### References Available upon Request

**Title:** Teaching Tourism Marketing as an Elective Course to Marketing Students in the Philippines: A Developing Country Perspective

**Author(s):** Robert Charles G Capistrano (De La Salle University)\* (<u>robert.capistrano@dlsu.edu.ph</u>)

#### Abstract

This paper provides a reflexive account of the challenges encountered in teaching tourism marketing to marketing major at the undergraduate level. While tourism marketing as a course has been offered in various tourism schools in the Philippines, this posed a challenge when teaching non-tourism majors. Using autoethnography, I reflect upon my journey as an educator in the Philippines who pioneered in teaching tourism marketing in a business school rather than a tourism school where tourism marketing is a required course. Beyond the existing and generic knowledge of marketing students on marketing principles is the need to understand tourism not only as an industry, but also as a social phenomenon. This paper makes a valuable contribution to marketing educators who are integrating tourism marketing in their current business curriculum particularly in developing countries.

#### Introduction

Tourism is recognized as one of the tools for poverty alleviation as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, it is incorporated as targets in Goals number: 8 (decent work and economic growth); 12 (responsible consumption and production); and 14 (life below water) on inclusive and sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, respectively. Tourism education must therefore be responsive by preparing the students as future leaders and managers to meet these challenges. This paper reflects my personal account as a Filipino educator who is currently teaching tourism marketing in a non-tourism school in the Philippines.

According to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourist arrivals increased by 7% between 2016 and 2017, to reach 1.3 billion. This compares with just over 1 billion in 2013. The report also reflects that Asia and the Pacific accounts for 30% of the world's international tourism receipts, a share that has almost doubled since 2000 (from 17%) (Financial Times, 2018). Between 2005 and 2016, Asia outperformed all world regions in terms of growth, international tourists arrivals increasing an average 7% per year compared to the world average of 4%. 2016 was the region's seven straight year of consistently robust growth. In 2016, the region enjoyed a remarkable 9% increase in international arrivals, the highest across world regions, to reach 308 million international tourists. However, tourist traffic is on the rise in developing countries, with international tourism arrivals to these economies increasing from 507 million in 2013 to 597 million in 2017. A continuation of this trend should mean more receipts and revenues, more jobs, and more inward investment to support the growing tourism sector (UNWTO, 2017).

Furthermore, international tourism represents 7% of total world exports and 30% of services exports. As a world export category, tourism ranks third after fuels and chemicals, and ahead of food and automotive products, and in many developing countries, tourism ranks as the first export sector. Nearly all developing countries have identified tourism as a viable direction in the effort to alleviate poverty (Blake, Arbache, Sinclair, & Teles, 2008). In 2018, the total export value from international tourism amounted to US\$ 1.6 trillion, with the sector being responsible for 10% of the world's GDP, an accounting for 1 in 10 jobs (UNWTO, 2018).

Although growing much slower than its Southeast Asian counterpart, tourism remains part of the Philippine policy towards economic development (Dela Santa, 2015; Maguigad, 2013). At the policy level, the Republic Act No. 9593 (Tourism Act of 2009) stipulates that the State declares tourism as an indispensable element of the national economy and an industry of national interest and importance, which should be harnessed as an engine of socio-economic growth and cultural affirmation to generate investment, foreign exchange and employment, and to continue to mold an enhanced sense of national pride for all Filipinos.

#### Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the relevant literature by highlighting the current state of marketing education in the Philippines, the tourism environment and sustainable tourism in the Philippines. Through the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order (or CMO) no. 17 series of 2017, higher education institutions (HEIs) are required to innovate the curriculum by revising policies, standards, and guidelines for the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. The CMO specifically set guidelines to shift to learning competency-based standards/outcomes-based education while giving ample space for HEIs to innovate in the curriculum in line with the assessment of how best to achieve learning outcomes in their particular contexts and their respective institutional mission.

Under the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, students can choose from five distinct majors or specializations under the program including: Human Resource Management, Marketing Management, Financial Management, Operations Management, and Business Economics. The Marketing Management program prepares the graduate for careers in marketing, marketing research, advertising, and public relations (see Table 1 for list of specific courses). The curriculum provides the graduate with both technical skills and competencies required in the field, but also the flexible mindset that is necessary to stay competitive in a constantly changing business environment.

