The 48th Annual Marketing Educators' Association Conference
2024 Annual Conference Proceedings
Reno, NV – April 10-13, 2024

Figure 1

EDITORS

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PREFACE

This volume contains the proceedings of the 48th Annual Conference of the Marketing Educators' Association (MEA) held in Reno, NV on April 10-13, 2024. Proceedings have been submitted online to the MEA conference website www.marketingeducators.org.

The conference theme continues to be "Enhancing the Practice and Scholarship of Marketing Education," which reflects the association's commitment to embracing the challenges of new generations of students and ever-changing technology in continuing to provide the most effective marketing education possible. It also suggests career opportunities for marketing educators. Embracing new learning styles and new technologies and incorporating new methods in our classrooms transform these challenges into great opportunities. The topics discussed provide a vast and exciting array of methods designed with these challenges and opportunities in mind. These conference proceedings include competitive papers/abstracts, position papers, and special session proposals. Each competitive paper was double-blind reviewed, and the authors provided a full paper or an abstract for publication.

An editorial committee evaluated position papers and special session proposals, and authors provided an abstract for publication. Authors, session chairs, and reviewers represent a geographically diverse group from half the U.S. states and several other nations. We also enjoyed several student participants representing industry. The competitive papers/abstracts, position papers, and special session proposals appear by the title of the presentation, starting with the competitive paper winners. Anyone with a passion for teaching marketing and who is working their way through a marketing educators' career is sure to find many interesting and useful ideas in the papers and abstracts contained within the pages of these proceedings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Marketing Educators' Association (MEA) conference and these proceedings would not have been possible without the voluntary efforts of many people. We would like to thank the authors who submitted manuscripts for review and the reviewers who lent their expertise and their time by providing thoughtful feedback. We would like to thank the board for its leadership and support, and the executive team for their service in planning and executing the conference. Additionally, we would like to thank the volunteers who helped sort name tags, register attendees, moderate sessions, and welcome new participants.

Special acknowledgment goes to our President Vicki Eveland, DBA, who coordinated and organized the 2024 48th Marketing Educators' Association Conference. Thank you for leading MEA this year!

Thank you to President Elect Qin Sun, Ph. D., and Vice President LaCalvince Simpson, DBA, who served as intermediaries for the papers and special sessions submitted to this conference. We thank our treasurer/secretary officers, Suzanne Connor, Ph.D. and Rex Moody, Ph.D. They have diligently worked to keep the organization financially sound and operationally robust and have also played a significant role in conference planning and communication. We also appreciate Rex's willingness to store and transport MEA equipment to the conference. A special

Thank You to MEA Past President Tony Stoval, Ph.D., for working with conference sponsors and for his guidance and wisdom throughout the year.

Thank you to our competitive paper reviewers:

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MAKE PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

The 2025 MEA Conference will be held in Warner Center Marriott at Woodland Hills, CA on April 3-5. Start thinking about a paper submission now and watch the https://www.marketingeducators.org/ website for future information. Papers will be due for review in early January 2025.

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Online Misinformation & Disinformation: Strategies for Combating Fake News through A Digital Media Literacy Inoculation Intervention

Jennifer Zarzosa, Assistant Professor, Wingate University
Cecilia Ruvalcaba, Assistant Professor, University of the Pacific

Abstract:

Misinformation and disinformation in digital media are growing at an exponential rate. Education in information literacy is critical to ensure students do not fall prey to easily manipulated features. We propose marketing educators implement digital media literacy modules within their courses to inoculate students from misinformation tactics. Our findings indicated that if students undergo this intervention, they can identify misleading information by applying digital media literacy strategies such as lateral reading, fact-checking, evaluating source authority and perspective, assessing evidence, and click restraint.

Purpose of the Study:

The rapid growth of digital communications necessitates the skills for navigating this digital environment. As technology has made it easier for users to engage with a vast amount of information, it has also made the publishing of misleading or false information effortless. College students are perceived as digital natives who are fluent in evaluating the information that flows online yet research has indicated students struggle to evaluate Internet sources. As misinformation and disinformation becomes more prevalent, marketing educators need to ensure students are equipped to discern among the competing marketplace of information available online.

Method and Sample:

An experiment was designed to measure if students' information literacy increased after the lateral reading intervention. In the start of Fall 2023 term, 82 graduate students were asked to imagine they were researching the topic of climate change and came across a website. Students reviewed the disinformation website for no longer than 10 minutes and assessed if it was a reliable source of information. Throughout the semester, students learned about digital media literacy strategies such as lateral reading, fact-checking, evaluating source authority and perspective, assessing evidence, and click restraint. At the end of the term, 61 graduate students completed the survey post-test. They reviewed the disinformation website and assessed if it was a reliable source of information. The final sample only included students who took the pre-test and post-test.

Results:

A z-test for proportions was conducted to evaluate if the proportion of students who clicked on the first result on the SERP changed after the intervention. The number of students who employed click restraint technique increased from 57% in the pre-test to 80% in the post-test ($z = -2.887$, $p = .002$).

A z-test for proportions was conducted to determine if the proportion of students who opened a tab to conduct research about the website significantly increased from the pre-test to post-test. There was a statistical significance in lateral reading practices. 92% of students applied lateral reading during the post-test compared to 75% in the pre-test ($z = -2.446$, $p = .007$).

A paired t-test was used to evaluate changes in information literacy after the intervention. The students evaluated the relevancy of the evidence to determine if it supported the main argument. They applied this strategy after the intervention and found the main argument was significantly less relevant ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.20$) after the intervention compared to before ($M = 3.43$, $SD =$

.85) the intervention (t (60) = 2.45, p = 0.00). Moreover, students assessed the reliability of the evidence significantly lower after (M = 2.80, SD = 1.46) compared to before (M = 3.05, SD = 1.11) the intervention (t (60) = 1.74, p = 0.04). Similarly, the overall reliability of the website was perceived as significantly lower after (M = 2.67, SD = 1.59) compared to before (M = 3.02, SD = 1.08) the intervention (t (60) = 2.84, p = 0.03).

Value to Marketing Education:

The results show digital media a literacy inoculation intervention is effective in providing students with the tools necessary to navigate the online landscape. This is a valuable skill that is critical in today's technological environment. The flexibility of the assignment provides for its ability to implement in a variety of marketing courses and outside of marketing as well. It is hoped that the adoption of such methodologies in marketing courses will create a generation of students that will be not only digital natives but be fluent in navigating the digital information landscape.

Keywords: Digital media literacy, lateral reading, click restraint, source authority

31 Years of the Journal of Marketing Channels (now Journal of Inter-Organizational Relationships): Analysis of Research Themes and Future Directions

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Nitesh Pandey, Professor, Amrita School of Business
Satish Kumar, Professor, Indian Institute of Management

The Journal of Marketing Channels (as of January 1, 2021, changed its title to the Journal of Inter-Organizational Relationships) has been one of the leading journals in marketing channels research in the last 31 years (from 1991 to 2022). The main purpose of this review is to synthesize and summarize the most current state of knowledge of *JMC* and its evolution as a journal in the last three decades. Over its history, the journal has published influential research with authors from various countries of the world valued by both academic and practitioner audiences. Unlike previous work, this study researched all 453 articles published in *JMC* in 31 years. Therefore, our study provides a more complete and up to date examination of the journal that should be valuable to marketing channels scholars and practitioners. Our methodology closely follows previous bibliographic studies of marketing journals such as *Journal of Business Research* (by Donthu et al 2020), *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing* (by Valenzuela-Fernandez et al 2019) and many others. This study uses bibliometric techniques to identify the top authors and their clusters, the top countries that contributed to the journal, and maps the research themes prevalent in the journal over its history. We also map keyword networks for each decade of the existence of the journal to demonstrate the evolution of the research themes. Major bibliographic clusters were identified using VOSviewer software, while RStudio was used to map out the collaboration pattern among countries associated with *JMC* authors. Our analysis also shows the expansion of the journal's global reach over the three decades in terms of the contributors' country networks. Importantly, the study summarizes the research impact of the journal over its history and provides directions for future research for the journal. This research is relevant to the general marketing education as it demonstrates the use of the bibliometric techniques and applies to a concrete example of an academic journal.

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Impact of social media marketing strategies on brand equity of higher education institutes

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Abstract: Purpose of the study to study the role of social media marketing strategies on brand equity of higher education institutes. This study tries to find out how higher education institutions can develop brand equity using social media marketing. Data was taken from 403 post graduate students who were selected from various higher education institutes. It is found that that user generated content and institute generated content had a significantly favorable impact on brand awareness, brand image, and brand credibility, all of which have a good impact on student-based brand equity. The findings provide some practical implications for educational marketers to promote their higher education institutions. Integration of social media marketing strategies into the branding efforts of higher education institutes gives a new approach in emerging markets like India which not only help in enhancing their brand equity but also enables them to stay competitive in an increasingly digital interconnected world.

