Today’s world needs graduates with digital marketing skills

Early this month, in a second-year undergraduate degree class at a leading private university, lecturer Dr Rachael Louis Vincent was not surprised to find that her students had installed 7 to 14 social media accounts on their smartphones. According to several reports from various geographical locations across the world available on the internet, people in various age groups are spending at least an hour, some even nine hours, a day surfing the Net. Given these social trends, it is not surprising that digital marketing is increasingly becoming an integral part of business across the globe. Malaysia is no exception.

The integration of digital aspects across business is clearly visible in Southeast Asia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, the UK, the US and Australia. A recent study conducted by Digital Marketing Institute reports that “in the US (63%), the UK (52%) and Ireland (72%), marketing professionals are unanimous in their verdict that becoming more digitally focused will be critical to their organisation in the next two years”.

Recently, academic scholars Aditi Mitra and Sanjaya Singh Gaur at Sunway University Business School, South Korea, Italy, jointly published an article entitled “Combining organisational change management and organisational ambidexterity using data transformation” in Management Decision, one of the oldest management journals in the world. In the article, they say that owing to the reactive, ad hoc and discontinuous nature of change often triggered by external factors or crises within an organisation, it needs to continually engage with the existing data. The outcome must be driven towards preparing for the change through data engagement, implementation and reinforcement. The authors also say that in order to be successful, it is essential to have a strategy, set up the right operating model, be clear on the scope of the change management work-stream and continuously monitor the progress through defined milestones and acceptance criteria. They conclude that for companies targeting to achieve competitive differentiation through ambidexterity, a well-grounded change management programme is the key to success.

This useful research shows business professionals that they need the latest and most cutting-edge digital marketing skills and know-how to help their businesses compete in the digitally charged global economy. This need is supported by the practitioners too.

For example, Robert Walters, a world leading specialist professional recruitment group, says on its website that the global demand for digital and technology skill sets shows no sign of slowing this year and that at the same time, most marketers feel that they do not have staff with the necessary digital marketing skills. A report entitled “2019 Marketing Hiring Trends” published by McKinley Marketing Partners supports the above. According to the report, “61% of hiring managers plan to add digital marketers to their team. Digital skills are essential in today’s marketing workforce”. In fact, McKinley Marketing Partners has ranked digital marketing as the top marketing specialty out of five for this year.

As Malaysian businesses struggle to upskill their current staff, business graduates need to go through a curriculum that includes the development of necessary digital marketing skills. The Department of Marketing at Sunway University Business School in Sunway City is working towards meeting this important need for businesses operating in the country. It offers a Bachelor’s Degree Programme in Marketing and a Bachelor’s Degree Programme in Business Studies with the possibility to develop skills particularly in digital marketing along with other aspects of marketing. This year, the Marketing Department will be launching a new programme — M.Sc. in Marketing. This programme will allow non-marketing and non-business degree holders to obtain post-graduate qualification in marketing and acquire the required digital marketing skills. The department’s programmes use state-of-the-art curriculum that focuses on the development of potential employees in possession of digital marketing skills for Malaysian and international firms operating in the country. These graduates will be well equipped to face the challenges of the digital economy.

The Marketing Department at Sunway University has a pool of experts with international experience and backgrounds who research across the micro and macro aspects of businesses operating in the digital economy. At the micro level, the department’s research is in the broad domain of behavioural research involving socio-psychological constructs, such as research into human emotions, decision-making, social identity, ethics, behaviour and action. This work has been applied to the study of consumers, salespersons, managers, patients, doctors and organisations.

At the macro level, the department’s research examines how firm-level issues, such as market orientation, governance, corporate social responsibility, inter-organisational trust and top management team characteristics, affect the strategies and performance of the firms in different geographical settings.

The research settings used by the department include Malaysia, India, Bangladesh, China, Germany, Australia and New Zealand. The methods used include experimentation and survey as well as qualitative research. The academic staff of the Department of Marketing also have extensive international experience in consulting and training for executives and senior management.