Table 1. List of Professional Major Courses and Elective Courses under the Bachelor of Science in Marketing Management in the Philippines.

Professional Major Courses	Elective Courses
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- Professional
   Salesmanship
- 2. Marketing Research
- 3. Marketing Management
- 4. Distribution

# Management

- 5. Advertising
- 6. Product Management
- 7. Retail Management
- 8. Pricing Strategy

- 1. Consumer Behavior
- 2. Sales Management
- 3. International Marketing
- 4. Franchising
- 5. E-commerce and Internet

## Marketing

- 6. Entrepreneurial Management
- 7. Direct Marketing
- 8. Services Marketing
- 9. Industrial/Agricultural

## Marketing

- 10. Cooperative Marketing
- 11. New Market Development
- 12. Strategic Marketing

### Management

- 13. Environmental Marketing
- 14. Special Topics in Marketing

# Management

15. Personal Finance

However, tourism marketing is not considered to be part either as a professional major course or as an elective course in the Philippines. However, tourism is important to a destination's economy. Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (2014, p. 534) identified five direct benefits of tourism to a destination: (1) direct employment in hotels, restaurants, retail establishments, and transportation; (2) support industries and professions (i.e., revenue management, software companies, and university tourism professors; (3) multiple effect where tourist expenditures are recycled through the local economy; (4) provides state and local revenues derived from taxes on tourism; and (5) stimulates export of locally made products.

In the Philippines, the direct contribution of travel and tourism to gross domestic product (GDP) was PhP 1,185.4 billion (US\$ 27.63 million, 8.2% of total GDP in 2016 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). The following year, the tourism industry contributed 12.2% to the economy that is measured by the share of tourism direct gross value added (TDGVA) to the GDP amounting to PhP 1,929.3 billion (US\$ 38.8 million) (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018). This trend reflects the importance of tourism as an industry to the national economy. However, tourism education like any other university degrees being offered in the country (i.e., nursing, information technology, etc.) remains export-oriented (Lorente, 2012). Business schools are therefore in a position to catalyze and create jobs by shaping the minds of students to support the local economy.

Sustainable tourism is instinctively appealing and is widely supported by the Philippine government in various legislative instruments such as Executive Order No. 111 (Establishing the Guidelines for Ecotourism Development in the Philippines) that went into effect in 1999. In the Philippine context, sustainable tourism aims to contribute to the economic development, environmental sustainability, and social and cultural well-being of destination areas. Moreover, sustainable tourism seeks to optimize local economic benefits and improve the residents' quality of life, protect the natural and built environment, and provide a high-quality experience for visitors.

In contrast to the policy, the Philippines ranked 79<sup>th</sup> out of 136 economies in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2017 which is five notches down in 2016 (World Economic Forum, 2017). Other factors that accounts the performance of the Philippines include the reduction of government budget dedicated to the development of the travel and tourism sector, reduced efficiency of ground transport, security concerns, and diminished protection of property rights. While environmental policy has improved, however, there is still a risk that undermine natural resources. To offer a tourism marketing course in the light of the increasing potential of Philippine tourism needs a critical review of the generic marketing course or electives and its content being offered in the country.

As a phenomenon, tourism influences the interaction and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1986). However, the complexity of issues arising from the human-environment linkages affecting the Philippine environment is an increasing concern, particularly in achieving sustainability (Sia Su, 2007). While tourism education remains to be business-oriented, the social science aspect remains underrepresented in educational practice (Caton, 2014). A holistic approach that examines the impacts of tourism is needed in business schools as the kind of tourism impacts is shaped by the chosen tourism development and marketing strategies.

# Methodology

For this paper, I used autoethnography as a qualitative research method that allows researchers to draw on their own experiences to understand a particular phenomenon or culture. Autoethnography can range from research about personal experiences of a research process to parallel exploration of the researcher's and the participants' experiences and about the experience of the researcher while conducting a specific piece of research (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Maso, 2001; Méndez, 2013). In writing this reflexive account, the first person "I", instead of the third person is now accepted in tourism journals such as the *Annals of Tourism Research* provided that the method deployed by the research justifies and explains its use (Tribe & Xiao, 2011). Contrastingly, narrating a story in the first-person perspective may run the risk of too much attachment to self and a certain set of memories (Denshire, 2014). While this can be a problem because the author may be seen as being too self-indulgent, the stories and experiences are not solely of the author, but rather that they also represent the group they are autoethnographically representing (Dewan, 2017). In autoethnography, one is evaluated through the 'ethic of

accountability' where the researcher write their truth as if all the people involved in those events were reading or listening (Méndez, 2013).

