible behavior in order to develop social consciousness. The authors used this key distinction between building social awareness and developing social consciousness in this research, and considered cognition, personal values and affect identified by Crilly et al. (2008) as the core elements of social consciousness and antecedents likely to encourage socially responsible behavior.

On a global scale, the need for a more sustainable world was unanimously acknowledged by United Nations members again in September 2015, when 17 Sustainable Development Goals were set, positioning education at the heart of the strategy to promote sustainable development (UN General Assembly 2015). Business leaders are being urged to apply their business acumen to come to grips with the social, moral, and environmental impact of their organizations (Mirvis 2008).

For most organizations, the three pillars of sustainability (social, economic, and environmental) are indeed now viewed as companywide necessities (Haugh and Talwar 2010). In particular, consequent to a range of factors such as consumer pressure, new legislation, and social evolution, environmental sustainability has increasingly become an issue of central importance to firms (Audebrand 2010). CSR strategies that encompass responsible or sustainable business practices, as recently adopted by many companies, demonstrate this (Deer and Zarestky 2017). Marketing managers are not exempt from this increasing focus on sustainability. Marketing has been rightfully implicated as a culprit in the over-consumption of resources and in the spread of western-style insatiability for goods among the world's developing and emerging nations. To the extent that it is part of the problem of unsustainable production and consumption, marketing can and must be a major part of the solution (Martin and Schouten 2014). Sustainable marketing means doing things differently to help bring about a society in which striving for environmental sustainability and social justice is the norm (Martin and Schouten 2012). According to Gordon et al. (2011, p. 146) it can be achieved in three principal ways:

- Green Marketing—Developing and marketing more sustainable products and services while introducing sustainability efforts at the core of the marketing and business process.
- Social Marketing—Using the power of upstream and downstream marketing interventions to encourage sustainable behavior.
- Critical Marketing—Analyzing marketing using a critical theory-based approach to guide regulation and control and stimulate innovation in markets with a focus on sustainability, but moreover challenging some of the dominant institutions of the capitalist and marketing systems, to construct a more sustainable marketing discipline.

It is important that Business Schools include ethics, CSR, and sustainability in their curricula to provide students with the necessary skills to contribute to a better society (Scullion 2017). The benchmark study by Nicholls et al. (2013) found ethics to be incorporated into

more than 50% of the marketing courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in the United States. CSR was incorporated into about a third of undergraduate and half of graduate marketing courses. Sustainability was included in more than 40% of both undergraduate and graduate marketing courses. Thus, marketing students increasingly seem to be exposed to all three topics. How can social consciousness of those issues and a sense of responsibility be developed by marketing students within a business school environment? How can students be taught to be responsible people, and what role does management education play in the process? These questions were used as a starting point for our research.

8.3   Methodology

In order to analyze why and how ethics, CSR, and sustainability are incorporated in the curriculum at a business school level within an academic setting, a phenomenological case study approach (Yin 2018) was chosen. The selected 'case' in this study was the Marketing subject group within BBS in the UK. This group is made up of 16 academics, ranging in responsibility from part-time lecturers, through full-time senior lecturers to principal lecturers who will normally hold more senior administrative responsibility in addition to teaching and research roles. As a subject group, these academics are responsible for all marketing modules, both in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs. A total of around 2500 students study at BBS and a large majority of these will (usually at several points during their degree) take marketing modules taught by members of the Marketing subject group.

The choice for a holistic single-case design for this study was based on what Yin (2018) calls the 'critical case'. The Marketing subject group at BBS has a strong emphasis on social marketing and marketing ethics in both the background of its members (many of whom research and publish actively in areas like social marketing and CSR) and the content of the curriculum offered. As such there are only limited structural barriers

to introducing learning content, which builds social consciousness in students. Researching in one UK business school made sense because the country is considered a leader in CSR and sustainability in management education (Matten and Moon 2004).

