

feminine words. Ideally, research should be conducted that determines if a truly neutral vocabulary could be identified so rather than balancing male versus female, the overall language is intrinsically neutral. This study only considered entry-level job advertisements. Future research should also investigate advanced job advertisements for gender bias. Longitudinal research could also be conducted to determine if initial bias in entry-level job advertisements leads to continued gender bias as employees advanced in organizations.

## **Conclusion**

This study sought to explore gender bias in job advertisements. There were significant differences between *neutral* verbiage and male/female bias. The subcategories of sales and marketing roles also indicate a male and female bias respectively. Bias against women in entry-level sales careers has detrimental consequences, not only for women but also for the success of organizations as a whole. Addressing this bias is crucial for the further examination of gender equality in the workplace, which not only affects women, but also men and the overall organization. Thus, organizations should implement a process to assure conscious awareness in the writing of job advertisements to assure neutral gender verbiage.

## **References available upon request.**

**Title:** An Evaluation of Incorporating a Narrative Filmmaking Project in an Advertising Course to Enhance Learning

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## **Abstract**

There is an emerging consensus among marketing educators that the learning environment must be accompanied by an outward industry focus. Ensuring such a focus requires a more reflexive exploration of how utilizing digital narrative filmmaking as a teaching strategy can enhance students' learning outcomes, how digital media technology can be used in marketing education, and what students can gain from the pedagogical shift towards experiential methods involving digital narrative filmmaking. This study reports a project – a digital narrative advertising project - which is designed to harness digital technology to engage student learning and meet marketplace needs while using important advertising concepts to accomplish its goals. By engaging students in developing a new digital advertising narrative for an integrated brand communication campaign, the promotional video project requires imagination, creativity and innovative thinking. Ultimately, the project's objective is to expand the student's effective message development skills in a more inductive and improvisational direction and teach how to communicate brand meanings more effectively and comprehensibly in the form of a digital narrative. Empirical research is provided suggesting that this method of learning performs well on a wide range of educational criteria

## **Introduction**

Experiential learning encourages learning through experience (Kolb, 1984, Lincoln & Frontczak, 2008) and has been shown to enhance integration of course material (Grau & Akin, 2011) and

perceptions of learning and actual learning (Chapman, Schetzle, & Whalers, 2016; Fowler & Thomas, 2015; Grau & Akin, 2011). Applying experiential learning theory in the classroom has also been shown to improve student engagement and learning experience (Huaizhong, Öchsner & Hall, 2017). Smith et al. (2005) note that the engagement paradigm views the professor as a designer of learning experiences. Some defining characteristics of student engagement concept, defined in terms of time and effort devoted to educationally purposeful activities, include: challenging problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and student–faculty interaction (Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005).

A number of scholars suggested that the need for imagination and creativity in business continues to grow year by year (Nissley, 2002, Shambu and Meyer, 2007, Bilton, 2006). When recognizing intriguing relationship between art and various aspects of business practices, scholars are increasingly employing musical and theater models to demonstrate successful product innovation, strategic thinking, and organizational innovative activities, even to the point where modern jazz improvisation analogies are almost common place in the management literature (Kamoche, Cunha & Cunha, 2003). A number of marketing educators have suggested that projects bringing more of the art world sensibilities into the classroom by integrating marketing concepts and art forms such as photography (Machin, 2016), sculpture (Polegato, 2014), poetry (Morris, Urbanski, & Fuller, 2005), and even filmmaking (Peterson, M., 2018) have much potential for boosting student learning. As the world of Web 2.0 has rapidly unfolded in recent years with an explosion of consumer-created content, marketing education faces an opportunity to integrate concepts and tools related to Web 2.0 while teaching creative skills, which are indispensable to a business' creative capital.