While autoethnography is utilized in qualitative marketing research (Hackley, 2007), writing from the perspective of a marketing educator remains scant. Autoethnographic studies remain relatively rare in marketing and consumer research partly because their critical orientation is perceived to be professionally risky in intellectually conservative business schools and top marketing and consumer research journals that are firmly wedded to a natural science model of social research (Hackley, 2016). Also, Freeman and Spanjaard (2012) emphasized that marketing educators should equip students in using ethnographic techniques into the marketing research curriculum as a viable alternative method of marketing research. Therefore, the essence of autoethnography is to use the subjectivity of the author as a bridge to the reader and by so doing to re-constitute some element of life or the world in a way that resonates at a personal level in order to capture both the scientific value of truth and the human need for meaning.

Upon writing this paper, I began to examine my power and positionality with certain assumptions about the phenomenon being investigated and the situations that were observed and experienced (Merriam et al., 2001). I also acknowledged my position as a middle-class Filipino who was both educated in the Philippines and overseas. Being one of the few Filipinos who earned a doctorate degree in Tourism Management in New Zealand, I felt the need to provide a new perspective in studying specialized courses in marketing particularly when incorporating tourism marketing. Considered one of the world's largest industry, I see tourism as an important discourse within the academic community, specifically relevant within a business school in order to influence undergraduate students in marketing to undertake a path within the tourism industry. I also bring in my position as an environmentalist having a master's degree in Marine Management in Canada as well as being a conservationist by profession for almost 10 years in the Philippines.

After finishing my PhD in 2014, I returned to the Philippines to teach in the University of the Philippines-Asian Institute of Tourism (UP-AIT), the premiere university in the country. I had the opportunity to teach undergraduate courses in Ecotourism, Tourism and Culture, Domestic Tourism, and Tourism Research Methods. In 2017, I moved to De La Salle University and became part of the university's business school particularly in the Marketing and Advertising Department where majority of the students are affluent. Being in a business school, I found my niche in developing Tourism Marketing as an elective course being offered to marketing students in the university.

Tourism education in the Philippines is one of the oldest in Southeast Asia which began in 1976 through UP-AIT in partnership with the Department of Tourism and the Philippine Tourism Authority (now the Tourism and Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority). However, the production of knowledge in Philippine tourism and hospitality remains limited. A study by Aquino (2018) coded and analyzed 98 articles related to the investigation of themes in Philippine tourism and hospitality from 2007 to 2017 and recommended the need for the indigenization of tourism and hospitality management in the Philippines while encouraging reflexivity among academics.

To the best of my knowledge, I pioneered in developing and teaching Tourism Marketing to non-tourism major students in the Philippines. For this study, I analyze my own personal journey as I am entangled and engaged with the universities I worked with and the community that I interacted with as an educator both in the University of the Philippines and De La Salle University. The former, being the country's lone national university that is committed to nation building by shaping minds that shape the nation (UP Diliman Information Office, 2016). The latter, a Catholic university that provides quality human and Christian education by teaching minds, touching hearts, and transforming lives (De La Salle University, 2017). Transitioning from a tourism to a business school gave me the opportunity to reflect upon my journey while assessing the curriculum being offered to students and be able to improve teaching and learning in the university. As an individual and a citizen of a developing country, I also see myself as a change agent to improve Philippine education by giving back since I had the opportunity to study overseas for my postgraduate degrees as an international scholar.

### **Results and Discussion**

Provided below are the various challenges I encountered in teaching Tourism Marketing to marketing student majors:

1. Lack of available resources in tourism marketing from a Philippine context
There is a lack of published or online resources in tourism marketing in the context of the
Philippines. As most resources are available from a Western perspective (i.e., Hudson & Hudson,
2017; Kotler, Bowens, & Mackens, 2014), I equipped using the only textbook dedicated to
tourism marketing within the Philippine setting by Gatchalian-Badilla (2015) that focuses on the
marketing mix (Kotler et al, 2014) – including product or service, price, place, and promotion.
The content also includes aspects related to tourism market and segmentation, tourism and
consumer behavior, tourism marketing and the communication process, relationship marketing,
destination branding and marketing, distribution channels, and developing a marketing plan. I
also incorporated Hsu et al.'s (2008) textbook that deals with an Asian perspective in tourism
marketing. However, the resource is still focused from a developed country perspective which is
unable to examine the context of the Philippines as a developing nation.