Keywords: User generated content, Institute generated content, brand image, brand awareness, brand credibility, brand equity, social media marketing, higher education institutes

1. Introduction

Social media has become the most active channel to reach consumers since the marketing environment changed ten years ago. Since the advent of social media, marketing has changed from traditional one-way communication to currently two-way multidimensional communication (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015; Lacka and Wong 2019;). Higher education institutions (HEIs) have prioritised branding in order to establish meaningful conversations with potential students about the HEI's brand values in the competitive climate in which they operate today (Nguyen et al. 2020). Higher education institutions create their branding strategies around their strong brand equity, which demonstrates the reliability and competence of their services to potential students, in order to stand out in the market (Mclaughlin, Mclaughlin, and Mclaughlin 2018). Brand equity enables HEIs to increase brand awareness in order to draw in students, hire top talent, capture larger market shares, and set themselves apart from other institutions (Mourad, Meshreki, and Sarofim 2020).HEIs must present well-thought-out strategies and programmes that will allow them to maintain their competitiveness for economic growth (Kotler and Fox, 1995;Pucciarelli and Kaplan, 2016).The younger generation has recently adopted social media at a rapid rate (Liu et al. 2021). Over 90% of potential students, according to estimates, utilise social media (Aldahdouh, Nokelainen, and Korhonen 2020). In order to engage with potential students, Higher education institutions now place a lot of emphasis on their social media marketing efforts (Lacka and Wong 2019; Farzin et al 2022). Will social media marketing strategies affect brand equity of higher education institutes? (Rq1). While social media marketing is well-established in developing Western nations, there hasn't been any comparative research on what drives consumers in developing nations (Choi et al. 2019). What is still not apparent is how brand equity for HEIs is created and enhanced through social media marketing and brand credibility (Rq2).

1.1 Direct Marketing via Digital and Mobile Technologies

The website of the HEIs should be accessible from a variety of gadgets, including tablets, smartphones, and desktop PCs. Information on course admissions, partnerships with stakeholders, student mobility, research opportunities, and other topics are available from them. (Jon and colleagues, 2014; Mok and Hughes, 2012; Mourad et al,2020). The websites of the HEIs may provide real-time, personalized interaction options through live chat services. They can interact with potential students via web conferences using readily available methods like Skype or Google Hangouts to answer their questions or address their worries, share papers or videos, and lead them through pertinent websites using co-browsing. Webinars for prospective students' parents might be planned by HEI marketing. Additionally, the HEIs' websites might include evaluations and ratings from students who can attest to the fact that they are giving their students adequate service. They will be able to draw in new ones thanks to the pleasant experiences shared by the pupils. The websites of the HEIs should be organized and well-designed, with clear, readable forms. Their content should be as enticing to online users as possible. They might include a wide variety of crisp pictures, movies, podcasts, and other media. They might also use virtual reality technology to let potential customers see the HEIs' facilities. HEI marketers can organize webinars for prospective students and their parents. Moreover, the HEIs’ website could feature student testimonials, including reviews and ratings that may serve as proof that they are providing an adequate level of service to their scholars. The positive experiences from the students themselves, will help them attract new ones. Attractive websites may persuade users to sign up for email subscription lists in order to get electronic newsletters and marketing materials. How HEIs can engage directly with potential students using this direct marketing strategy by using a range of media, including electronic newsletters, mobile messaging applications, websites, online and offline catalogues, and promotional letters, among others (Rq3). However, user generated content and interactive marketing and social media may help to develop relationships with potential students.

1.2 User-Generated Content, Interactive Marketing and social media

HEIs can advertise their higher education programmes on external websites and online portals that contain user-generated material in a variety of settings. For instance, Wikipedia pages have a large audience and a high credibility rating with search engines. HEIs can interact with potential students through discussions and unofficial surveys. Articles containing information that are meant to enhance communication with online users. HEIs have the chance to increase brand awareness through social media (e.g. Constantinides and Zinck Stagno, 2011; Kuzma and Wright, 2013; Bélanger et al., 2014; Mourad et al 2020). They must therefore create a presence on social media channels (Xu, Kang, Song and Clarke, 2015). Since interested prospects could be enticed to share and promote promotional content online, HEIs are depending more and more on the most well-known social networks. Through emails, postings, likes, tweets, mentions, and other social media channels, these digital marketing stimuli may cause social contagion (Camilleri, 2019). The marketing messages of the HEIs would spread virally as a result, as successful marketing efforts may cause significant emotional reactions in potential customers. Consequently, HEIs can benefit from word-of-mouth (WOM) promotion on social media (Dumpit and Fernandez, 2017; Nguyen et al. 2020). User-generated content (UGC), interactive marketing, and social media have become increasingly important in the field of education, transforming the way students learn, interact, and engage with educational content.

1.3 Digital Marketing and Education Sector

The educational sector and institutions can now take advantage of social media's potential thanks to digital marketing. Various social media channels are used when disseminating information to a global target audience. films and other shared stuff with excellent creativity. The decision-making process of students is significantly influenced by the digital promotions made available through these social networking sites. More than 98% of today's young are active on social networking sites, which is the main reason that most educational institutions are adopting social media to increase student usage. Through the creation of a brand image, social media aids marketers in increasing brand awareness among customers and precisely demonstrating to them what their brand actually is. Brand equity, according to Datta et al. (2017), entails developing distinctive qualities for a brand and highlighting the differences between brands within similar categories of goods and services for their customers. As a result, a brand's attributes that contribute to brand equity attract customers through the growth of the company's image, which in turn affects customer responses.

Thus, the present study intends to contribute existing knowledge by understanding of engaging, personalized, and collaborative learning environment in education, empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey and facilitating meaningful interactions with peers and educators. The next section relates to literature review.

2. Literature Review:

2.1 Social Media Marketing in Higher Education:

In developing branding strategies, HEIs are increasingly using social media to share, communicate, and collaborate with the students (Nguyen et al. 2020). The use of social media as a marketing channel has expanded in recent years, driven by the ability to reach millions of customers with brand-related content and engage them in conversations (Lacka and Wong 2019). Social media marketing (SMM) refers to the usage of social media networking sites for executive marketing activities effectively (Alawadhi and Al-Daihani 2019). The most prominent reason why social media has become an important communication tool in HEIs' marketing landscape is its ability to protect HEIs within the competitive environment and connect with the target audience instantly (Peruta and Shields 2018; Farzin et al 2022). In developing branding strategies, HEIs are increasingly using social media to share, communicate, and collaborate with the students (Nguyen et al. 2020). Social media facilitates the prospective students to receive a better understanding of the HEI including HEI reputation, education service, and quality, the course relevance, and HEIs' faculty member profiles (Rambe and Moeti 2017; Fearon et al. 2018). These factors influence the prospective students and other social media users to make their final decision of choosing HEI (Baker 2018; Rana et al 2022).

In order to create and exchange information about the brands with target customers, SMM is developed in two forms user-generated content (UGC) and Institute -generated content (IGC) (Raji, Mohd Rashid, and Mohd Ishak 2018; Müller and Christandl 2019; Jois, & Chakrabarti, 2021). UGC is the 'media content created or produced by the general public, rather than paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet' (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). It can be from past students, teachers, corporates, or parents. IGC is considered 'the content created by institutes on official brand pages on social media channels' (Colicev, Kumar, and O'Connor 2019, p.102). IGC can be on attributes like physical facilities, its rankings in the marketplace, activities with stakeholders, and excellent service delivery. Brand-related UGC motivates prospective students to develop positive feelings toward the brands (Hwang and Kim 2015). Students tend to search for information and advice from others on social media to develop their favourable attitudes toward enhancing brand equity. Besides, IGC also enables consumers to evaluate HEIs against competitive HEIs to enhance brand equity (Colicev, Kumar, and O'Connor 2019; Rana et al 2022).Social media is considered as one of those platforms playing a strong role in shaping people's opinion about brands by developing and maintaining reputations based on these shared experiences and opinions that can easily be expressed online (Hudson & Thal, 2013; William, Helena, Adam, Rob, & Marina, 2017; Jois, & Chakrabarti, 2021). The reputation on social media is generally analyzed on basis of number of followers, likes, views, shares, re-tweets etc. (Keitzmann et al., 2011;; Farzin et al 2022).).

2.2 Online Advertisement in higher education:

Consumer behaviour research has shown distinct attention to the attitude towards the advertisement and branding through online advertisement (Castaneda et al., 2007). A particular online advertisement targeting to a particular target spectators can create different effects appearing in different environments (Stevenson et al., 2000; Rana et al,2020). In order to assess the effectiveness of online advertisement, online ads features such as format and animation may influence the online users' attitude towards the object (Burns and Lutz, 2006). The inquiry also found that website characteristics associated with banner advertisements are expected to cause a substantial impact on the consumer thought process (Lee and Thorson, 2008). Past empirical research on demographic profiling of internet users confirms that majority of the internet users belong to young age groups. Research also showed that the younger generation's exposure to non-formal communication systems is increasing, and they are more technology savvy. A survey conducted by Calisir (2003) found that youthful people, between 13 to24 age groups, spend more time than older people on the net. Looking at above discussion, it is obvious that online advertisement has great potential to bear an influence on brand image.

2.3 *Brand equity in higher education*:

In the HE industry, brand equity can be demonstrated through the professionalism of teachers/lecturers (inseparability and heterogeneity in their skills and the way they interact with the audience) (Lovelock and Jochen 2007), the reputation and history of the HEIs in the marketplace (Panda et al. 2019), location (Haffner et al. 2018), the high-quality available courses that HEIs can offer and have the expertise (Rambe and Moeti 2017;Rana et al 2020), the supporting and operation systems to run education services (Mourad, Meshreki, and Sarofim 2020), and the physical facilities to support learning experiences (Fearon et al. 2018; Jois, & Chakrabarti,2021; Farzin et al,2022).

