

Editorial: *Rethinking Strategic Planning for the Smart Phygital Future to Enable Resilience, Talent, Agility, and Improve Customer Experience*



Indeed, things are appearing to becoming more hopeful if we take into account some of the ideas highlighted in our last RDC Magazine issue with regard to how we act with responsibility on the path to economy of care, encouraging the development of wellbeing, better connecting what has happened with the next normal, valorizing this extraordinary time for learning and bringing the necessary clarity of cascading priorities (Purcarea a, 2021).

Three years ago, in September 2018, we also wrote an article entitled *“The Future of Retail Impacted by the Smart Phygital Era”*, underlining how the need for harmonizing the digital environment with the in-store environment is clearly recognized within retailers’ struggling of adapting to the new reality and to improve the shopping experience (including by considering mobile and artificial intelligence as disruptive forces in retail, smartphones’ rising role in improving the retail CX within the constant disruption and transformation, and the renewed interest in retail apps), blending digital experiences with physical ones, valorizing actionable insights from the analysis of data, and ensuring this way the retail renaissance (Purcarea, 2018).

Very recently, the reputed McKinsey & Company brought to our attention – within the framework of a traditional COVID-19: Briefing note – that: *“The new edition of The Next*

Normal takes a deep dive into the post-COVID-19 world of shopping, where the tech-enabled “store of the future” can double retailers’ earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) margins. The catch? Retailers need to make plans for the “phygital” future now, or get left behind” (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Also very recently, a newsletter from Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Bloomberg Center (entitled “COVID-19 Business Impact, Info Blast” and highlighting the latest Harvard Business School faculty research related to COVID-19), has represented an opportunity to read among many valuable articles one entitled “*Defining a Post-Pandemic Channel Strategy*”, and written by the reputed senior lecturer at Harvard Business School, Frank V. Cespedes (who is also the author of a new book: “Sales Management That Works: How to Sell in a World That Never Stops Changing, Harvard Business Review Press, February 23, 2021), in which he argues that: “*Predicting the future is hard, but it can be broken into managerially-relevant chunks that help to separate the knowable and unknowable. First, consider whether past is prologue. E-commerce is not new... Second, recognize that predictions about technology are often overblown... Third, what is under way is a shift to omnichannel buying, and that has implications as managers allocate resources in order to achieve profitable growth... So, in adjusting to the future, beware of channel inertia... The future is never what it used to be. It now involves rivalry between channel systems, not only between individual firms. Competing with Amazon means competing with that supply and distribution chain, not just price and product on a web site. Across industries, sales effectiveness... requires the intersection of company and channel capabilities with customers throughout their buying journeys.*” (Cespedes, 2021).

Another article making reference to the e-commerce giant Amazon (as one of the “Notable examples of reinforcement learning applications”) grab our attention very recently, being also written by McKinsey’s representatives, and entitled “*It’s time for businesses to chart a course for reinforcement learning*”: “*Retail: Amazon has used reinforcement learning to automate some warehouse fulfillment activities and power its fleet of autonomous drones that, once fully certified and deployed, will be able to bring packages to customers’ doors in hours*” (Corbo, Fleming and Hohn, 2021). And from the point of view of the reinforcement learning applications in retail industry the following were underlined: “*Optimize routing, logistics network planning, and warehouse operations to reduce costs and keep shelves stocked; Implement advanced inventory modeling and digitize supply-chain planning to prevent out-of-stocks and waste; Deliver advanced personalization capabilities that adapt promotions, offers, and recommendations daily for increased customer satisfaction and sales*”.

We recently referred to a discussion about “Leading the RAU Customer Experience” with the distinguished Founder and Rector of the Romanian-American University (RAU), Professor Ion Smedescu(1991-2008) and President of the Romanian-American Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture (FRAPEC), a valuable traditional meeting which took place at the beginning of the second semester of the academic year 2002-2003, Professor Smedescu being accompanied at that 2003 meeting by his young Marketing teaching assistant