In order to increase construct validity (Yin 2018), we used several sources of evidence including interviews with relevant decision-makers and academic instructors, module descriptors that describe the content of each module and the University of Brighton strategic plan, which also includes BBS. Although the aim of this research is not directly to generalize results for other subject groups or business school environments within the UK, the external validity of the research is guaranteed, to some extent, considering that the course structures and module content within the business school is aligned to Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE) requirements, which apply to all recognized business degrees in England. In addition, the undergraduate degrees are accredited by two professional bodies, both the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), which operate at a national level. To increase the reliability of our research results we developed, as suggested by Yin (2018), both a case study protocol and a case study database, which are available from the authors on request.

In order to get a good overview of all relevant issues within the subject group, we used a holistic case study design (Yin 2018) where we looked at marketing teaching in both the undergraduate and postgraduate business degrees. Primary data collection involved interviews with four key members of the Marketing subject group. The interviewees taught undergraduate and postgraduate modules.

- The in-depth interviews analysis was preceded by data analysis of all Marketing modules descriptors and related degree structures (BSc Business Management, BSc Business Management with Marketing, BSc Marketing, and MSc Marketing degrees) and followed by in-depth analysis of the university strategic plan, which applies to the business school. This design allowed for data triangulation, which is of paramount importance in a holistic single-case case study (Yin 2018).

8.4   Developing Social Consciousness and Responsibility of Marketing Students at Brighton Business School

The University of Brighton strategic plan for 2016–2021 speaks of four core values, which guide planning within the university: inclusivity, sustainability, creativity, and partnership. Sustainability underpins everything the university does: '*Our commitment to sustainability runs throughout all our practices, from the management of the university's campuses and facilities, through procurement, travel, food, ethical investment, community engagement, research, teaching and learning*' (University of Brighton 2016). The University of Brighton has a 158-year history as an educational institution operating in the unique environment that is Brighton (Shields 1990). From its earliest days as a tourist resort attracting visitors for the health cure of sea bathing in the nineteenth century, Brighton has been a location, which is open to new ideas, alternative lifestyles, and progressive social thinking. Interviewee 1 gives just two examples of many: '*in terms of "people and planet", Brighton is a hotbed for the "living wage" campaign with 321 businesses (and the local council as well) which signed up to pay a minimum wage around 15% higher than the national minimum living wage. In terms of the natural environment, Brighton was the first city to have a Green Party-led city council and since 2014 the Brighton and Lewes Downs Biosphere was recognised by UNESCO for its unique sustainable ecologic and socio-economic characteristics*'. All interviewees agreed that the environment of Brighton and the values of the University of Brighton play a key role in defining the relevant learning outcomes and objectives of the different courses and modules offered to students in the Business School. '*As marketing lecturers, we believe that a marketing manager who has as his/her sole aim to make profit is obsolete. We need professionals with strong knowledge of marketing techniques, capable of taking the best decisions, but also with a social conscience. Social consciousness is thus embedded everywhere in our courses*' (Interviewee 2). Experience at BBS is a testimony that this can start as early as the first year at undergraduate level, can be reinforced all throughout the curriculum, and even become a specialization at Master's level.

The efforts of the teaching teams to embed social consciousness in the Marketing curriculum at BBS are twofold.

8.4.1 Integration of Standalone Core and Elective Modules Within Courses

The first way BBS marketing lecturers try and develop social consciousness and responsibility among marketing students is within specific core and elective modules dedicated to sustainable marketing.

As core modules within their course, Business with Marketing, BSc students are required to study 'Marketing and Responsibility' in year two. As the name indicates, this module aims to sensitize students to the role of ethics within marketing decision-making. As Interviewee 1 explained '*We introduced this module as a way to infuse more ethics teaching into the core marketing curriculum. Students are very positive about this module and the in-class discussions are often very animated and instructive both to students and to the colleagues who teach the module*'. The module mixes both theoretical and practical approaches, with four main areas of sustainable marketing being covered—ethics, societal and not-for-profit marketing, environmental responsibility, sustainability, and responsible communication. Interviewee 4 stressed that this module offers students a broad perspective of various ethical marketing issues: '*We encourage students to examine every-day decisions of companies through the prism of CSR, sustainability and ethical decision making. In one of the assignment, students are tasked with producing financially viable recommendations for firms that tackle pressing moral and ethical issues, ranging from animal testing in cosmetics manufacturing, to on-line gambling, fair wages and female and male body image in advertising*'. Often the best-performing students in this second-year module will go on to do a research project in their final year related to topics they first encountered during 'Marketing and Responsibility' in year two.