With its roots in literary theory (Polkinghome 1988; Ricoeur 1984), the narratology, has long been a basis for understanding how consumers experience their life as a story and seek authenticity through narrative (Kray, et. al. 2010; Wilson, 2011; Iyengar, 2011). Several areas of the marketing literature examined how the brands promoted via the ads that tell stories play a role in consumers' identity construction endeavors. Narratives provide consumers with the reasons for why things happen and why people engage in particular behaviors (Delgadillo and Escalas, 2004). Consumers make sense of their lives by thinking about themselves and the events around them in story form (Btuner 1990). The marketing literature argues that postmodern consumers engage in an active, ongoing identity construction process that may be informed by the meanings that emerge from advertising (Escalas, 2017, Firat, Dholakia, and Venkatesh 1995). Several areas of the consumer research literature explored the effects of narrative processing. Escalas ( 2004 ) investigated how brands become meaningful to consumers by examining the process of constructing narratives that create a link between a brand and a consumer's self-concept. Through a series of experiments, it was demonstrated that narrative advertising leads to narrative processing which enhances self- brand connections, and self-brand connections, in turn, are positively related to brand attitudes and behavioral intentions. The Adaval and Wyer's (1998) study shows that the advantage of narratives comes from their structural similarity to information naturally acquired in life experiences and from their tendency to induce holistic rather than piecemeal information processing strategies. Stories elucidate goals, evaluate actions to achieve goals, and interpret outcomes (Pennington & Hastie, 1986). Narrative advertisements are well suited to influence the viewers' focus on the process of using a

product, as opposed to the outcome of using the product, because narratives consist of goal-oriented action sequences incorporating goals, processes, and outcomes (Escalas, 2004). Consumers who saw a process-focused narrative ad exhibited stronger ad and brand attitudes and greater behavioral intentions to purchase the advertised product (Escalas, 2004). One of the advantages of process-focused narratives comes from their influencing consumers' thinking about the behavioral steps necessary to achieve the benefits of using the product, thus creating a plan. Therefore, consumers are more willing to take these behavioral steps, and develop stronger attitudes and intentions to buy the product. Previous studies also explored the role of transportation, where consumers become absorbed in their story-like thoughts, in persuasive effects of narrative self-referencing (Escalas, 2007; Green and Brock, 2000). Surprisingly, given the number of authors who suggest important theoretical and practical ties between an artistic activity of storytelling and marketing education, there are few, if any, published empirical studies that actually examine this link (Peterson, M., 2018, Ryman et. al, 2009; Mills, 2010). Moreover, despite a solid body of scholarship and apparent practical relevance, there has been very little discussion of utilizing digital narrative advertising filmmaking experiential projects in marketing education.

The purpose of this paper is to present a discussion of the digital narrative advertising project which is designed to harness digital technology to engage student learning and meet marketplace needs while applying important advertising concepts to accomplish its learning objectives. A detailed examination of the task, which challenges students to use their creative abilities, and implementation details are presented. Empirical research examining student evaluations of how the project met a number of educational objectives is also reported.

### **Educational Objectives of Using the Narrative Filmmaking Project**

Undergraduate business students should be equipped with a broad range of knowledge and skills to enter and sustain careers in the business world. For example, Bacon (2017) identified increases in curiosity and cognitive complexity as important learning outcomes for marketing students. Thought leaders in business assert that marketing students should be prepared to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills (competency) specific to the domain of marketing as well as creativity and strategic imagination (Florida & Goodnight, 2005). For educators, encouraging "imagination" within a marketing decision making context requires developing a parallel set of appropriate pedagogical techniques. This paper outlines a student digital narrative filmmaking project designed for an Advertising and Sales Promotions course within an undergraduate management program.

Utilizing narrative filmmaking while employing digital video technology in advertising classroom presents marketing education with an opportunity to go beyond the traditional format of teaching message development and to create a "personalized student-centered learning environment" involving socially engaging task of visual storytelling. Using visual storytelling in the marketing classroom offers a number of advantages and presents a number of opportunities to enhance learning. The creation of video storyboards and production of actual videos is more novel to students (few students are familiar with the video production process prior to the project) and lends itself to exploring different aspects of narrative advertisements and creativity in group work. From a creative execution point of view, video makes it easier to induce

different types of emotions. Also, video has a temporal perspective and allows multiple aspects of narrative advertisements to be discussed and implemented, e.g. deciding whether the brand is a minor prop or a central aspect of the story, whether the story has unexpected elements, different dramatic forms or plots, e.g., comedy vs. tragedy, different degrees of character development, and moment- by-moment plot twists. This is particularly important when teaching students how to activate narrative processing and facilitate the formation of self-brand connections by consumers.

