

TEACHING CHINESE UNDERGRADUATES IN CENTRAL CHINA INTERNATIONAL MARKETING USING A BLOG TO ENABLE CULTURAL RESEARCH WITH AMERICAN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In just three weeks how do you teach Chinese undergraduates in central China how to successfully select, adjust, and approach marketing a Chinese product in America, having never taken a marketing class before? An internet blog created by the author for this purpose seemed, as it turned out, a good solution. While Chinese group members used the blog as a core learning tool to gather primary data from chosen American student bloggers to complete a Country Notebook assignment, it also gave tremendous insights into Chinese culture for both the American students and professor. Cross-cultural assignments, created for this International Marketing class in China, now better inform cultural discussions in the author's same course taught in an American classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 1940s Bloom introduced American educators to three high-level domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and kinesthetic. Later Bloom (1956) developed the cognitive taxonomy to include six levels, visualized as a pyramid, which build on each other as a hierarchy. Chinese teaching primarily reflects the cognitive domain, and, more specifically, the three lower cognitive levels Bloom identified: knowledge, understanding, and application (Wang & Farmer, 2008). In contrast, Western education has focused on the three higher level cognitive skills of Bloom's taxonomy: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956). Researchers have linked affective learning—dealing with the emotions and heart—with cognitive learning (Hall, 2005). While affective learning is more closely examined in the 21st Century (Owen-Smith, 2004) its application has been characterized as being the space where both teacher and student can co-create an environment to learn from each other (Palmer, 1998; Hall, 2005). Considering cross-cultural teaching, this understanding is especially important as many differences result from various world views. To be effective, a teacher must understand his/her cultural norms and then the students' culture, learning how to bridge the differences (Valiente, 2008). This challenges professors to create different pedagogy

strategies to teach more effectively cross-culturally. Perhaps this is no more fully appreciated and fundamental than in teaching international marketing in a culture that is nearly polar opposite, as with Americans teaching in China (Hofstede, 1983).

PEDAGOGY DESIGN

With three weeks and 40 total instruction hours, I set the goal for my 15 undergrad Chinese students to create a Country Notebook, the precursor to an international marketing plan, by assessing a geographic segment of the American market to introduce a Chinese product. This has been used successfully by other international marketing teachers (Crittenden & Wilson, 2005) but does not offer a way to collect primary data (Hu, 2009). With help from a technology-savvy friend, we created a blog to overcome this issue. I put my Chinese students into three groups of five each; five American bloggers—former undergrad and grad students—counterbalanced. I integrated six blog assignments within this three-part framework. Our first week we focused on *Who we are*, understanding the role geography and history play in creating a culture's context. By mid-second week we advanced to *What we're doing*, examining how to use these cultural understandings to better determine how to market in that country through primary and secondary data gathering; and the last few days we reviewed, *What we learned*, by sharing through group oral presentations.

CONCLUSION

As identified by others teaching in newly emerging markets (Clarke & Flaherty, 2003; Kelley, 2007) many of my "tips for instructional success" mirror theirs. With a slightly different focus, I offer 10 teaching insights. Personally, this first of six teaching opportunities in China fundamentally altered the way I teach American students. And, more importantly, how I relate with and teach international students, specifically Asian, in an American classroom.

References available on request