As for the MSc Marketing degree at BBS, it offers a unique specialization in Social Marketing that combines marketing techniques to influence positive behavior for social good in a sustainable way (Kotler and Zaltman 1971). Through contacts with local government institutions and councils, BBS can offer students very interesting

projects where they can apply their knowledge of social marketing to real cases, often to high praise of the commissioning organization. As Interviewee 2 clarified '*All students can enroll in this module and have contacts with charities that are developing a social marketing campaign. Therefore, all the students in the MSc Marketing course have the opportunity to research and learn about the not-for-profit experiences and social marketing issues*'.

At the BSc level, there is ample choice of elective modules linked to sustainability, ethics, and responsibility, with 'Social Marketing', 'Contemporary Issues in Marketing', 'Environmental Sustainability' or 'Working in the Voluntary and Not-for-profit Sector' to name the most popular. As Interviewee 1 explained: '*Looking at the popular business press and the academic literature, social consciousness has certainly gained attention over the last 10 years. Some of the (several hundred) topics covered by students in their assignments since we introduced those modules are; consumer decision making in relation to child labor, the effect of promotional campaigns around body image, peer pressure around alcohol consumption by students, and the societal impact of "fast fashion". Academics are often highly impressed by the work students deliver at the end of the year; once students are allowed to research a topic that really fits their interests (and BBS students perhaps more than others are interested in these social aspects of Marketing) they really run with it*'.

Besides integrating CSR in the curriculum and offering a Social Marketing pathway, the MSc marketing at BBS also offers one elective specifically devoted to ethics and CSR. Students in this module learn about business ethics and CSR theories. Interviewee 2 expanded on its content: '*The module explores up to date case studies from companies with good examples as well as bad ones. As part of their assessment, students have to discuss a current ethical or CSR issue, apply the theories they learned about and suggest ways to improve companies' behavior and actions*'.

8.4.2   Embedding Social Consciousness Everywhere in Subject-Specific Traditional Modules

More than designing specific modules to address main social concerns, individual faculty members at BBS use traditional marketing modules

as places to raise awareness among future marketing managers about social issues. Interviewee 3 argued that, '*if specific modules are needed, that will rely on integrative frameworks that have some power for consolidating knowledge about CSR, ethics and sustainability, those concepts are important enough to be embedded in any marketing module offered*'. Interviewee 4 emphasized that sustainable marketing is at the heart of all subject-group teaching: '*Our aim in the Business School is for our students to develop a passion for practicing sustainable marketing. We do this through igniting the spark of interest in our undergraduate students the minute they come through the doors of the Business School. We continue to feed the fire of their interest during their time with us by embedding the principles of sustainability in all our modules*'.

Thus, in terms of social consciousness, nearly all of the subject-specific modules at the BSc level include one or more case studies related to CSR and sustainability issues as currently highly relevant matters in business thinking. As Interviewee 1 pointed out: '*In all of the core textbooks used in these first-year modules the student will find case studies around ethics, CSR and sustainability and often these will be subject of in-class discussions*'. Interviewee 4 insisted that not only integration of sustainability principles was important in any module, but also measuring of marketing success of such integration, as is done in 'Measuring Marketing Success' level 4 first year undergraduate module: '*Here we aim to introduce students to the idea that not only business now have to take responsibility seriously, they have to be able to measure the return on building long-term corporate value by integrating sustainability practices*'.