Brand equity is potentially a major element that influences the HE customer's selection process as it acts as a risk reliever as well as a differentiation tool (Carvalho, Brandão, and Pinto 2020). HEIs try to establish positive brand equity to (a) enhance the HEI brand awareness among the stakeholders (Dennis et al. 2017; Farzin et al,2022), (b) attract many students (Lim, Jee, and De Run 2018), (c) enable the HEIs to recruit high-calibre faculty and administrators (Mourad, Meshreki, and Sarofim 2020), (d) differentiate themselves from rival new and existing HEIs (Perera, Nayak, and Nguyen 2020), and (e) gain a higher market share (Chee et al. 2016; Rana et al 2022). The next section is on development of Developing Theoretical frame work t for the study

3.Theoretical framework: Based on the literature review, it is seen that factors influencing *Student based brand equity* (SBBE) in Higher education have received limited attention. The branding literature offers no prior research examining the issues and factors that are important for developing strong HEI brand equities (Endo, De Farias, and Coelho 2019). Developing and managing brand equity in the HE markets facilitates the HEIs to highlight the quality of service they are providing (Mourad, Meshreki, and Sarofim 2020). Thus, this research uses an empirical model adapted from Aaker (1991), Keller (1993) and Lassar, Mittal, and Sharma (1995) in which we propose that UGC and IGC have an impact on *brand awareness, brand image and brand credibility* which in turn have an impact on *brand equity*. Fig I is the model for the study

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Fig-I

Definition of each variable are given below:

Brand image: Brand image is the general perception and feeling of consumers for brands, and it affects consumer behaviour (Zhang, 2015). Huang (2017) mentioned that brand image is the process of mutual communication between brand stimulation and consumer perception. Lee, Tseng and Chan (2019) argued that brand image comes from the evaluation of the brand consumers, and the brand image in the consumer's memory will become an important consideration for consumers' purchasing decisions. Keller (2003) states the high level of brand awareness and positive brand image will increase consumer loyalty towards the brand. Understanding brand image (how consumers perceive a brand) can provide a valuable information for producing a brand identity (Aaker, 1996b). A positive brand image is established by marketing programs such as advertisement which link to the consumers' memory of the brand (Keller, 1998). According to Haque et al. (2006) consumer familiarity and confidence significantly depend on the brand of the products and the company's sales history. Brand image is also considered as the power to change customers' perception of the commodities and services offered (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996; Jois, & Chakrabarti, 2021).

Brand Image and Its Perspective in Higher Education: Under the higher education perspective, brand image is one of the most significant features for students in the selection of their desired institute for their further study. A positive brand image of an institution can helps its customers (students) to distinguish from other institutes and therefore affect their choice intention (Chen and Chen, 2014). Institutes of higher education would take the necessary initiative to form an outstanding brand image. This could be managed through proper management of target consumers in developing positive brand perception in order to be a distinctive in the competitive education market (Duncan and Caywood 1996). The branding of national higher education systems is increasingly becoming a common global trend over the recent years. Advertisement by using different media are the main activities in enhancing branding in supporting and acquiring the role in building brand equity of the customer by representing all thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, and experiences what consumers have learned, heard, felt, and seen over time about the brand. (Wang et al., 2009;Rana et al,2022).

Brand credibility: In the realm of intense competition, credible brands could trigger positive outcomes in the creation of brand value (Park, Im, and Kim 2018), and increase the purchase intention (Brunner, Ullrich, and De Oliveira 2019). Brand credibility refers to the customers' perception of the brand's perceived ability, motivation, and willingness to provide accurate and truthful information and deliver what the brand promises to its customers (Bougoure et al. 2016). Brand credibility is assessed through the holistic exposure of the customers to the brand across pre-purchase behaviour (Dwivedi, Nayeem, and Murshed 2018). Furthermore, in today's digital and interactive age, real-time information influences a brand's credibility (Pinem et al. 2019). It is intricately linked to high perceived brand value (Chakraborty and Bhat 2018), thereby improving customers' perception of the brand attributes (Chin, Isa, and Alodin 2019). Similarly, higher brand credibility exerts a substantial effect on customers' brand choice intention (Martín-Consuegra et al. 2018), influences the perception of high quality (Pecot et al. 2018), and low information searching cost (Fan et al. 2019). If the trustworthiness and expertise are not managed correctly, it can lead to brand rejection (Sun et al. 2019). In a service setting, brand credibility provides many benefits for the firms including high relationship equity (Mills, Pitt, and Ferguson 2019), reduced perceived risk (Busser and Shulga 2019), and positive change in customers' purchasing and consumption behaviour (Chin, Isa, and Alodin 2019; Rana et al,2022), which forms stronger ties between customers and the brand (Kashif et al. 2018).

Student based brand equity: Brand equity refers to ‘a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers’ (Aaker, 1991). Brand equity is the added value with which a given brand endows a product; thus, rendering the development of a strong brand is imperative for organizational strategic thinking (Farquhar, 1989). According to Keller (1993) *‘brand equity occurs when the customer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong and unique brand associations in mind’.* The brand equity has mainly two dimensions; customer-based & firm-based. From customer-based perspective, brand equity is based on constructs such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary assets (Aaker, 1991). From the firm-based perspective, it is the incremental cash flows resulting from the brand name (Chunling, Ping, & Haizhong, 2008; Farzin, et al,2022). The next section is on developing hypotheses

4.Development of hypotheses:

Chen and Qasim (2021) stated that customers’ perception of brands is positively influenced by the social media communications of the brand. Also, many previous researches have concluded that brand equity is improved by a brand's communications (Yoo et al., 2000). Also, a recent study by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015) concluded that social media communications of the brand could influence a brand’s awareness and brand equity. Hence, it is hypothesised that brand awareness mediates the positive effect of Institute generated Content (IGC) on Student based brand equity (SBBE):

H1: *Brand awareness affects the positive effect of Institute generated Content on Student based brand equity*

Usually, social media content created by firms enhances the probability of a brand being incorporated into a customer's mind when he is making a decision for purchasing (Algharabat et al., 2020). It is expected that content created by institutes on social media will have a positive influence on brand awareness and brand image (Bruhn, Schoenmueller, & Schafer 2012). Similar was concluded by Cham et al. (2016) that the efforts of social media marketing could lead to forming a brand image, leading to high brand equity. The effect of content generated by users of a brand can be positive or negative subjective to the content written by the user as it can comment negative or positive on a brand that sums up to affecting the brand image of a brand (Bruhn et al., 2012). In support of these statements, it can be hypothesized that:

H2: *Brand image mediates the positive effect of Institute generated Content on Student based brand equity*

Social media allows users to create and exchange brand-related information on online platforms (Buzeta, De Pelsmacker, and Dens 2020). In this case, the evaluation of the brand occurs not only between customers and institutes 'interactions but also among customers (Müller and Christandl 2019). Individuals believe that the opinions about the brand shared by their peers, family, or other influential people are trustworthy and reliable (Tajvidi et al. 2020). As such, *Institute generated Content* could create a varying effect on users' perceptions of the brands (Jiao et al. 2018). The brand-related *Institute generated Content* such as reviews of the service/product, comments about the facilities, and people working for the brand may involve lots of 'Likes', 'Comments', 'Shares', and 'Voting' would help users to recognize the brand's expertise and trustworthiness (Quesenberry and Coolsen 2019). The rationale for individuals to trust *Institute generated Content* is its lack of commercial purpose (Oliveira and Casais 2018). As such, if the users are highly engaged with the positive brand-related UGC activities, the effect on the evaluation of the brand is likely to be more positive (Jiao et al. 2018). Social media users typically rely on the content published by the brand assuming that the brand knows itself better than others (Mishra 2019). Meaningful brand image through the published IGC on social media provides some cues for the brand's ability and expertise in providing superior performance to competitive brands (Wang, Kao, and Ngamsiriudom 2017). For HEIs, the information shared by the HEIs on their social media pages could help to influence the students' perceptions (Peruta and Shields 2018). When prospects perceive relevant brand-generated information shared by users that they already know as helpful, valuable, or persuasive, they follow these reviews and recommendations (Mourad, Meshreki, and Sarofim 2020). The higher the believability of the information shared by the existing students, and parents, the higher HEI brand credibility social media users perceive. It can result in a formation of brand value in their mind and, thus, lead to a better evaluation of the equity of the higher education brands. We hypothesize that:

H3: *Brand credibility mediates the positive effect of Institute generated Content on Student based brand equity*

Charitha Perera et al. (2022) in their study explain that social media marketing facilitated prospective students to communicate and collaborate to gather information relevant to higher education institutions and their respective brand equity. The next section relates to methodology.

5. Methodology

Research Design: First secondary data is collected from various research papers on Google Scholar and EBSCO followed by qualitative research using personal interviews on 50 students to find out whether post graduate students make use of social media to decide about joining a higher education institute. The target segment is post-graduate students of different courses from various higher education institutes in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. Mumbai is not only a financial capital of India but also an educational hub. This is followed by a quantitative study in which data is collected by using a structured questionnaire. Judgement sampling is used to take a sample of 403 post graduate students.

