

STATUS OF UNDERGRADUATE BRAND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN MARKETING CLASSROOMS AND CORPORATE BOARDROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Although not true in yesteryear, nowadays brand management (BM) is a mainstream corporate boardroom issue and it should become a mainstream undergraduate marketing education issue. BM, today, is a part of whole-company management, is given due respect as a viable and valuable driver of business, and is given high importance as a boardroom agenda item. Not B/BM has not been traditionally emphasized in undergraduate marketing education, now may be the time to revamp marketing curricula to better meet corporate need for BM-educated undergraduates. This can be done by revamping principles of marketing textbook presentations to include broader coverage of BM issues; integrating BM issues into existing marketing courses; and/or by creating stand-alone courses.

Our research found little academic evidence that BM education is presently considered of high importance in today's undergraduate marketing education programs, nor did we find evidence of any initiative that it is of future concern. Yet, on the other hand, there is substantial evidence that BM is of growing importance to today's corporations as evidenced by the increasing presence of B/BM issues as boardroom agenda items. Of the scant B/BM coverage found in academia, there appears to be a large gap between B/BM issues discussed in marketing journals, textbooks, and classrooms and those discussed in corporate boardrooms. Surprisingly low emphasis is presently given to B/BM education at AACSB-accredited undergraduate schools of business, even those considered to be top-rated by the 2008 *Business Week* Survey of Schools of Business. This finding is of high importance to marketing education planners given that 70 percent or greater of today's U.S. corporate worth is a result of branding or BM decisions. Research shows that today's marketing graduates need better BM training in order to meet the hiring needs of brand-driven industries. Suggestions are

given for integrating B/BM concepts and for creating stand-alone courses. Although barriers may hamper an integration/creation initiative, the large boardroom/ classroom gap must be narrowed to keep marketing education relevant. This research was intended to raise marketing educators' awareness of two issues: (1) the lack of attention being given B/BM issues in marketing education, and (2) why B/BM topics should be of educator concern.

We used survey analyses to gather information from the 462 U.S. AACSB-accredited schools of business that we stratified into two sub-groups: (1) the 96 top-rated AACSB-accredited schools of business (as rated by *Business Week*, 2008), and (2) the remaining 366 other U.S. AACSB-accredited schools of business from which we drew a random sample of 96 for analyses. We analyzed each school's marketing department website for a B/BM course offering. Content analyses was used to analyze marketing journals; *Brands in the Boardroom*; and principles of marketing texts for coverage of B/BM concepts.

Our research findings revealed the following: (1) that few (19/96 or 20 percent) of *Business Week's* top-rated AACSB-accredited undergraduate schools of business offered a stand-alone B/BM course; (2) that very few (3/96 or 3 percent) of the remaining 366 offered one; and (3) that B/BM coverage gaps exist between various marketing education publications – principles of marketing texts, top marketing journals, and *Brands in the Boardroom*.

These findings have important implications for marketing educators and marketing curriculum planners. Based on our research efforts, we contended that there is a growing need for more emphasis on B/BM education in today's marketing programs.