The project requires students to create a digital advertising narrative film inquiring into three domains: content (the narrative), composition (the narration), and context (the advertised brand in a social context). The determination of the content of an advertising narrative is based on the insights into the consumer brand experiences, involves choosing a primary character, the key environments, props, and plots, and the symbolic devices that are relevant to the brand advertised. The composition of an advertising narrative requires empathy and anticipation of the emotional involvement of the consumer with the brand narrative and the closeness to the story. The determination of context requires expressing the experiences and events in the narrative in the context of the overall ideologies, experiences, and resources of the consumer. The advertising narrative project requires students to engage in a mode of information processing not typically required by traditional coursework in marketing programs. By encouraging students to develop a new digital advertising narrative for an integrated brand communication campaign, the video project requires imagination, creativity and innovative thinking. As a media environment is increasingly shaped by social media and digitized images (moving and still), in order to remain relevant. marketing education is evolving toward a pedagogy that is rich in engagement and strongly supported by digital technology. Using digital narrative advertising project transforms the message development and creative execution effort of students into a potentially powerful Web 2.0 experiential learning project involving creativity, sharing, and collaboration.

Ultimately, the project's objective is to expand the student's effective message development skills in a more inductive and improvisational direction and teach how to communicate brand meanings more effectively and comprehensibly in the form of a digital narrative.

### **The Task**

This instructional method utilizes experiential approach to learning in which students incorporate information covered in the Message Strategy and Creative Execution modules in an Advertising and Sales Promotions class into a four-minute digital narrative promotional video for an actual brand. Students are assigned to use principles and concepts discussed in the modules focusing on managing creativity, creative message strategy, and executing the creative to develop a 4-minute promotional video for a brand of their own choosing. The work on the project began by focusing on viewing and discussing examples of visual storytelling, themes and supporting evidence through short promotional films and feature film clips. Students then workshop the practical and aesthetic elements of visual storytelling and relevant filmmaking techniques by using digital phone cameras and computer video editing software. Starting with creative narrative idea development and thematic intent and working through the practical steps of filmmaking, all project elements are presented as workshop exercises in order to develop or enhance the students' critical thinking, creative and production skills. It is explained to students that

storytelling is something that comes naturally to us as and is something we use to make sense of the world in our everyday lives. Making visual stories is a fun and rewarding activity that stimulates both creative and critical thinking. Students are informed that professor and students will work together on how to foster idea development, on structuring narratives supported with visual evidence, on creating stories with purpose and on practicing positive group critique. Examples of the promotional videos are analyzed prior to assigning the project because being familiar with techniques, themes and mistakes made in promotional videos only comes from exposure to them. Not only is it important to watch and analyze promotional videos in order to know what works, and to break down how it was done, but sometimes the best way of learning about a new topic is by seeing what doesn't work. Some of the videos analyzed are deliberately challenging to watch to add an additional level of complexity to students' understanding of intertextuality and semiotics. The discussion questions are formulated to assess a variety of concepts as they relate to one another within the context of a single promotional video. Examples are used to illustrate fundamentals of composition, importance of shot choice and size, framing "shot by shot," preparation of creative brief, working with light, etc. To simplify matters, the broad marketing objective for the video project was to raise awareness and generate interest in the brand. Students could choose the particular segment they want to target, the geographic focus, and the theme/message of their campaign. Students could choose to emphasize a particular benefit or be more general, and choose one of the message strategies discussed in class and text. A set of guidelines covering the principles of video production was provided to the students. The handout explains terminology, fundamentals of video production, fundamentals of camera movement and action in the frame, and continuity. How to take advantage of music to enhance video, the difference between music videos and adding music to video, and directing action to sync with music was also discussed.

The value of pre-production is emphasized and it was explained that the pre-production materials are essential components of the project. The examples of the outline, shot breakdown, storyboard & production schedule, and creative brief for the promotional video are discussed.

### **Implementation**

Students in groups of three to four get involved in story writing, planning and producing a short digital video. Students get outside and gather visual images, put them together to build meaningful stories, and talk about what the images mean to say and how we make sense of them. There are many opportunities to talk about student's own experience outside of the classroom and how they might formulate new approaches by incorporating visual images and storytelling into designing integrated marketing communication campaigns. The focus is on choosing a meaningful theme, applying narrative structure to organize ideas and using supporting evidence to prove the unique selling proposition by writing and directing with purpose.