First, personal interviews were conducted on 50 participants to find out whether they make use of social media to decide about joining a higher education institute. Then a structured questionnaire is used to collect quantitative data. It consists of two parts: the first part consists of demographic questions like gender, stream of education and whether the students are active on social media and which sites they use more often. The second part of the questionnaire has rating questions (on a scale of 1 to 5) for six constructs namely User Generated Content, Institute generated content, Brand image, Brand awareness, Brand credibility and Brand equity**.** *Brand image* is represented by statements like ‘Institute is known for good quality teaching’, ‘Institute is known for good placements’, ‘Institute is known for good infrastructure’, ‘The institute has been serving the students for a number of years’, ‘The institute has held an iconic place in the city’. *Brand equity* is measured by statements like ‘I feel proud of joining this institute’, ‘The institute is well appreciated by my friends’, ‘The institute is suitable for my personality’, ‘This degree is very valuable to me’, ‘I will gain more in value than the tuition fees paid’, ‘I chose this institute because of the benefits received’, ‘Institute is very responsive to student interests’, ‘I am happy with my growth and knowledge after attending this institute’ and ‘I have a positive feeling about the institute.*’* *Brand credibility* is measured by statements like ‘Institute does exactly what they promise’, ‘Quality promoted by this institute is trustworthy’, ‘I can count on the brand of this institute’, ‘Institute produces students having good knowledge and skills’, ‘I have full faith in the intentions of the promoters. *Institute generated content* is measured by statements like ‘I follow the information posted by institute on their official website’, ‘I visit institute website to know about infrastructure', 'I visit institute website to know about courses offered', 'I follow the institute social networking sites to know more about upcoming activities', 'I follow the institute website to know their ranking', 'I follow the institute website to know about their placements;, ;' I follow the institute website to know about their tie-ups'. 'I follow the institute website to know about their accreditation'. *User generated content* is explained by statements like 'Content shared by others about the institute meets my expectations', 'Content shared by alumni about the institute is encouraging', 'Content shared by students about the institute is better than other institutes', 'Parents of students have written good things about institute', 'Corporates have written good about the institute', 'External agencies have written good about the institute'. *Brand awareness* is explained by statements like 'I have heard about the institute', 'I have seen ads of the institute', 'My friends talk about the institute', 'Some friends have taken admission in this institute', 'I have visited this institute earlier', 'I am able to recall the name of the institute'.

The analysis consists of qualitative research using word cloud and its result is given below in Fig II:

Fig.II

Word frequency count is given in table -1 based on above

Table-1

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*Sample Design***:** Sample was selected on the random basis. Total 403 students were selected from different stream. Fifty-three percentage were males followed by females forty seven percentage. Males are higher compared to females as per gender ratio of country which is 51:49 (Srivastava,2022). The percentage of male students (53.2%) participating in the survey was slightly higher than the percentage of female students (46.8%). The students belonged to various streams of education like Management, Commerce, Arts, IT and Computer Applications, Science, Engineering and Pharmacy were selected. Management (24%); Commerce (16%); Science (14%); Engineering and IT (13%). Ninety-one percentage of these students are active on social media. Majority of the students (57.8%) are active on Linked In, followed by 29.6% on Facebook and Instagram (10%). Majority of the students (81.3%) visit websites of institutes to know more about them.

Questionnaire Design: Cronbach alpha values were determined and its result is given below in table-2

Table-2

Thus, the Cronbach Alpha statistic of all the constructs is greater than the acceptable criterion of 0.70 (Nunnally 1978), indicating that the survey instrument meets the required level of reliability (Chow 2004). A normality test (K-S-Test) and the Shapiro-Wilk test have been used to judge the normality of the data, as suggested by Srivastava, (2022). Since the sig. value > 0.05 for each factor, the data follows a normal distribution. Harman's single-factor test was conducted to examine the study's common method bias (CMB) as per the study by Singh & Srivastava, (2020). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on all items of the measured constructs, and the results showed that more than one factor with an eigenvalue greater than one was extracted, and no single factor accounted for significant variance. Hence, CMB was not a concern in this study. As there is no one factor, common method bias is eliminated (Hair et.al 2010). A correlation test, too, indicated that there is a very low correlation between one factor, and the other.: Since the KMO value > 0.7, it shows that the sample size is adequate for factor analysis. In the Bartlett's test, since the significance value is 0.000 (i.e., very close to 0), hence it shows that the data is suitable for conducting factor analysis. Factor analysis is given below in table-3.

Table-3

Statements 1 to 9 have a high loading factor (greater than 0.7) for factor 1. Hence these statements can be clubbed together under factor 1 and can be named as '1. *Student based Brand Equity'*. Statements 10 to 17 have a high loading factor (greater than 0.7) for factor 2, which can be named as '2. *Institute generated content'*. Statements 18-23 have a high loading factor (greater than 0.7) for factor 3, which can be named as '3. *Brand awareness'*. Statements 24-29 have a high loading factor (greater than 0.7) for factor 4, which can be named as '4. *User generated content'*. Statements 30-34 have a high loading factor (greater than 0.7) for factor 5 which can be named as '5. *Brand Credibility'*. Statements 35-39 have a high loading factor for factor 6 which can be named as "6. *Brand Identity'*. The next section relates to Results:

6.Results:

Structural equation modelling is done using AMOS software to test the hypotheses and to find the model fit and test its validity. SEM using AMOS software allows to rigorously test complex theoretical models, evaluate their fit to the data, and assess the validity of their hypotheses, providing valuable insights into the relationships among variables in a given phenomenon. It also means that the theoretical framework underlying the model is supported by empirical evidence from the data. This study tested the specific hypotheses embedded within the model. This involves examining whether the estimated parameters are statistically significant and whether they align with the hypothesized relationships. Fig-III gives the path diagram

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Fig.III

Firstly, item reliability was evaluated based on the factor loadings of the items (i.e., observed variables) on their respective constructs. As all the factor loadings were higher than the threshold value of 0.5, convergent validity was supported (Hair et al. 2014). Secondly, construct reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha (α). As Cronbach's alpha was higher than the threshold value of 0.7, construct reliability was supported (Hair et al. 2014).

To estimate the fitness of the model estimates including the $\chi 2$ statistic, the goodness of fit index (GFI), Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and comparative fit index (CFI) were assessed using AMOS and SPSS. The model yielded acceptable fit indices: $\chi 2/df = 3.776$, GFI = 0.991, AGFI= 0.971, RMSEA = 0.096 and CFI = 0.964.

From the regression coefficients table, it is seen that

(i) Institute generated content (IGC) has a significant positive effect on brand image (p value= 0.002)

(ii) Institute generated content (IGC) has a significant positive effect on brand awareness (p value= 0.000)

(iii) Institute generated content (IGC) has a significant positive effect on brand credibility (p value= 0.000)

(iv) User generated content (UGC) has a significant positive effect on brand image (p value= 0.000)

(v) User generated content (UGC) has a significant positive effect on brand awareness (p value= 0.007)

(vi) User generated content (UGC) has a significant positive effect on brand credibility (p value= 0.003)

(vii) Brand awareness has a significant positive effect on Student based brand equity (p value = 0.019)

(viii) Brand image has a significant positive effect on Student based brand equity (p value = 0.001)

(ix) Brand credibility has a significant positive effect on Student based brand equity (p value = 0.003)

This shows that Institute generated content (IGC) and User generated content (UGC) have a significant positive effect on brand image, brand awareness and brand credibility. Also, brand image, brand awareness and brand credibility have a significant positive effect on student-based brand equity (SBBE).

Hence, it can be concluded that brand image, brand awareness and brand credibility mediate the positive effect of IGC and UGC on SBBE.

6.1 Hypotheses Testing:

The summary of the hypotheses testing is given in table-4

Table-4

Hypothesis H1 states that brand awareness mediates the positive effect of UGC on SBBE. Since the effect of UGC on brand awareness (p value = 0.007) and effect of brand awareness on SBBE is significant (p value = 0.019), H2 is accepted. Hypothesis H2 states that brand image mediates the positive effect of IGC on SBBE. Since the effect of IGC on brand image (p value = 0.002) and effect of brand image on SBBE is significant (p value = 0.001), H2 is accepted. Hypothesis H3 states that brand credibility mediates the positive effect of UGC on SBBE. Since the effect of UGC on brand credibility (p value = 0.000) and effect of brand credibility on SBBE is significant (p value = 0.003), H3 is accepted.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

First and foremost, our findings showed that user and institute generated content had a favorable impact on brand awareness, brand image, and brand credibility, all of which have a good impact on student-based brand equity. Students utilize social media extensively and are particularly receptive to information posted by other users about the programmes available, the calibre of the staff, the facilities, the ratings of the university, accreditations, and other events and activities. Students engage with the institute's website and other social media platforms like their Facebook page in a similar way. These interactions on social media give individuals access to content produced and published by the institutions, such as current activities, relevant programmes, and HEIs rankings, which helps them better understand HEIs.

While earlier study (Del Roco Bonilla et al. 2020; Gyamfi et al. 2021) demonstrated the importance of user-generated content for high participation services of higher education, our findings reveal that HEI-generated material also has an impact on student-based brand equity (SBBE). These findings contribute to scholarly discussions about the effects of user- and firm-generated social media content on brand perceptions and customer behaviour (Sagynbekova et al. 2021). According to Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016), brand value perceptions among consumers are unaffected by firm-created social media marketing.

However, the current study demonstrates that institute-generated content has an effect on brand equity in the higher education sector by influencing brand image, brand awareness, and brand credibility perception. Furthermore, brand image (p value = 0.001) was found to have a greater positive impact on SBBE than brand awareness (p value = 0.019) and brand credibility (p value = 0.003). The second result is that brand awareness, brand image, and brand credibility play significant mediating roles. Additionally, prior research appears to support the idea that the brand-relationship construct mediates the relationship between user-generated content and customer-based brand equity, such as brand identity, brand commitment, and brand trust (Barreda et al., 2020). (Augusto and Torres 2018). However, the mediating effects of brand awareness, brand image, and brand credibility have not been researched.

Our findings indicated that brand awareness, brand image, and brand credibility act as mediators between UGC and IGC and SBBE. IGC and UGC do not directly increase brand equity. Instead, some of UGC and IGC's overall influences on SBBE are spread through brand recognition, brand credibility, and brand image. Users' shared content would enable potential customers to learn how students learn about the institute, build a positive brand image, and comprehend how HEIs are able to deliver on their brand promise.

Similar to this, the updated content provided by the institute via Facebook advertisements, posts, comments, and replies to specific comments on brand pages aids in brand recognition, brand image comprehension, and brand credibility. It strengthens their positive opinion of the HEIs' brand equity as a result. This study extends the arguments of Dwivedi, Nayeem, and Murshed (2018) by confirming the mediating roles of brand awareness, brand image, and brand credibility. These authors report that building the credibility of the brand is an effective way to attract customers, which in turn also makes it easier for consumers to justify paying a higher price for the brand value.

