

## USING AN INDEX OF LEARNING STYLES AS A TOOL TO DEVELOP CLIENT- BASED PROJECTS FOR MARKET RESEARCH STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

For many years the Market Research course was taught as a lecture-based course. Case studies were used to illustrate how market research tools applied to hypothetical business situations. Course evaluations suggested that students were not grasping the market research techniques, and they were uncertain of their ability to use the tools in subsequent research endeavors.

Over a two-year period the Index of Learning Styles (ILS) was administered to 90 market research students. The printed version of the ILS questionnaire consisted of 44 incomplete sentences to which an "a" or "b" response could be selected to finish the statement. The survey took roughly 10-15 minutes to complete. The responses of students were submitted on-line and a profile for each student was returned with scores on four learning dimensions: active-reflective, sensing-intuitive, visual-verbal, and sequential-global.

Frequency distributions for each dimension were generated and analyzed. Data overwhelming showed that students preferred a teaching environment that favored active, sensing, visual and sequential learning. The traditional Market Research course had been taught using teaching strategies that favored the reflective, intuitive, verbal, sequential student learner.

In particular the data showed that of the 90 respondents, 28.3 percent represented a preference for strong active learning while no one fell into the strong reflective learning category. In the sensing-intuitive dimension 29.4 percent of the students recorded a strong sensing preference while 1.5 percent indicated a strong intuitive learning preference. The visual-verbal dimension showed the largest percentage favoring the visual learner. Of the 90 students 36.8 percent indicated a preference for strong visual while only 2.2 percent indicated a preference for strong verbal. In the sequential-global dimension 31.4 percent of the students were strong sequential and 1.1 percent of the students were strong global. Due to space limitations the mild and moderate categories for each learning dimension are not recorded here.

Setting aside the case study approach, the Market Research was organized so that students would work for a business client on a real world market research issue. Of particular interest were research projects that allowed students to write the survey instrument, collect and analyze primary data, and present their findings to the business client at the end of the term. Businesses were typically selected from the local community and varied in size from small entrepreneurs to large corporations. Both profit and nonprofit companies were used.

Feedback from students and business clients was the only means of evaluating the success of this style of teaching market research. Course evaluations indicated that students as well as business clients were very pleased with the results.

Limitations to this study were a small sample size and the fact that the only statistical procedure used to analyze the data was frequency distributions. Future research in the area of learning styles will focus on using regression and correlation analysis to analyze the data in more detail.