Students are informed that similar to a successful essay, the theme of a promotional video should be planned in advance using research, should be well organized (benefits of starting with an outline are explained), be supported with visual evidence (importance of make an argument is emphasized), then edited and re-edited (more than one draft) and, finally, convince a target audience (prove its point). Filmmaking is not only a more fun and interesting way to teach students how to use their message development and creative execution skills, but it engages their

artistic side by using visual storytelling to fortify their creative writing technique. It is rewarding to observe students deciding on important story information, finding evidence, solving problems and working together, brainstorming an idea and shot list, planning the project, and solving problems during shooting. Finally, students spend a session working on assembly, drafts, fine cuts, and final editing of the narrative advertising video. The process concludes with the digital story being shared with an audience.

For example, recently one of the student groups decided to work on the task of creating a promotional video for a Tide-To-Go, travel size fabric stain remover from P&G that wished to appeal to a cautious, always on the move, stringent consumer, who wants to look sharp at any given situation but not a current user of Tide-To-Go. The team recognized that the product benefits are widely underrecognized, the product does not hold a strong position in the minds of consumers, and set the goal to reinvigorate the sales. Although this task may seem somewhat challenging at first, it is surprising how well many message development concepts may be applied within a narrative advertising video project, and how well the end product demonstrates the educational benefits of the project. The team created traditional narrative structure, identified narrative building blocks, selected main characters, place, plot and theme, and demonstrated ability to think visually, using the frame, in order to convey the selling proposition that Tide To Go can make any mess disappear and to establish the idea that it is okay to relax and make a mess while running with coffee or enjoying the lunch: Tide-To- Go is there to erase the stain. This narrative advertising video also successfully incorporates the hierarchy of effects (generating attention with the music and using close up, medium shot, wide shot, using foreground/middle-ground/background, conveying a clear message in a form of a dramatic story, making a case and using supporting evidence, using good imagery and acting to enhance retention, and communicating a solid unique story proposition); operant conditioning (making a clear link between using Tide-To -Go and experiencing positive emotions afterwards); and classical conditioning (having the brand name announced and the product shown shortly before the reintroduction of the upbeat jazz music and showing one of the actors expressing strong positive emotions).

## **Method**

After completing the digital narrative advertising project, 17 students from a senior undergraduate advertising and sales promotions course were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their views of the project. A number of questions developed by Ryman, Porter, and Galbraith (2009) (some were modified to be applicable to the current project) were used to measure overall impressions about the project and its effectiveness, the extent to which the video project encouraged reflection and deeper understanding of advertising issues, the affective responses (fun, frustration, satisfaction, etc.) of students to the video project, and orientation toward art. All questions used a 7-point Likert scale, anchored with strongly disagree (-3) and strongly agree (+3). The specific questions and their mean values are presented in Table A, Table B, and Table C. Pairwise t-test were used to determine whether the mean rating for each question was different from 0, the neutral point on the scale. Results of this analysis are also presented in Table A, Table B, and Table C (all items differ significantly from the neutral point).

## **Results**

The questions asked of respondents may be divided in three categories: (1) learning outcomes, (2) project satisfaction, (3) art orientation.

**Learning Outcomes.** There was a strong support for the statement that the project helped to understand message development strategy (2.82). Relative to a standard exam, the task was perceived as more engaging (2.06), greatly increased understanding of how the various parts of creative brief fit together and relate to the creative message development process as a whole; and helped to learn about managing creative process (2.41). Together, these factors suggest that students were positive about the impact of the digital narrative advertising project on their learning (mean=2.539).

**Satisfaction with Project.** Students were well-satisfied with their effort on the activity (2.32), believed that the project was more fun than a normal exam (2.94), indicated that they would encourage the professor to continue to utilize this project ( 2.76), and disagreed with the statement that the video project was very frustrating (-1.35). Together, these factors suggest that students found the digital narrative advertising project to be a positive experience (mean=2.32)

**Art Orientation.** The two “art orientation” items: 1) perceived personal importance of art (2.17) and 2) personal perception level of creativity (2.41), were aggregated into a single measure of the student’s art orientation. The results indicated that students viewed themselves as somewhat art oriented (mean = 2.29).