Technology advancements are making it possible for marketers to understand their audiences better. For instance, the marketers at HEIs can use Google AdWords to determine which ads are converting prospects and the most popular search phrases. The keyword and message combinations that work well in specific markets are identified by AdWords. Additionally, Google Analytics gives HEIs a precise image of their website activity. They will be able to track and monitor the success of their internet marketing as well as tailor their communications as a result.

Many HEIs nowadays are using big data and analytics to reach out to new target segments in various situations (Camilleri, 2019). They frequently articulate carefully thought-out integrated marketing communications programmes that are designed to give them the best options for development and growth. This article has described how top HEIs use a range of marketing communications strategies, such as advertising and promotions through traditional and interactive media, to spread the word about their top-notch academic offerings and outstanding contributions to well-known academic publications.

In order to maintain a competitive advantage over rival institutions, it was made clear that HEIs should sell their educational services through strategic marketing communications channels in various markets. They will be in a better position to build their brand equity with potential pupils if they do this. But HEIs must make sure that their standards, values, and quality claims are supported consistently over time. HEIs firmly believe that social media is the future of communication. They are using a multifaceted communication approach in which several content kinds are employed to interact with their stakeholders.

8. Managerial implications

This study provides HEIs with a useful foundation for creating long-term SMM plans that will raise their profile across the globe. There is proof that the pandemic has dramatically increased social media use generally in recent years (Tam and Kim 2019). Given that consumers' aversion to making physical contact with others has grown as a result of the epidemic, it becomes sense to predict that the usage of social media for brand-related behaviours has likely increased (Knowles et al. 2020). In the sphere of higher education, 81% of prospective students utilise social media every day to look up pertinent information about the HEIs they want to attend (Smith and Anderson 2018). Therefore, it is crucial for any HEIs to understand how to interact with a potential student online. The study gives institute marketers the chance to pinpoint the most persuasive social media content and put branding plans into practise to draw in potential customers. The findings support the notion of brand equity via the lens of global common patterns, assisting managers in mapping and creating new environments for HEIs that take into account local context-specific details (Khoshtaria, Datuashvili, and Matin 2020).

It's crucial for institute marketing managers to comprehend what inspires potential students to interact with institution brands in order to develop positive relationships with students (Manca 2020). This study offers important guidance on how to balance hybrid material produced by the marketing team of HEIs and other stakeholders on social media to strengthen their connections with potential students. First, institute marketing managers need to improve their social media contact with students to provide a special value that will affect how prospective students perceive the HEI's brand equity. This trustworthy, non-commercial information could show that HEIs perform good education services. Students can quickly assess the HE brand's expertise in education using this array of clues. In turn, this can encourage potential students to "follow" their social media profiles in order to strengthen their connections with the school.

Second, by communicating with HEI stakeholders on social media, prospective students can learn more about the HEIs they want to attend. They begin looking for posts from other students who share their views, asking alumni and educational professionals for help, and participating in debates about HEIs in third-party social media groups. Thirdly, institute marketing managers should ensure the brand messaging is clear in order to draw potential students' attention to what the HEI stands for since our framework suggests that brand credibility is essential for SBBE.

In order to convey the credibility of the educational services that the HEI deliver, there should be consistency in the marketing mix selections, including contact with the students utilising both FGC and UGC. Instead of merely increasing their promotional campaigns, HEIs should invest more to develop and preserve the factors that determine brand equity (Mourad, Meshreki, and Sarofim 2020). Because of this, HEIs can better position their services in the market and influence students' enrolment intentions by concentrating on creating and maintaining the factors that determine brand equity (Kaushal and Ali 2020).

It is found that that user generated content and institute generated content had a significant favorable impact on brand awareness, brand image, and brand credibility, all of which have a good impact on student-based brand equity. Hence, brand awareness, brand image, and brand credibility act as mediators between user generated content, institute generated content and student-based brand equity.

10. Limitations and scope for further research

The sample size is limited to only 403 customers. A larger sample size can give more reliable results. The sample covers respondents only from Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. The study can be extended to people from other states and cities.

11.**Contribution:** Integration of social media marketing strategies into the branding efforts of higher education institutes gives a new approach in emerging markets like India which not only help in enhancing their brand equity but also enables them to stay competitive in an increasingly digital and interconnected world. Secondly, the study suggests that instead of partnering with high-profile influencers, institutes can collaborate with micro-influencers—individuals with a smaller but highly engaged following—to authentically promote their brand and connect with niche audiences.

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Annexure

Fig.I: Theoretical construct

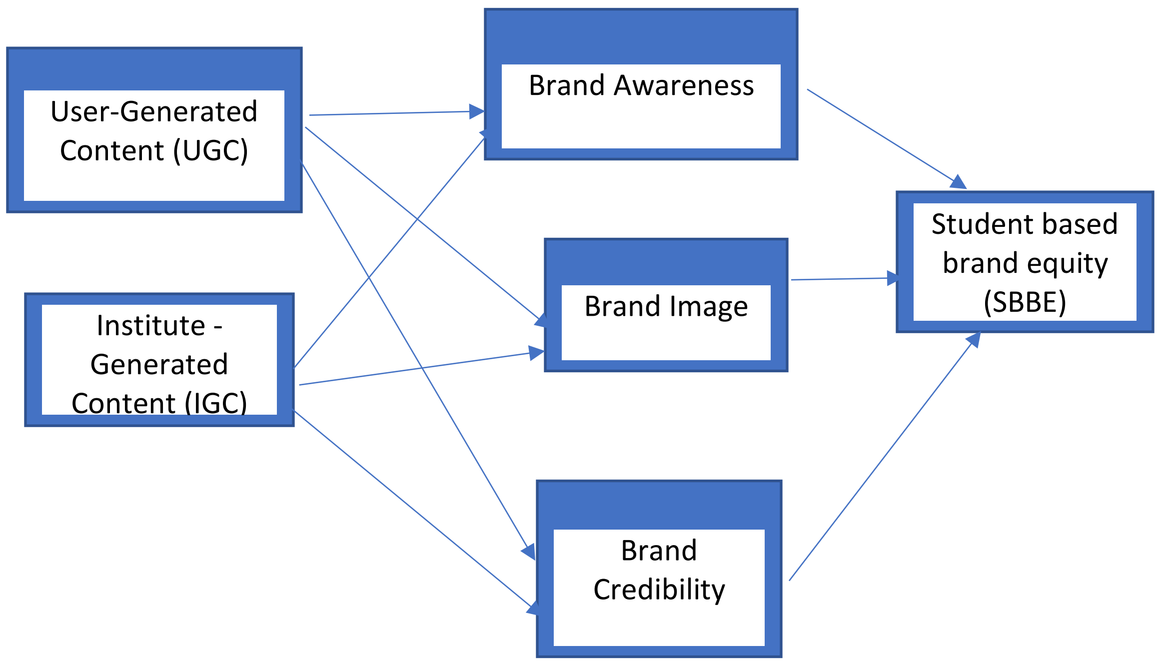
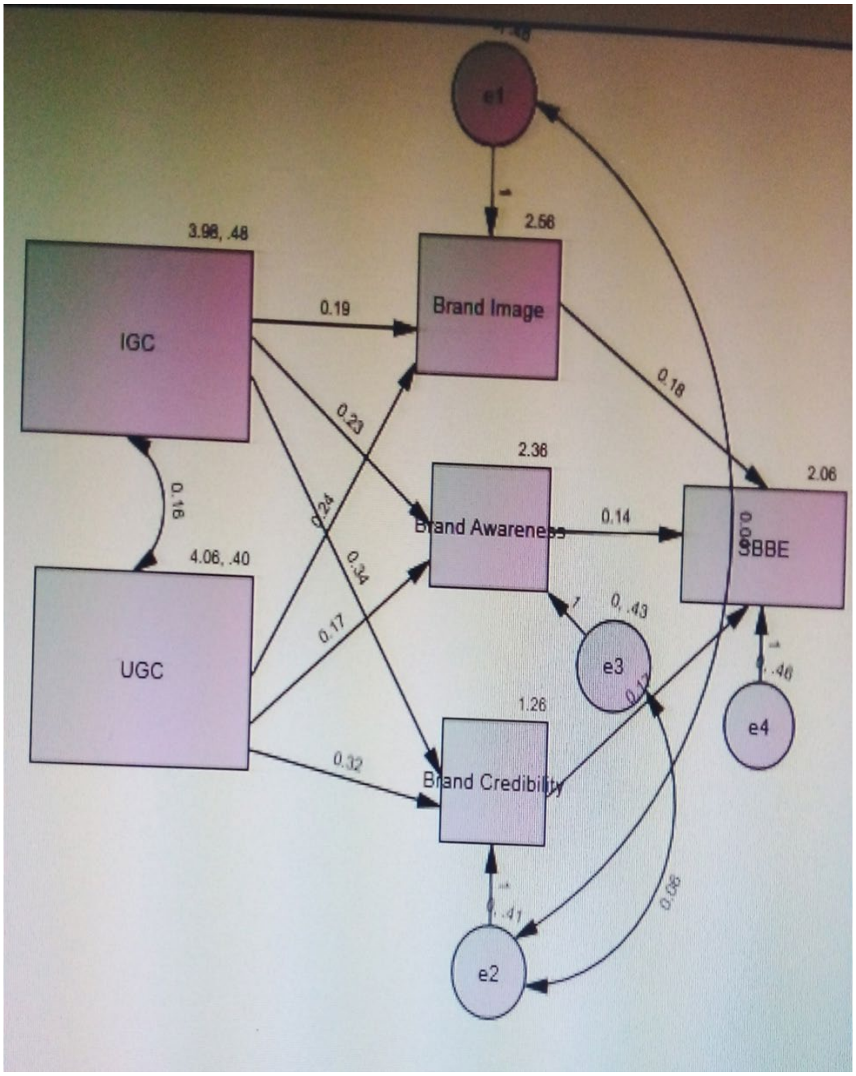