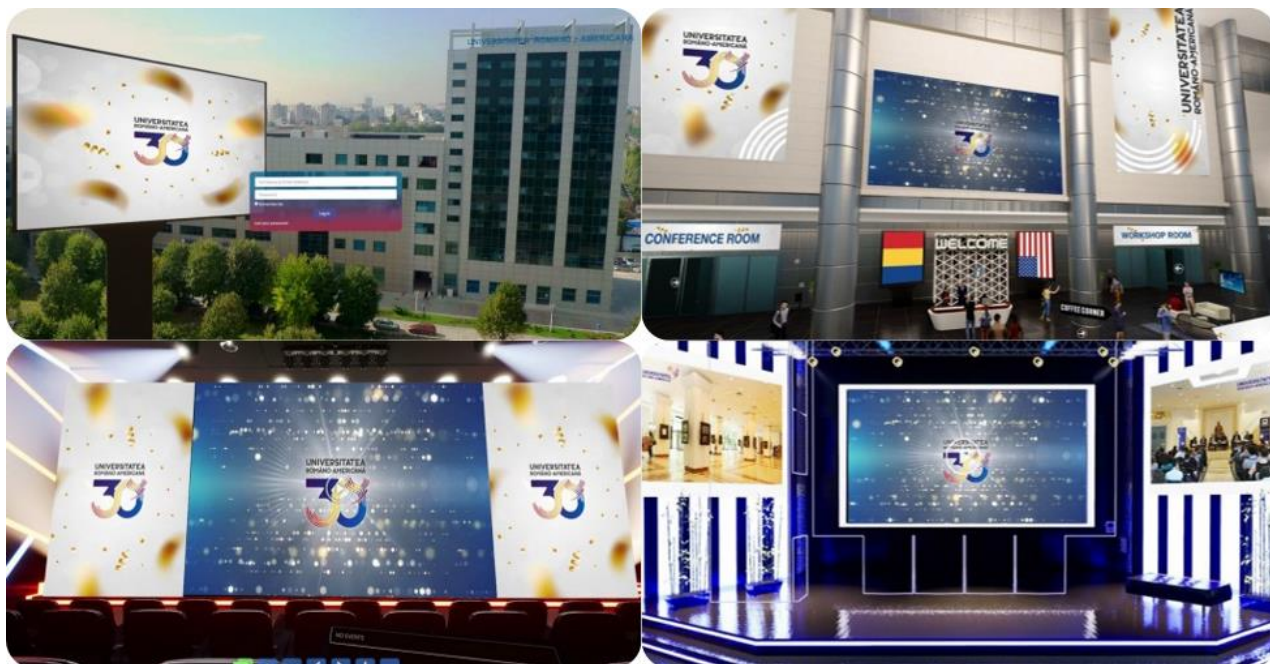
who now is the RAU Rector, Professor Costel Negricea, being also well-known as a long-standing advocate of digital marketing (Purcarea b, 2021).

The first 2021 issue of RAU Holistic Marketing Management Journal also made reference to the distinguished RAU Professor Ion Bulborea (a Great Friend of Professor Smedescu, an Honorary Member of our scientific association Romanian Distribution Committee) and his first academic conversation, in US, with the reputed Professor Ronald E. Carrier, widely known as one of the most dynamic and effective college leaders in US, who served as JMU's president for 27 years.



Professor Ronald E. Carrier, President Emeritus of James Madison University, Professors Stephen Bowers and Kent Zimmerman, and also Virginia State Senator Ryan McDougle participated in April 2006 ceremonies on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of RAU founding. It is of our honor and pleasure to share with our Readers the message sent by Professor Ronald Carrier, Chancellor at James Madison University, on 2nd October 2003:

“James Madison University is a friend of the Romanian-American University. On this day of October 2nd, 2003, we, the people from JMU are looking forward to the development of our relation. This university is an important force in the Romanian high education and the future leaders in business and government will be from among its students. The knowledge is essential in a free society. Congratulations to the management of the RAU and especially to Mr. Smedescu.”



This year participants at RAU events (conferences and workshops, cultural shows and virtual tours through RAU campus, online meetings with university friends etc.) organized on 19, 21 and 22nd of April 2021, on the occasion of the 30th RAU Anniversary, will enjoy a unique experience thanks to a digital platform. In advance of the opening Ceremony of the Anniversary Celebration – 30 years since RAU foundation, in the year 1991, with the aim of promoting the educational values of the American higher education on the background of the rich values of Romanian education – RAU Rector Costel Negricea (also an Honorary Member and a Member of the Board of our scientific association Romanian Distribution Committee) stated (among other aspects): *“We started in the year 1991, with a dream project of our visionary Founding Rector, Professor Ion Smedescu, PhD – an idea, a dream which came true through the efforts and knowledge of many professionals, through the dedication and talent of many professors and non-academic staff members, through the involvement of generations of students and alumni, through the trust of parents and grandparents and numerous other partners. The three decades until now challenged us enormously and demanded us to continuously adapt, harmoniously develop, to be stronger and more daring, in assuming the noble role of education, of promoting academic excellence and cultivating the values of knowledge and culture. We have grown together, and we are extremely grateful to you for that!”* (“The message of the Rector”: <https://www.rau.ro/30-years/?lang=en>).

Happy Anniversary RAU!

VIVAT, CRESCAT, FLOREAT!

Theodor Valentin Purcărea

Editor-in-Chief

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His Beatitude TEOCTIST, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church and Professor ION SMEDESCU, RAU Founding Rector on the occasion of the Consecration of the Romanian-American University Chapel in 2007