At the MSc level, students start their course with an Introduction to Marketing module. This module works as a refresher for students with a marketing background, but also as an introduction to the subject for students who have no previous marketing knowledge. In this short module, students are already introduced to the concept of CSR, and the idea of marketing for good. '*In introducing CSR together with the basics of marketing theory, we want to present the discussion around ethics awareness as an element of the marketing mix. Our idea is that students, from the start of the course, will perceive social responsibility as an important part of marketing*' Interviewee 2 explained. Similarly in the Communications and Branding module, one of the most popular within the course,

students develop a communication project for a 'real life' client, which is a charity. As Interviewee 2 accentuated: '*Here students reflect on issues around marketing communication, ethics and CSR, such as high-pressure sales techniques directed to vulnerable groups, misleading advertising and green-washing techniques. As communication is one of the most recognisable marketing functions, it is important to prepare the future communicators and awaken their responsibilities as marketers*'.

Interviewee 3 gave concrete examples of how students' social consciousness can be enhanced in traditional marketing modules:

– Discussions can be used to bring up challenging topics for marketers. A discussion on the needs and wants of consumers by using mobile phones example can be very provocative. Mobile technology poses serious environmental challenges, because of the raw materials needed to produce the hardware, the energy used to power smartphone connectivity and the pollution associated with disposal. '*Do students, as consumers, worry about electronic waste they generate when updating to the latest, most innovative mobile each year? (…) What can marketing managers do about it? Are they responsible for this situation? As future marketing managers, how will students deal with this paradox of consumers wanting more and more innovations and this causing even more damage to society?*'
– The use of specifically chosen interesting case studies can also help develop students' social consciousness within core marketing modules. 'For example, *I use Autolib (Paris's innovative electrical car sharing program) case study to illustrate the challenges and opportunities of public marketing, i.e. the application of marketing concepts and tools to public administration, also discussing the links between public administration and politics, and the difficulties of sustainable development projects*'.

As a result of the teaching team efforts to embed social consciousness in the Marketing curriculum, an increasing number of BBS students decide to write their final dissertation on issues related to ethics, CSR, sustainability, Social Marketing and/or the not-for-profit sector. '*BBS is thus offering degrees that still focus on the more traditional aspects*

of marketing, but the courses are shaping new graduates who are also capable of reflecting on the future impact of their marketing actions', Interviewee 2 clarified. This dissemination of a CSR culture within all marketing modules even reverberated on interdisciplinary projects within the Business School, such as the Business Project module, as explained by Interviewee 4: '*This module gives students an opportunity to come up with an app idea of their own, that has its potential for commercial success assessed not just by tutors but also by business executives. We encourage students to make CSR principles an integral part of their business proposal. This year's winners were the team who had placed the social need at the center of their business plan. They created a wearable tracking device and an accompanying app for relatives of those who suffer with Alzheimer's and dementia*'.

8.4.3 Discussion

The central issue of the relationship between education and 'the Good'—i.e. edification of citizens and future leaders for the health and welfare of the state—that Plato identified in *The Republic* millennia ago, seems nowadays even more vibrant since education can serve as the mechanism through which sustainability as public good can be advanced. If we want to educate responsible people, management education can play an important role in developing social consciousness in future managers. With its promotion of the '*Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*' between 2005 and 2014 (UNESCO 2005), there is no doubt that the United Nations has served as a catalyst to the development of sustainability thinking in education. Concrete application in the field of marketing education can be seen clearly in academic research that highlights the importance of incorporating sustainability in marketing curricula (Borin and Metcalf 2010), and in the publication of textbooks devoted to marketing and sustainability (Martin and Schouten 2012).

The aim of this chapter was to outline a practical example of how social consciousness and responsibility can be developed within the marketing curriculum of a business school. We presented an incursion

into the why and how marketing lecturers at BBS do it. The case study demonstrates concrete ideas of how educators can help students more deeply understand the societal consequences of their decisions as future marketing managers. By creating an up-to-date and meaningful learning experience, the ultimate goal of the Marketing subject group at BBS is to make sustainability issues and values integral to future marketing decision-making, thus helping to push forward the sustainability agenda among current and future generations of marketing managers.

