

MORE FEARLESS INNOVATION IN MARKETING EDUCATION: WRITING (POETRY) TO LEARN

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an innovation in the marketing classroom – poetry writing – that is a complement to the marketing educator's existing toolkit. While writing is critical for learning, much of the writing in business education is descriptive and analytical. However, thinking has three dimensions – reflective, creative, and critical (Hill & McGinnis, 2007; Ruggiero, 2003). Reflective thinking involves identifying challenges and opportunities by questioning what has already occurred, and deepening our understanding of our experiences. Creative thinking involves generating ideas and includes but is not limited to techniques such as brainstorming, analogy, and visualization. Critical thinking involves evaluating ideas (including one's own and others') and identifying the best ones. It includes developing the ability to separate fact from opinion, recognizing reasoning errors, analyzing arguments, and making ethical judgments. A complete view of critical thinking should include all three types of thinking. Creative thinking must be cultivated (Anderson, 2006; Hill & McGinnis, 2007) by moving beyond the dominant form of writing in business classes (descriptive, analytical) towards reflective and creative writing.

A focus on creativity, including creative writing, is important because of evidence that critical thinking diminishes during the progression through college (McIntyre, Hite, & Rickard, 2003). Further, creativity in marketing is critical for generating new product ideas, and for designing products and marketing campaigns. It is the basis for much organizational growth and success (Titus, 2007). Thus it is imperative that marketing educators develop pedagogical approaches for cultivating creativity among students of marketing (McCorkle et al., 2007).

Poetry is an approach to building creative writing and thinking. It is finding its way into mainstream science, including mathematics education and medicine where its usefulness stems from its, "paradoxical ability to communicate parsimoniously certain aspects of human experience.... Practitioners have discovered the power of poetry to deliver with economy what normal speech, scholarship, or pedagogy can do only with great difficulty, if at all" (Sherry & Shouten, 2002, p. 219).

In this paper, a poetry exercise is described, its use in marketing education discussed, and preliminary evidence for its success provided. With no prior use in marketing education, it provides a fresh approach to writing in marketing courses. It is an alternative to the traditional analytical writing that dominates marketing case analyses and plans.

As a reflective and creative exercise in which students are asked to reflect on their experience with a brand and write a poem about it, poetry writing develops students' practical skills (Peterson, 1996) and offers opportunities for spontaneous information processing (Matulich, Papp, & Haytko, 2008). Poetry not only involves students in a creative act requiring students to create a concise whole but, since it is a linking of the heart and head (Sherry & Shouten, 2002), it improves student engagement with course content. As an arts-based writing technique, poetry provides an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of concepts (Cantor, 2006). Further, when poetry is used as a key component of the product and branding component of a marketing class, it helps students understand that consumers develop emotional connections with brands. "Perhaps emotional truths are best communicated emotionally. Perhaps we know certain things are true or valid because, like good poetry, they resonate within us, expanding and enriching our consciousness" (Sherry & Shouten, 2002, p. 219). It gives students a chance to express their thoughts and emotions about their product experiences in a visceral way.

Having students write poetry has other benefits. It increases student engagement with the material and their enjoyment of the class. Further, sharing the poems in class is entertaining as students listen to and observe their peers animatedly read their poems. Finally, students' reflections on their product experiences and their creative poetry writing deepen their learning about marketing, thus completing the education cycle.

References Available on Request