Fig.II: Word cloud analysis

Fig.III:The path diagram:



Model Fit Summary

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	24	11.327	3	.010	3.776
Saturated model	27	.000	0		
Independence model	12	243.243	15	.000	16.216

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.953	.767	.965	.818	.964
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	.200	.191	.193
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	1.000	.000	.000

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	8.327	1.527	22.647
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	228.243	181.399	282.527

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	.038	.028	.005	.075
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	.811	.761	.605	.942

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.096	.041	.159	.078
Independence model	.225	.201	.251	.000

Table-1:Frequency count

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
institute	9	168	43.52	institute, institutes
good	4	104	23.32	full, good, skills, well
know	4	80	20.72	intentions, know, knowledge
website	7	64	15.56	sites, website
follow	6	48	12.44	Follow
students	8	40	10.36	student, students

college	7	32	8.28	college
friends	7	32	8.28	friends
known	5	32	8.28	known
name	4	32	8.28	name
place	5	40	7.24	place, positive, posted, ranking, sites
visit	5	28	6.56	seeing, visit, visited
content	7	24	5.2	content
encouraging	11	24	5.2	encouraging, promoted, promoters
shared	6	24	5.2	shared
value	5	24	5.2	appreciated, value
written	7	24	5.2	written
brand	5	24	5.2	brand, posted
placements	10	24	5.2	placements, positive
well	4	22	4.68	easily, well
attending	9	20	4.48	attending, seeing, serving
believe	7	20	4.48	believe, credibility, trust
count	5	16	4.16	count, number
faith	5	20	4.48	faith, trust
feel	4	16	4.16	feel, feeling
gain	4	20	4.48	addition, gain, paid
infrastructure	14	16	4.16	infrastructure
quality	7	16	4.16	quality
recall	6	16	4.16	recall, remember
benefits	8	16	4.16	benefits, gain
happy	5	12	3.12	happy
proud	5	12	3.12	proud
suitable	8	12	3.12	suitable, worthy
able	4	8	2.08	able
accreditation	13	8	2.08	accreditation
activities	10	8	2.08	activities
admission	9	8	2.08	admission
agencies	8	8	2.08	agencies
better	6	8	2.08	better
city	4	8	2.08	city
completely	10	8	2.08	completely
corporates	10	8	2.08	corporates
courses	7	8	2.08	courses
degree	6	8	2.08	degree
earlier	7	8	2.08	earlier

exactly	7	8	2.08	exactly
expectations	12	8	2.08	expectations
external	8	8	2.08	external
fees	4	8	2.08	fees
growth	6	8	2.08	growth
heard	5	8	2.08	heard
held	4	8	2.08	held
high	4	8	2.08	high
iconic	6	8	2.08	iconic
information	11	8	2.08	information
interests	9	8	2.08	interests
joining	7	8	2.08	joining
networking	10	8	2.08	networking
offered	7	8	2.08	offered
official	8	8	2.08	official
others	6	8	2.08	others
parents	7	8	2.08	parents
past	4	8	2.08	past
personality	11	8	2.08	personality
produces	8	8	2.08	produces
promise	7	8	2.08	promise
responsive	10	8	2.08	responsive
social	6	8	2.08	social
taken	5	8	2.08	taken
talk	4	8	2.08	talk
teaching	8	8	2.08	teaching
trustworthy	11	8	2.08	trustworthy
upcoming	8	8	2.08	upcoming
valuable	8	8	2.08	valuable
years	5	8	2.08	years
alumni	6	8	2.08	alumni
chose	5	8	2.08	chose
seen	4	8	2.08	seen
told	4	8	2.08	told
awareness	9	4	1.04	awareness
equity	6	4	1.04	Equity
higher	6	4	1.04	Higher

Table 2:Reliability of various constructs

Construct	Cronbach alpha
Brand Image	0.97
Brand Equity	0.989
Brand Credibility	0.976
Institute generated content	0.99
User generated content	0.965
Brand Awareness	0.972

Table3.:Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel proud of joining this institute	.982	-.024	-.052	-.112	-.002	.100
The institute is suitable for my personality	.980	-.023	-.058	-.113	-.001	.097
The institute is well appreciated by my friends	.980	-.023	-.058	-.113	-.001	.097
This degree is very valuable to me	.980	-.023	-.056	-.113	-.002	.097
I will gain more in value than the tuition fees paid	.965	-.032	-.051	-.110	.012	.105
I have a positive feeling about the institute	.948	-.029	-.047	-.090	-.003	.087
I chose this institute because of the benefits received	.927	-.050	-.045	-.069	.019	.120
Institute is very responsive to student interests	.873	-.055	-.040	-.129	-.041	.079
I am happy with my growth and knowledge after attending this institute	.869	-.009	.012	-.082	-.038	.103
I follow the information posted by institute on their official website	-.029	.990	.044	.027	-.058	-.014

I visit institute website to know about infrastructure	-.028	.988	.051	.035	-.051	-.012
I visit institute website to know about courses offered	-.029	.986	.048	.028	-.057	-.014
I follow the institute website to know about their accreditation	-.064	.966	.012	.034	-.030	-.028
I follow the institute social networking sites to know more about upcoming activities	-.034	.964	.069	.022	-.060	-.013
I follow the institute website to know their ranking	-.001	.946	.059	.060	-.053	-.016
I follow the institute website to know about their placements	-.046	.932	.012	.029	-.076	-.029
I follow the institute website to know about their tie-ups	-.020	.925	.035	.013	-.033	-.006
I have heard about the institute	-.054	.031	.980	-.089	-.031	-.062
I have seen ads of the institute	-.094	.057	.959	-.087	-.039	-.052
My friends talk about the institute	-.074	.075	.928	-.051	-.048	-.061
I am able to recall the name of the institute	-.047	.057	.916	-.090	.003	-.064
I have visited this institute earlier	-.047	.078	.898	-.001	-.031	-.073
Some friends have taken admission in this institute	-.010	-.004	.894	-.074	-.029	-.059
Content shared by others about the institute meets my expectations	-.157	.046	-.077	.956	-.122	.002

Content shared by alumni about the institute is encouraging	-.125	.033	-.095	.925	-.106	.007
External agencies have written good about the institute	-.120	.051	-.019	.906	-.114	.019
Content shared by students about the institute is better than other institutes	-.160	-.002	-.033	.888	-.071	.007
Corporates have written good about the institute	-.129	.039	-.098	.883	-.108	.003
Parents of students have written good things about institute	-.097	.054	-.075	.870	-.045	.029
Institute does exactly what they promise	-.013	-.082	-.038	-.104	.979	.006
Quality promoted by this institute is trustworthy	-.024	-.095	-.043	-.084	.961	.008
I have full faith in the intentions of the promoters	.013	-.088	-.013	-.124	.949	.014
I can count on the brand of this institute	.033	-.066	-.031	-.087	.926	-.006
Institute produces students having good knowledge and skills	-.070	-.030	-.044	-.136	.911	.019
Institute is known for good quality teaching	.152	-.022	-.058	-.015	.013	.968
Institute is known for good placements	.137	-.017	-.042	.023	-.002	.937
The institute has held an iconic place in the city	.162	-.021	-.064	.027	.018	.927
Institute is known for good infrastructure	.122	-.025	-.081	-.005	.025	.914
The institute has been serving the students for a number of years	.144	-.025	-.116	.038	-.013	.910

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table-4 Summary of testing of hypotheses

Sr. No.	Hypothesis	Test used	Significance value	Decision	Conclusion
1	H1: *Brand awareness affects the positive effect of Institute generated Content on Student based brand equity*	Regression using SEM	P=0.007 for UGC→Brand Awareness P= 0.019 for Brand Awareness→SBBE	Accept H2	Brand awareness mediates the positive effect of UGC on SBBE
2	H2: *Brand image mediates the positive effect of Institute generated Content on Student based brand equity*	Regression using SEM	P=0.002 for IGC→Brand image P=0.001 for Brand image→SBBE	Accept H3	Brand image mediates the positive effect of IGC on SBBE
3	H3: ***Brand credibility mediates the positive effect of*** *Institute generated Content on Student based brand equity*	Regression using SEM	P=0.000 for UGC→Brand credibility P=0.003 for Brand credibility→SBBE	Accept H5	Brand credibility mediates the positive effect of UGC on SBBE

AI Advancements in Procurement: Transforming Organizational Buying Behavior

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The adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in business procurement has the potential to transform buying processes and supply relationships in the future. We specifically focus on the impact of the adoption of AI technologies on organization buying behavior. Specific propositions are advanced regarding buying situations and increased information processing capabilities of purchasing function. We also explore the impact of adoption of AI technologies on the buying center structure including size and vertical and lateral involvement. We investigate the likely impact on the Organizational Buying Center (OBC) processes such as coordination and conflict. We predict that AI enabled business procurement may become more effective and efficient because of changes in the OBC structure and dynamics. Managerial implications of these important technological developments and future research directions are also provided.

Purpose of the Study – The purpose of the paper is to discuss the potential of AI to impact organizational buying behaviour. Potential impacts on organizational communication, OBC structure and dynamics are discussed.

Method/Design – This paper is conceptual in nature, as it puts forth testable propositions derived from a technology overview and incorporates existing organizational buying behavior theory.

