

What marketers really want

By  [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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The marketing landscape has been disrupted. Technology has changed how marketers communicate to consumers, while macro factors, such as globalisation, and micro factors such as a low economic growth influence the marketers' reality on a daily basis. While there is no doubt that modern marketing has evolved, the question is: have marketing skills evolved with it?



Tumishang Sekhu

The answer for many is a resounding no. In fact, higher education institutions have come under heavy criticism for offering textbook knowledge and neglecting skills development. These institutions have taken note and have been adopting their course structure. But exactly what skills are marketers looking for?

What complicates matters further is that marketing graduates are employed in different type of jobs within various sectors. Therefore, the skills and knowledge requirements are not clear cut, says Tumishang Sekhu.

A part-time lecturer at the Department of Marketing, Logistics and Sport Management at the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), she is currently undertaking a study to determine marketing practitioners' top priorities for improvement in marketing education as well as the key challenges in need of attention.

"My research has been prompted by the realisation that many graduates struggle to find employment. My concern led to wanting to discover why and what we as educators can do to change the status quo."

Her research will be able to determine exactly what employers value from entry level graduates, and this will allow for higher education organisations to prepare students to be work-ready and equipping them with the relevant skills and knowledge. “The research will provide a platform for the industry to voice their needs and advise higher education on what is required in their respective sectors, while benefiting the higher education sector in the preparation of students because they will understand what the marketing sector requires from them.”

One of the main problems is that although graduates are equipped with theoretic knowledge, employers value application of certain theories and skills, she explains. “By identifying what employers in different industries value, educators can amend marketing courses accordingly. Good quality graduates will result in quality employees that will add value to the company.”

Although this is not a new problem, it is one that has not been recognised nor addressed sufficiently in South Africa. “Most of the research on marketing skills and knowledge has been conducted internationally; hence the importance of my study.”

In conjunction with this, previous research has lacked a consensus on vital skills and knowledge areas. “This may be due to a variety of factors including differences in businesses from country to country,” she adds.

Internationally, employers highlight the need for certain personal traits, communication skills, analytical skills and leadership skills. While the needs of local marketers are yet to be determined, she forecasts a number of similarities between South Africa and the international community. However, she says, what she is interested in, is the differences. “South Africa has unique cultural and socio-economic factors that may affect the employers’ choices in their selection of employees.”

Sekhu's research is important for another reason; it establishes an ongoing communication between employers and higher education.

Sekhu's research comes to an end at the end of July. If you would like to participate please [click here](#).

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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