An ongoing debate exists regarding whether sustainability should be integrated into core marketing modules across the curriculum or developed as a standalone subject (Audebrand 2010). As proposed in the academic literature (Stubbs and Cocklin 2008), marketing lecturers at BBS are convinced that it is of central importance not only to increase student knowledge of sustainability, but also to challenge student views, and to encourage the analysis of student assumptions about marketing, the environment, and society. Experience at BBS shows that both routes complement each other when seeking to sow the seeds of a sustainability ethos. Sustainability needs to be integrated in the curriculum in a holistic way, rather than in a piecemeal one, thus facilitating critical, innovative, and creative learning spaces (Lambrechts et al. 2013).

Analysis unveiled that marketing lecturers at BBS act in accordance with Shrivastava's approach (2010, p. 446) where he suggests a 'holistic pedagogy of passion for sustainability', arguing against the fragmentation of management education and recommending the integration of analytical, physical, and emotional components. Some lecturers are even close to using a transformative learning approach as conceptualized by Mezirow (2000), one that begins with a disorienting dilemma that challenges the embedded meaning schemes and frames of reference that one uses to interpret experiences. With the aim to meet current sustainability challenges through educating students to be 'integrated catalysts' (who manage harmonization between thought, behavior, and action), who will have the capacity to lead business forward toward a socially oriented, ethical economy (Akrivou and Bradbury-Huang 2015).

If the provision of sustainability within the marketing curriculum reflects the commitment of BBS to the education and development of responsible marketing managers, expertise in CSR and sustainability

issues also helps marketing lecturers achieve this ambitious objective. Surveys of business schools introducing sustainability and CSR into the curriculum continue to find that faculty with the right skills and knowledge are crucial to successfully integrating sustainability into the curriculum (Moon and Orlitzky 2011). The emphasis on sustainability in the overall strategy of the university clearly plays a role. Marketing lecturers at BBS insisted that this environment of the university, where sustainability is considered of strategic importance and embedded everywhere, also empowers graduates to leave the university with the skills and knowledge needed to be change-makers for a sustainable future. The university's award-winning sustainability campaign, c-change, engages not only staff, but also students in driving forward progress toward a fully sustainable university. The University of Brighton was ranked 7th in the People and Planet University League 2017, in recognition of its commitment to, and progress toward, sustainability. BBS also became a member of The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), a United Nations-supported initiative founded as a platform to raise the profile of sustainability in schools around the world. This policy helps disseminating a sustainability culture among students. It also engenders changes in students' behavior, viewed as educating for sustainability (Thomas 2009). Thus addressing the already mentioned 'know-how' and 'know-why' of socially responsible behavior, evaluated by Schneider et al. (2010) as more difficult to achieve.

8.5   Conclusion

The main contribution of this chapter is to outline the implementation practice of sustainable marketing education in a UK business school. The findings offer valuable insights for other business schools into how to integrate sustainability into their marketing education and how to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 4, namely quality education. This case study illustrates that business schools can and ought to be a place where responsible people can grow to become responsible managers. Responsible managerial

decision-making will have a positive impact on society. Data analysis shows that, beyond creating explicit student opportunities around CSR and sustainability issues, universities can play an active role in embedding social consciousness and responsibility as part of their own strategic plan. There are further avenues to expand on this research. Firstly, a comparative study between experiences at other Business Schools in the UK could be conducted, to analyze how different universities approach this challenge in different ways. Other comparative studies could also be made with other cultures showing less concern for sustainability than in the UK, in order to evaluate better the important role universities do play when implementing a sustainability policy. Additionally, qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys with the BBS students on one hand, and alumni on the other hand, across different levels, would help understand and measure the real impact of the presented approach. From personal observation we know that quite a few graduates find jobs in social marketing, not-for-profit and charity organizations. It would be interesting to know what impact their education had on that career choice. Most importantly, every student who has completed a degree at BBS will have encountered aspects of sustainability and social consciousness every day in practically every module, through discussions with fellow students and professors in class, and outside the classroom, via sustainability initiatives throughout the university and within the city of Brighton itself. The combination of business school curriculum, university strategy, and city culture all allow individual students to develop their responsible self.

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