In tourism market and segmentation, I discuss Plog's article (2001) that explains why destinations rise and fall in popularity and from a consumer perspective, explaining the tourists' personality characteristics and determining their travel patterns and preferences. Given that most destinations follow a predictable, but uncontrolled development pattern from birth to maturity and decline, students as future tourism marketers will be able to assess, evaluate, and manage tourism development and maintain an ideal positioning. Tourism marketing students should sharply define target markets as travelers' behaviours and preferences are evolving from being a destination for adventurers (i.e., backpackers or explorers) to one that attracts the least adventurous group of travelers. Segmenting and monitoring the tourist market is necessary while preserving the natural environment including the need to set aside particular areas for special protection.

2. Examining tourism products vis-à-vis tourism impact to a destination

The core product of tourism is the beneficial experiences that are gained (Prentice, Witt, & Hamer, 1998). Being the second largest archipelago in the world, the Philippines is promoted due to its 7,100 islands. As an educator, I posit that tourism as a product should be consistent with the principles of sustainable development which integrates the environmental, social, and economic aspects of development. As a product, marketing for tourism is complex that involves stakeholders with a sound and professional destination marketing planning process (Morrison, 2013). Marketing students should also have a grasp of various principles including conservation of biodiversity, educational opportunities, visitor experience, planning considerations, ethical responsibility, and provision of community benefits.

The tourism industry is a complex and dynamic entity because destinations consist of many and varied enterprises, which although managed independently in response to various tourism demands are closely interrelated. Many tourism industries exist, some large and some small, overlapping in many places and with diverse component organizations (Leiper, 2008, p. 237). The big gap in the distribution of tourism income between the rich and the poor can exacerbate poverty (Blake et al., 2008). In some Philippine destinations, the economic benefits from tourism enjoyed by the local tourism sector (represented by boat operators, dive operators, and resort owners) have allegedly disadvantaged local fishers in terms of access to and control of the marine protected areas (Fabinyi, 2008; Majanen, 2007; Oracion, Miller, & Christie, 2005). Hence, addressing poverty through provision of alternative livelihoods in tourism remains a constant challenge in the Philippines.

## 3. Marketing as a course remains business-oriented

The shortest definition of marketing defined from a marketing management perspective is 'meeting needs profitably' (Kotler, 2001). Within this framework, marketing majors taking tourism will still need to define and differentiate mass tourism with sustainable tourism (or ecotourism) as a product where the latter has high-value and low-impact while giving premium to the natural environment. Similarly, the word ecotourism has also been used and abused in the practical sense (Sirakaya, Sasidharan, & Sonmez, 1999) particularly in developing countries. Unlike university students taking tourism as an academic field in the Philippines, they have the opportunity to take up courses in Ecotourism/Sustainable Tourism, Tourism and Development, Resort Management, Tourism Laws, and other subjects where environmental ethics are integrated in the lesson (see Table 2 for a list of subjects offered in a Philippine tourism school). Marketing majors who are not familiar with tourism as a course (or as an industry or as a social phenomenon) may need to familiarize themselves regarding principles in tourism management and sustainability.

Unlike ecotourism or sustainable tourism, mass tourism is characterized by large-scale development, which aims to attract large number of tourists/visitors. From the experiential aspect, the tourism product in mass tourism is usually commodified and contrived. Tourists engaged in ecotourism activities, on the other hand, demand more individualized, authentic, and enriching experience with nature. As products, it is vital to examine the differences between mass tourism and ecotourism in terms of the market that they tend to attract and how tourism destinations are being managed. Not all tourism ventures that market themselves as 'ecotourism'

or claim to be practicing 'alternative tourism development' are in harmony with the principles of sustainable tourism. Many nature-based tourism ventures on private properties in the Philippines (especially those on island estates) are often up-market and exclusive. Although the maintenance of these facilities are quite high, it does not automatically make them ecotourism attractions if management is not ecologically sustainable and socially responsible. On the other hand, the proliferation of small-scale developments in the Philippines can just be as harmful as or even worse than a single large-scale development (Catibog-Sinha, 2012, p. 35).

