

A CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF HIGH SCHOOL
SUBJECT AREAS IN THEIR PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE
BY MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT PROFESSORS

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ABSTRACT

The success of students pursuing degrees and careers in marketing and management is in large part dependent on the educational skills and background the students acquire before entering college. Secondary research with respect to marketing and management professors' attitudes toward those high school subjects which could be regarded as important in the development of students in their fields of endeavor was lacking.

A mail survey of marketing and management professors to determine which high school subjects were important in preparing students for degree programs and careers in marketing and management was conducted. Ten high school subject areas were studied. Rankings of these ten areas were performed and correlation analysis was used to determine the extent of the correlation between the rankings of the two groups of professors.

The rankings of the two groups were shown to be significantly similar using both Spearman's and Kendall's rank order correlation coefficients.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, much has been written and/or spoken about the declining quality of education in this country. As stated in the recent report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), if a foreign power tried to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists here today, we might well view it as an act of war. Silber (1981) recently said that today's high school diploma does not guarantee a level of literacy for graduates. Mohler (1982) stated that just under fifteen percent of high school seniors receive their diplomas with the reading and writing skills of sixth-grade children. It appears that increasing foreign competition in marketing and economic matters may do more harm to the economy than military actions. Thus, whereas America's position in the world may once have been relatively secure with only a few well-trained people, this is no longer true. The level of competition that the United States is able to put forth will depend, to a large extent on the quality of the minds which are assembled on the management payrolls. The people of this country need to know that those who do not have the levels of skill, literacy, and training essential to this new era will, in effect, be disenfranchised, not only from certain material rewards, but also from the opportunity to fully participate in our national life (National Commission on Excellence, 1983). In order for universities to develop the minds of their students to the fullest, it is important that

knowledge be obtained about the preparatory skills levels of students in management and marketing so faculty members can gear their instructional materials and methods accordingly.

Much of the literature in the field of business education centers on curriculum development (Cagley and Boone, 1981; Bowers and Summey, 1982; Bernhardt and Bellenger, 1978; Duncan and White, 1982; Delene, 1981; and Bowers and Summey, 1983), teaching effectiveness (White and Duncan, 1982; Stampf and Hollander, 1980; and Smith Chandron and Talaga, 1982) and students' attitudes toward marketing issues and problems (Lipson and Gur-Arie, 1981; Dudley and Swan, 1982; and Hasty and Bellizzi, 1982).

A review of the literature revealed no research available in the area of marketing professors' and management professors' attitudes toward the high school subject areas deemed necessary to adequately prepare individuals to pursue degrees and careers in marketing and management. Even though attitudes do not determine prerequisites, it is believed that a teacher's attitude about his students' levels of preparation could influence the method(s) he uses to impart subject matter to his students. Due to this lack of important information, a study was undertaken with the objective of determining the importance of various high school subject areas in preparing students for degrees and careers in marketing and management as perceived by those individuals responsible for teaching at the college level in these subject areas.

METHODOLOGY

This study involved two mail surveys: a survey of marketing professors and a survey of management professors. The survey of marketing professors was accomplished by sending questionnaires to 100 members of each of the following three organizations: The American Marketing Association, the Southern Marketing Association, and the Southwestern Marketing Association. There were 165 marketing questionnaires returned for a response rate of 55 percent. The survey of management professors was accomplished by taking a random sample of 250 members of the Southern Management Association. There were 121 usable questionnaires (48.4%) returned.

The mail survey instruments were practically identical (the only difference was the substitution of the word "marketing" for the word "management" on the two questionnaires). Each questionnaire contained a section asking the

respondents to rank-order ten high school subject areas in order of their importance in preparing students for degree programs and careers in marketing/management.

The individual rankings were then tabulated and averaged so that an overall ranking for each of the two groups was established. Two types of correlations analysis were then performed and tested for significance: Spearman's rank order correlation and Kendall's rank order correlation. These two correlation coefficients are nonparametric in nature (neither depends on a normal distribution or intervally-scaled data to be computed) (Nie, Hull, Kenkins, Steinbrenner and Bent; 1975).

FINDINGS

The ten high school subject areas are presented below along with their corresponding rankings by each of the two groups of professors.

Subject Area	Rank	
	Marketing	Management
English	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Math	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
Speech	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Economics (Free Enterprise)..	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
Science	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Civics	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>
History	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>
Foreign Languages	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>
Bookkeeping.....	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>
Music.....	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>

These rankings show that marketing professors and management professors ranked six of the ten subject areas identically. English and Math were ranked first and second by both groups. These two basic subject areas seem to have been under-emphasized in modern primary and secondary education systems of late as evidenced by declining college entrance exams as well as calls for "back-to-the-basics" by many school systems across the United States.

Speech was seen to be of third importance by marketing professors who possibly feel that communication skills play a very large part in the role of a professional marketer. However, one could argue that communications permeates the entire college preparation of any student. Management professors, on the other hand, viewed economics as being the third most important subject area in which their majors should be prepared. These two subject areas were reversed in importance for the fourth level by each of the two groups of professors.

Science, civics and history were ranked fifth, sixth and seventh respectively by both groups of professors. Music was the remaining category ranked evenly by the two groups. It was ranked last (10th) on both professors' rankings.

Foreign languages and bookkeeping were ranked in

reverse by the two groups. Foreign languages were ranked eighth and bookkeeping ninth by marketing professors. Bookkeeping was ranked eighth and foreign languages ninth by the management professors.

As may be expected from pursuing the ranking of the two groups, there exists a high degree of correlation among the rankings. THE SPSS package was used to compute both Kendall's Correlation Coefficients and Spearman's Correlation Coefficients. Both showed that the correlation between the two groups was significant at beyond the .001 level.

Kendall's tau	<u>.9111</u>	Significance	<u>.001</u>
Spearman's rho	<u>.9758</u>	Significance	<u>.001</u>

The chief differences between Spearman's rho and Kendall's tau seem to center around the fact that Kendall's coefficient may be more meaningful when there are a large number of tied ranks in the data, though there appears to be no fixed rule of selecting one coefficient over the other (Nie, et al; 1975). Both coefficients were included in this analysis for comparison purpose.

SUMMARY

Management and marketing professors were surveyed as to their attitudes about various high school subject areas and the importance of each of these areas to the development of their majors. Marketing and management professors ranked English and math as first and second in importance for preparing students for degree programs and careers in marketing/management. A correlation analysis between the two rankings showed that marketing and management professors had a very high level of correlation in their rankings of the ten high school subject areas. The correlations were significant below the .001 level using both Kendall's tau and Spearman's rho coefficients.

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