A correlation analysis was performed to examine the impact of the student’s art orientation on their assessment of the digital narrative advertising project. The analysis indicated that students’ art orientation was not significantly related to either: 1) their satisfaction with the project ( $\rho=.096$ ,  $p>.001$ ) or 2) the perceived effectiveness of the project as a learning tool ( $\rho=.388$ ,  $p>.001$ ). Therefore, the results of this analysis, while indicating that the digital narrative advertising project is clearly perceived as an effective learning tool, also suggest that these outcomes are independent of students’ art orientation.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the survey responses, the educational objectives of the project were strongly met. In general, the project seems to greatly foster increased engagement, understanding of the process of developing messages, and perceived ability to manage creative process while working on a creative message execution. Another interesting result of this study is that students’ art orientation has no impact on students’ actual perceptions of the project effectiveness.

The practice of creating digital promotional narrative videos is a helpful analytical tool for marketing students. Such a collaborative project, even in today’s age, is quite unusual in bridging disciplinary boundaries. One of the advantages it offers is the way it facilitates collaboration between members of a message development team. In addition, by showing the videos they made to the whole class, students could compare their experiences with each other, develop ideas for future projects, and were able to point out creative discoveries and insights of particular interest. In sum, using visual storytelling in the advertising classroom, whether fiction or nonfiction, helps students connect to an effectiveness of creative and critical thinking that is important to their

academic and professional careers. The depth of understanding that is achieved when using images to tell a story, or explain an idea, or describe a thought, helps students gain confidence in their creative thinking process, leading students to have more trust in their own critical thinking skills. Thus, the digital narrative advertising project should be considered a valuable tool not only for advertising and sales promotion, but for other marketing courses as well.

**Table A**

Items Measuring Learning Outcomes

<b>Post-project Statements</b>	<b>Mean Ratings<sup>1</sup></b>
1. The video project helped increase my understanding of message development strategy.	2.82*
2. While working on this video project, I found myself engaging in a deeper level of thinking than I normally do when preparing for quizzes or studying to understand key advertising concepts.	2.06*
3. The video project helped me to think about how the various parts of creative brief fit together and relate to the creative message development process as a whole.	2.82*
4. Through doing this video project, I learned things about managing creative process that I wouldn't have if I had not done it.	2.41*
<b>Learning Outcomes</b> (average of above items)	2.53*
<sup>1</sup> As measured on a seven-point scale, where +3 = “strongly agree,” -3 = “strongly disagree,” and 0 = “indifferent” or “don’t know.” * p < 0.001; * p < 0.1 (significance of the mean is relative to a 0 rating).	

**Table B**

Items Measuring Project Satisfaction

<b>Post-project Statements</b>	<b>Mean Ratings<sup>1</sup></b>
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1. I am very satisfied with my efforts on this assignment	2.47*
2. I would encourage the professor to continue to utilize this assignment.	2.76*
3. This assignment was more fun than a normal exam	2.94*
4. The video project was very frustrating	-1.35*
<b>Project Satisfaction</b> (average of above items, a frustration item is reversed)	2.32*
<p><sup>1</sup> As measured on a seven-point scale, where +3 = “strongly agree,” -3 = “strongly disagree,” and 0 = “indifferent” or “don’t know.”</p> <p>* p &lt; 0.001; * p &lt; 0.1 (significance of the mean is relative to a 0 rating).</p>	

Table C

Items Measuring Art Orientation

<b>Post-project Statements</b>	<b>Mean Ratings<sup>1</sup></b>
1. Art is an important part of life for me.	2.17*
2. By nature, I'm a creative person.	2.41*
<b>Art Orientation</b> (average of above items)	2.29*
<p><sup>1</sup> As measured on a seven-point scale, where +3 = “strongly agree,” -3 = “strongly disagree,” and 0 = “indifferent” or “don’t know.”</p> <p>* p &lt; 0.001; * p &lt; 0.1 (significance of the mean is relative to a 0 rating).</p>	