Table 2. Indicative list of subjects offered per area in a tourism school in the Philippines.

Tourism Development	Tourism Management	Financial Management	Tourism/Travel Laws	Promotion
<ul> <li>World         Tourism</li> <li>Domestic         Tourism</li> <li>Entrepreneurs         hip         Development         in Tourism</li> <li>Land         Resource and         Resort Area         Development</li> <li>Tourism         Principles</li> <li>Tourism         Development         and Control</li> <li>Information         and         Communicati         ons         Technology         and Tourism</li> <li>Tourism and         Philippine         Culture</li> <li>Ecotourism</li> <li>Travel         Industry         Practices         (internship)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Principles of Organizati on and Behaviour</li> <li>Human Resources Managem ent in Travel and Tourism</li> <li>Tourism Managem ent</li> <li>Meetings, Incentive Travel, Convention and Exhibition (MICE) Managem ent</li> </ul>	Managem ent     Accountin g for     Tourism     Enterprise s     Financial Managem ent in     Tourism     Enterprise s	Tourism     Law I     Tourism     Law II	Marketing Management in Tourism Promotion

Source: University of the Philippines-Asian Institute of Tourism, http://our.upd.edu.ph/files/catalogue/AIT.pdf).

4. Examining business ethics that incorporates tourism sustainability

There is a need to supplement the curriculum in business courses that focuses mainly on business ethics which may not cut across issues affecting tourism as an industry. Currently, the only course taken by students in marketing only deals with business ethics are norms and rules that govern marketing communications including laws that govern mass communication and legal and ethical issues in the Philippines. Due to lack of available statistical data by the Philippines' Department of Tourism, the increase in visitor arrival and the expenditure of various markets are still the basis for economic gains. Nonetheless, the complexity of tourism as an industry necessitates its sustainability and covering other topics that deal with destination life cycle, carrying capacity, and other ecological concepts because students need to realize and learn that there is more to statistics that count.

Moreover, an important issue worth discussing is economic leakage that Mowforth and Munt (1998) described has become an accepted feature of tourism. These authors showed that developing countries are drawn to tourism as a way of earning foreign exchange that resulted to the leaking of much of the money made, straight back out of the national economy. This leakage, as it is now commonly known, was seen to arise primarily as a result of the transnational corporations' ownership and control of the tourism industry in the developing countries: from hotels to tour operators and airlines The short-term goals in tourism development are generally profit-oriented with very little or no consideration for the welfare of the host community and the ecology of destinations (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Hall & Lew, 1998).

A classic example being used by majority of Filipino professors is the case of Boracay Island. Recently, this tiny island declared back in 2012 by Travel+Leisure as the best island in the world, was closed in 2018 for a six-month period after the President Duterte descried it as a 'cesspool.' The number of existing hotels and available rooms in Boracay has exceeded and that there is an excess in solid waste generated and insufficient wastewater treatment facilities. Being a popular destination in the Philippines promoted for mass tourism, the strategy should not be about growing the number of tourists entering the island, but in increasing revenues from each tourist while maintaining mass tourism services.

I believe that island destinations that are mostly situated in developing countries can generate higher revenue receipts by providing high-quality tourism services and diversifying services, including ecotourism and cultural tourism activities. Today's tourist destinations need a new philosophy centered on keeping loyal visitors in order to guarantee long-run success and enhance the destination's sustainability. It is more desirable, and less expensive, to retain tourists than to conquer new ones (Kastenholz, Carneiro, & Eusébio, 2006). From a marketing perspective, it is five times more expensive to attract a new customer than to retain a loyal one (Kotler, 1997).

