INCORPORATING SOCIAL MEDIA INTO THE MARKETING CURRICULUM

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Companies are integrating social media technologies into their marketing mix to reach consumers, promote brands, provide customer service, share research, increase sales, and in other areas of marketing (Dickey and Lewis 2010). Marketing educators face a challenge as they consider how to prepare students to use these tools in their professional roles. Although today's students have grown up with interactive media, they may be tech-dependent but not necessarily tech-savvy. Thus, the question becomes how do marketing educators integrate interactive technologies into the curriculum to support student learning so that graduates and future marketers are prepared to use, create, and manage effective marketing campaigns using a new and ever-changing generation of media. The literature offers some examples of the various social media platforms in use in marketing classes, including YouTube (Payne, Campbell, Bal, and Piercy 2011), Second Life (Halvorsen, Ewing, and Windisch 2011), Facebook (Granitz and Koernig 2011) and Twitter (Lowe and Laffey 2011; Rinaldo, Tapp, and Laverie 2011). There are new social media platforms introduced each year, the newest of which are Pinterest and Google+. As these new platforms are introduced, educators have an opportunity to use them in the classroom but this requires reflection on pedagogical beliefs and an understanding of how the incorporation of a new method will change the learning environment.

Marketing journals have called for more research in the area of teaching with social media, resulting in several publications on social media integration in the classroom. Most publications in the area agree that using social media for student learning can be beneficial for teaching (Lowe and Laffey 2011; Rinaldo, Tapp, and Laverie 2011). These benefits include conciseness of communications, robustness compared to texting and email, convenience of use, the nonintrusive nature of the technology, and the ability to track student behavior (Lowe and Laffey 2011). Evidence for enhancing student learning (Granitz and Hugstad 2004), understanding of marketing practice, and preparation for the job market has also been demonstrated in the literature (Rinaldo, Tapp, and Laverie 2011).

These articles highlight factors that may make social media integration difficult. For example, social media is a dynamic technology that requires a great deal of learning on the part of the professor (Rinaldo, Tapp and Laverie 2011). Likewise, because social media is still relatively new and we do not fully understand the boundaries of social media in practice, professors have to learn as we go (Dickey and Lewis 2010). These factors may make teaching with and about social media difficult, perhaps causing anxiety for both students and professors as they step out of their comfort zones.

As with any new technology integration, best practice for teaching with social media is still being explored. Professors use social media to demonstrate real world examples to marketing students, to stimulate student learning (Lowe and Laffey 2010), to communicate with students about course topics (Rinaldo, Tapp, and Laverie 2010), to engage students in their own learning (Payne, Campbell, Bal, and Piercy 2011), and to teach methods for using technology for marketing and advertising (Halvorson, Ewing, and Windisch 2011).

This panel will discuss (1) pros and cons of course integration versus stand-alone instruction of social media marketing, (2) challenges of integrating social media into traditional courses, and (3) methods for integrating social media into traditional courses. We intend to generate discussion on how social media tools are beneficial for marketing educators as a form of experiential learning. Professors can use social media to communicate, in real-time, with students to generate interest and discussion on course topics in the same manner in which marketers use social media to generate interest and discussion surrounding their brands. We will discuss how using social media can facilitate learning and can prepare students for future careers.