Results – The paper's conclusion suggests that significant changes are probable due to the adoption of AI. The nature of organizational buying is anticipated to undergo a shift towards increased reliance on AI-generated input. Additionally, it is expected that the size of OBCs may

decrease, with reduced vertical and lateral involvement, while promoting greater coordination and less conflict among members.

Value to Marketing Education – This paper aims to conceptualize the effects of AI technology adoption on organizational buying situations and the structure and dynamics of OBCs. For practitioners, this conceptualization may equip them to navigate the impacts of the AI technological advancements effectively. For general marketing education audience this paper shows the potential impact of AI technologies on procurement processes that may be used in the classroom discussion.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, organizational buying behavior, Organizational Buying Center, efficiency, effectiveness.

Improvements in Cultural Intelligence: Implementation of a Two-Report Brand Audit in Introductory Marketing Courses

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Cultural intelligence (CQ) is the ability to recognize and adapt to cultural differences, and therefore to function effectively across cultures (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004). This study explores the impact of an educational intervention embedded within a major project in the introductory marketing course on students' cultural intelligence. We propose an extension of an existing assignment will positively influence such ability of students. In addition, changes in student worldviews, career and academic goals, and beliefs toward globalization are measured to explore the impact of this intervention on these factors.

Methods

Four in-person sections of an introductory marketing in Fall 2022 and Fall 2023 were used for this study. Students took the pre-test survey in the first week of class and the post-test survey was administered in the last week. 75 paired samples were secured and paired samples two-tail t-tests were used to determine the significance of changes. The educational intervention used to assess improvements in CQ was a minor "pre-project" assignment (worth 4% of the course grade) added to a comprehensive brand market audit project (worth 20% of the course grade). The "pre-project" assignment was designed to stimulate student reflections and thought related to CQ by researching three brands available in the United States before starting the brand audit project.

Results

Paired samples t-tests revealed that the differences between pre-test and post-test scores for three dimensions of CQ—metacognitive ($p = 0.025$), cognitive ($p < 0.001$), and behavioral ($p < 0.001$)—were significant, while the difference for motivational CQ was only marginally significant

($p = 0.094$). The planned intervention appears to be successful in improving students' cultural intelligence. In addition, we observed changes in students' worldview between the pre-test and post-test. For five out of the six items, changes in students' worldview were significant. Interestingly, students showed no changes in their academic goals, career goals or beliefs toward globalization after the intervention.

Value to Marketing Education

The results show an encouraging pattern and improve our understanding of antecedents to CQ as well as improvements in curriculum design. A significant benefit of this type of intervention is the ease of incorporation (linked to an existing project in a course) rather than more intensive techniques commonly used to enhance cultural intelligence. This study provides several meaningful contributions. First, the importance of CQ has been well documented, yet a strong understanding of the range of antecedents to CQ has not been solidified. In addition, this study shows that student CQ can be improved through more modest curricular adjustments embedded within existing courses and existing semester-long projects. Our study also provides several important insights for higher education faculty and administrators. First, with this study we hope to emphasize the importance of student CQ in our increasingly diverse and global business marketplace. Secondly, it is evident that carefully conceptualized minor adjustments in major projects can yield significant results.

Keywords: Cultural intelligence (CQ), educational intervention, curriculum

Teaching the Principles and Practices of Successful Approaches to Selection Interviewing: Impacts of Early Experiential Learning

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Abstract

The value of teaching job interviewing skills in marketing education is discussed. In particular, the lack of pedagogy in developing employment interview and interviewing skills with rigor, relevance, and realism is noted. A pedagogy which provides authentic experience in interviewing is developed. The elements include conceptual learning, modeling, vicarious learning, mock interviews, and informational interviews field research project. Writing skills are also developed. Detail is given of how the informational interviews field research project is assessed. An important element is the emphasis on experiential learning which positively affected students' perceived value of the skills developed.

Key words: employment interview, interviewing skills, business communication skills, experiential learning, small-group project work

Introduction

The value of a business education may not be strictly limited to the business knowledge learned in school. For example, while Finch et al. (2013) and Schlee and Harich (2010) found support for employer interest in specific marketing skills, they found also that employers highly valued broader skills such as the ability to solve problems, communication skills, or interpersonal skills.

The interviewing process is a topic of great interest and immediate concern to students applying for internships and jobs after graduation. Recruiters must have the skills necessary to hire the best possible talent. Those applying for professional positions must have skills that will allow them to effectively communicate their knowledge and generalizable skills, such as metacognitive or communication skills, establish rapport with potential employers, and positively differentiate themselves from other applicants (Chapman & Rowe, 2002). Therefore, it becomes imperative for business programs to provide opportunities to increase the knowledge base and develop and practice interviewing skills.

Recently, marketing education and business communication literature has begun to contain discussions of going beyond simply overviewing general interviewing principles and giving their rationale to taking an applied approach, focusing heavily on skill development. For example, Kleiman & Benek-Rivera (2010) proposed a four-step approach to teaching interview skills based on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. This approach emphasizes the need to incorporate conceptual knowledge, analysis, practice, and application. DeLong & Elbeck (2018) demonstrated that soft-skills, and interpersonal skills in particular, exert a positive main effect on likelihood of obtaining a second interview. They also demonstrated that soft skills can be improved with targeted training modules embedded in an introductory marketing course. Hopkins, Raymond, and Carlson, L. (2011) conducted a survey of students, faculty, and recruiters to discover differences between these three groups in terms of perceived importance of skills that students need to obtain jobs. They found that students find experiential learning more important than do faculty and recruiters. They also found that there is no difference between the groups in perceived importance of interactive skills and interview preparation. After researching characteristics, skills, and traits that provide students a sustainable competitive advantage in the job market, researchers concluded that there is a strong need to help students develop multiple skill sets within a business classroom and encourage students to explore opportunities including internships and positions that may not necessarily be their current career choice.

Prior research demonstrates relevancy of teaching selection interviewing skills within the curriculum. At the same time prior research shows that recruiters assign greater importance to different classroom activities that emphasize critical thinking, objective assessment, individualized learning, and technical skills than do faculty and students (Hopkins, Raymond, and Carlson, L., 2011). Effective integration of the selection interviewing training may help align curricula with students as well as industry needs, preparing students to not only get an internship, and eventually job, but also keep it.

Lack of adequate employment preparation and skills development among college students forces us to reevaluate the effectiveness of the current career preparation strategies. Strictly presenting information about resumes and selection interviewing process during the last semester of senior year or informing students about resources available at the career center is not enough. There is a pressing need to engage students in a more authentic learning experiences during their freshman year since they should be prepared to apply for internship positions during the sophomore year. Exploration of the pedagogical approaches towards teaching interviewing skills within the curriculum has been lacking.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an example of the authentic learning experience, embedded in an introductory business class, designed to develop students' employment interview and interviewing skills.

A Grounded Cognition Perspective

The design of an authentic learning experience is approached from a novel, grounded cognition perspective, focusing on the role of simulations for understanding how external cues trigger students' experiences. Papies et al.'s (2017) work, which outlines the role of simulations within the grounded cognition theory, has guided the development of teaching pedagogy proposed in this project. The framework proposed by Papies et al. (2017) offers a pedagogical foundation for realism-based active learning approach towards building skills that can be transferred beyond the academic setting. However, the paper balances a respect for prior research with an openness to create a new learning model better suited to the needs of students at the beginning of their academic journey. The proposed pedagogy considers knowledge of holistic theories such as Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and more behavioral models such as Bandura's (1977) social learning theory.

One perspective that is gaining recognition in marketing is a grounded cognition perspective. Pioneered by Laurence Barsalou (Barsalou 2003, 2008, 2009, Barsalou et al. 2003, Barsalou at al. 2005) it is based on the observation that the brain is organized around a situation processing architecture the constructs of situated conceptualization, pattern completion inference, and simulation explain the cognitive mechanisms through which experiences can be stored in memory and later retrieved to guide motivated behavior.

As a person perceives, cognizes, feels, and acts in a situation, multiple neural systems process the current setting, physical environment, other agents who are present, self-conceptions, physical actions in the environment, and a wide variety of cognitive and affective to the situation.

Each of these neural systems produces a continuous stream of perceptual experiences for its respective situational content, along with corresponding conceptual interpretations. For example, if student is reading the articles about business communication principles related to selection interviewing or is providing written responses to hypothetical interviewing questions or is interviewing a hiring manager neural systems may be producing continual thoughts about the articles and interview questions along with affective responses, mentalizing, and associated bodily states. Other neural systems may continually establish the self-relevance of experience of responding to the interview questions as it unfolds, reflecting their identity, values, goals, and norms.

As an experience progresses, the situated conceptualizations are established that can be used to interpret what is occurring in the current situation at multiple levels of analysis, while simultaneously controlling relevant actions and producing related cognition, affect, and bodily states.

While situated conceptualizations are typically learned through personal experiences, they can also become established vicariously (Papies et al., 2017). In teaching interviewing skills, this could happen, for example, through observing other job applicant's interactions with a recruiter when watching a feature-length film, or when watching a video demonstration of interviewing behavior that leads to success, e.g. being invited back for a second interview or being hired. It is reasonable to assume that once learned, situated conceptualizations formed vicariously will function to guide motivated behavior through simulations as if they had been learned directly.