## Conclusion

Tourism marketing has the power of turning 'unknown places' into popular tourism destinations. In the Philippines, tourism is a major industry where numerous tourist destinations and attractions are being promoted on small islands and coastal areas. If properly managed, tourism

can assist nation-building efforts and promote national identity and pride (Henderson, 2003; Palmer, 2007). The gap identified in this study provides a direction for the future development of marketing courses in the higher education in the Philippines. There are a number of possible options to bridge the gap: (1) developing relationships between the marketing educators and the tourism industry through establishing a consultative forum; (2) allowing marketing educators to gain experience in the tourism industry while equally allowing industry practitioners in tourism marketing to work within a university setting as either guest lecturers; and (3) developing processes for curriculum development that incorporate consultation with industry to inform and guide the process. These recommendations could provide a depth and breadth of knowledge in tourism marketing that is contextual, practical, and beneficial for the Philippines as a developing country. In driving tourism growth for nations, states, and cities, students can enter the world tourism industry and plan strategies towards successful destination planning and marketing. Tourism and/or destination marketing is a career worthy of college and university graduates (Kotler et al., 2014).

Methodologically, a novel approach of this study is utilizing autoethnography for the two different distinct fields of tourism education and marketing education. Future scholars may reflect upon how tourism marketing is being taught in developing countries. Collaboration with other developing countries in Southeast Asia should be explored by tourism educators to facilitate knowledge exchange and share successful pedagogical practices. In the context of marketing research, educators who are interested to teach tourism marketing should determine the motivations of tourists in taking pleasure vacations in tourist destinations. Research in tourist motivations is necessary for developing tourism products, assessing the extent of limits of recreational demands, and in formulating appropriate marketing strategies.

In telling my teaching journey, using the methodology and writing style of autoethnography, I have been able to relate my personal experiences and the experiences of the others in my teaching in a lifelike way. Going through this process has empowered me as a citizen of a developing country together with my knowledge and the lessons learned in teaching tourism marketing to move forward and meet the needs of the changing markets. Students need information to stay competitive and understand how many tourists are desired, which segments to attract, and how to balance tourism with other industries. Nonetheless, it is essential for tourism planners and marketers to consider not only the economic benefits of tourism, but also the protection and conservation of the natural and cultural environments, all of which will contribute to the sustainability of natural resources.

# References Available upon Request

**Title:** Assessing the "Why" Behind Purchase Behavior Using Student Revealed Data

**Author(s):** Stuart Van Auken (Florida Gulf Coast University)\* (Svanauke@fgcu.edu); Ludmilla Wells (LgWells Marketing Consultancy)

Students are challenged to think about their own purchase behaviors as to the "why" they are loyal or non-loyal using data that they have revealed. The study is unique in that students provide their own purchasing insights for each of twenty rapid-repurchase cycle products, as well as insights into their own overall extent of brand loyalty behavior. The collected student data are aggregated and partitioned into two categories: higher loyalty and lesser loyalty products using t-Test departures from an overall brand loyalty assessment. The resulting groupings are used to have students assess "why" the evidenced results are occurring. Students can thus reveal why they stay with brands in some product categories and why they switch brands in other product categories.

Ensuing class discussions let students reveal they why behind behavior in ways that textbooks do not provide. The discussions also allow students to see that the same behavior may be a function of different considerations many of which are capable of segmentation.

# References Available upon Request

**Title:** Hype or Help? Understanding the Desirability of Digital Marketing Certifications and Industry Need

**Author(s):** Caroline K Munoz (University of North Georgia)\* (cklmunoz@ung.edu); Scott Cowley (Western Michigan University); William Humphrey (Florida International University)

### **Purpose of the Study:**

The question of how students can acquire and effectively demonstrate digital marketing skills is an important one for marketing educators. An array of digital marketing projects, courses (e.g. Digital Marketing, Social Media Marketing, and Digital Analytics) and degree programs have recently been created to prepare future digital marketers. Yet, an additional proposed way to develop competence in digital marketing is through Industry certifications that concentrate on topics (e.g. Hubspot Inbound Certification) and technology platforms (e.g. Google Analytics Certification) (Munoz & Wood, 2015; Staton, 2016). These certifications could also prove to be a desirable form of qualification signaling to industry professionals, with some anecdotal evidence suggesting that they have positively influenced hiring decisions (Staton, 2016). To better understand digital marketing skill and certification demand, this research is guided by several research questions: Which certifications are exhibiting the most interest by certification-seekers? Which certifications are most frequently sought by employers overall and in proportion to the skills those certifications are designed to demonstrate? Which skills that correspond to the available certifications are most frequently sought by employers?

## **Method/Design and Sample:**

Two types of data comprise this research: search volume data as a representation of market demand for certifications, and job listing website data as an indication of demand for certified market applicants and corresponding certification-related skills. All data were collected on a