While neural systems process their respective "local" situational information, other systems integrate these streams of "local" information "globally" (Barsalou 2016). When learning selection interviewing in an introductory business class, the integration of coherent conceptual interpretations of the assigned reading materials, video demonstrations, the feature film, etc. is accomplished by placing all these activities in a broader HRM framework. When a local or global element of an earlier learning situation is reencountered later, a situated conceptualization stored in memory becomes reactivated (Clark 2013). Hearing questions posed by a potential internship supervisor, for example, may reactivate situated conceptualizations formed previously when reading carefully curated collection of articles, watching video demonstrations, completing mock interviews by providing written responses to the interview questions or working on informational interviews field research project. The best-matching situated conceptualization becomes active and leads to categorizing the current situation as a similar type of situation. The best-matching situational memories become active to guide goal-directed behavior, offering a form of expertise based on previous experience. The grounded cognition theory assumes that the best fitting situated conceptualization that becomes active is adapted to the current situation instead of rigidly fitting the situated conceptualization to the situation.

Project Implementation

This study describes and examines an authentic experience in learning interviewing skills is introduced in an introductory business course. The goal of the proposed pedagogy is to provide students with immersive experience that fosters development of interviewing skills and prepares students to successfully interview for the ideal position.

Interviewing skills were taught using a range of carefully sequenced activities to ensure properly scaffolded learning. Each training module and the informational interviews field research project was structured according to the principles of the grounded theory of motivated behavior Barsalou, 2016):

● Conceptual learning: carefully curated list of assigned readings embedded within the HRM-related course modules

● Modeling: videos and cartoons curated to illustrate positive and negative behavioral applications of interviewing skill.

● Vicarious learning: screening and discussing real-life lessons from the feature-length film The Internship

● Mock interviews: role plays which entail providing written answers to the interviewing questions and receiving written performance feedback.

● Team project: students collected detailed information about a hiring manager's thoughts, opinions and behaviors to explore different approaches towards selection interviewing.

Conceptual Learning

The content of the modules embedded in the course is designed to introduce students to scholarly and popular media texts which offer insight into the approaches and processes of communication in selection interviews. Students learn how to analyze contextual factors which contribute to our understanding of business communication including organization dynamics and cultural differences. The assigned texts motivate students to investigate communication strategies which offer an effective behavioral approach to interpersonal communication management and evaluate ethical concerns which create a context for mutually satisfying communication in an organizational communication context. Some examples of the assigned text include: "What's Your Story?" by Elizabeth Barnes, Harvard Business School Publishing, 2003, "Ace Behavioral Interviews By Telling Powerful Stories" by Arlene Hirsch, The Wall Street Journal, 2006, "The 10 Questions You Should Be Asking a Potential Employer" by Joe Konop, Huffington Post, 6/21/2014, "Companies Turn To Quirky Interview Questions—Even After Google Says They Don't Work." By Jena McGregor, The Washington Post, 3/29/16.

The assigned texts contribute to the project's overall objective to help students gain insight into effective communication in interviews, to advance students understanding of successful interpersonal communication in organizational settings, and to develop their ability to use successful verbal and nonverbal communication strategies during selection interviews.

Modeling

It was suggested that that situated conceptualizations can also become established vicariously (Best and Papies 2018). In teaching selection interviewing techniques, this can be implemented, for example, through observing HR professional discussing effective strategies, or by being exposed to specific effective and ineffective responses to the interview questions. There are reasons to assume that once learned, situated conceptualizations established vicariously will guide motivated behavior during selection interviews in the future as if they had been learned directly through experience.

The content of the modules embedded in the course contains a number of videos that illustrate the principles and practices of successful approaches to interviewing. The videos provide students with examples of different scenarios and provide opportunities to analyze both successful and problematic approaches towards interviewing. Review of videos enables students to learn how to communicate properly during interview.

The videos focus on traditional, behavioral and performance methods of employment interviewing and demonstrate the impact of various ways of responding to the interview questions on the likelihood of being invited back for a second interview.

Some examples of the assigned videos include: “Introduce Yourself” & “Tell Me About Yourself” (How to answer these tough interview questions!), “Tell Me About Yourself! (3 brilliant, top-scoring sample answers to this tough interview question!), "Why Do You Want To Work Here?" (Interview Question and top-scoring best Answers!), “Why Should We Hire You? (The Best Answer to this Difficult Interview Question!), “What Is Your Greatest Weakness? – Sample

Answers", "How to Answer: Describe A Challenge or Conflict You Overcame (+ Example Answers). From the grounded cognition perspective, the videos engage and integrate various neural systems that produce a continuous stream of perceptual experiences, along with corresponding conceptual interpretations.

Vicarious Learning: Screening and Discussing Real-Life Lessons From the Feature Film

It is critical for students to understand needs of job applicants and employers and how various methods band formats of employment interviewing can be utilized and balanced to provide satisfying solutions to those needs.

While YouTube videos are useful for illustrating some isolated aspects of interviewing process, they are not as effective as feature films for presenting more holistic and nuanced view in the broader context of the HRM frameworks.

Using a feature-length film that can be screened in class or viewed on-line adds additional layers of complexity to students' learning. The feature film was screened in class with the instructor pointing out key recruitment, selections interviewing, onboarding, and performance appraisal concepts as they occurred. When relevant concepts arose, the instructor would stop the video and ask questions such as "What HRM concept are we seeing at work" or "What interviewing concept are we seeing at work." Students were eager to discuss real-life lessons from the movie.

Practice With Feedback

Based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future performance, behavior-based interviewing (BBl) is widely used in the business world. This interviewing technique uses specific questions based on candidates' skills, background, and experience to determine if they can do the job. Successful interviews have found that the way a person handled a specific situation in the past provides valid information about how this person will approach a similar situation in the future (Deems, 1994).

Consequently, after conceptual learning and analyzing best practices during selection interviewing, students are instructed to consider behavior-based interview questions and to post their responses to the questions if asked in an interview for their first full-time job following their graduation from the college. After posting the responses students are instructed to review each other responses so that they can compare and self-critique their work. The written feedback is provided by instructor.

The goal for students is to apply knowledge they gained when reading articles, watching YouTube videos and a feature-length film and practice responses to behavior-based interview questions. Students are encouraged to practice their responses outside of class with their research partners. These simulations energize class discussion and enable students to explore ideal responses to the selection interview questions, to analyze a variety of possible answers and to receive feedback to their communication approach. Students are instructed to answer the question prompts with enough depth to demonstrate the comprehension of and critical thinking about the assigned materials. Students are asked to answer questions such as: (1) Please tell me about the greatest challenge you've encountered in an analytic project, (2) Please give me an example of something you've done which prepares you for this position, (3) What is your greatest academic success—and failure?

These extensive role-playing exercises help to reinforce concepts and communication approaches students learned earlier.

Team Project

The goal of the Informational Interviews Field Research Project is to ensure that students gain critical experience in conducting informative interviews. The project enables students to conduct critical analysis and apply relevant business communication and HRM frameworks to field research. Students plan, coordinate, conduct, transcribe, and synthesize interviews with hiring managers in order to make tangible connections between course material and "the real world."

The students are assigned to teams of two. For this project each team is required to interview two professionals (one per team member) who have experience in conducting full-time selection interviews. Using concepts from the class discussions and texts, students are required to exhibit effective business communication in an organizational setting and thoroughly research the field, the specific organization, and the professionals they interview before conducting actual interviews. After interviewing hiring managers and learning about their unique approaches, students analyze their findings in a joint paper. The purpose of these interviews is to gather research that enables students to analyze (compare and contrast) their approaches to communication in interviews including style, format, length, methods, key questions, disqualifiers, evaluation rubrics, attributes/skills they value (and avoid) and their communication expectations for candidates. In addition, based on the findings students are asked to make specific recommendations regarding useful communication strategies for applicants based on the findings. Students learn how to articulate ideas through written reports which enriches their understanding of what they previously learned by making connections with fieldwork outside of the classroom.
A suggested approach for this fieldwork is outlined and students are encouraged to tailor this framework and their follow-up questions to suit their individual interviews. For example, the outline prompts students to learn about the hiring manager's approach to interviewing. The

following questions are suggested: How do they find employees? On/off campus, internal referrals, internships, online, other? General Description of Interviews. Type? Dyads, multiple interviewers, panels, super days, receptions, meals, travel, other? Approach? Length, structure, uniformity? Questions? Traditional, behavioral, case study, problem solving, testing, other?

The project, besides offering other benefits, helps students to cultivate empathy which is considered a key element in the success of interviewee–interviewer relationship. Empathy has both cognitive and emotional dimensions. It involves the ability to understand a hiring manager's perspective, motivations, and feelings while at the same time linking these to how student-interviewer might experience these motivations and feelings oneself. Empathy is particularly relevant in selection interviewing where the applicant must feel accountable and understand the rationale behind decisions made by recruiters.

Method: Assessing Effectiveness of the Informational Interviews Field Research Project

After completing the Informational Interviews Field Research Project, the students complete a survey measuring their perceptions of different aspects of the project. The questionnaire primarily measures students' perceived effectiveness of the experiential learning activity investigated in this study. The measurement instrument is designed to measure attitudes toward the entire learning experience and aimed at revealing both the magnitude and valence of the evaluations. Attitudes toward the learning experience are solicited using a series of statements about the project that are related to the learning objectives that the Informational Interviews Field Research Project was intended to achieve. Using a seven-point scale (where 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree), the students report their level of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements according to how well each statement describes the achievement of learning objectives after completing the project, e.g. whether as a result of completing the project students developed a good understanding of how to prepare for the job interview, feel confident that they can communicate their skills to an employer in a positive way, developed a deeper understanding of questions employers might ask that can be difficult to answer, feel confident that they can answer difficult questions that an employer may ask on an interview, developed a much better understanding of what questions to expect, developed understanding of what they need to prepare for their first actual interview.

The questionnaire also measures, using a seven-point scale (where 1 = not at all; 7 = to a very great extent), how confident students feel that after completing the project they can independently prepare for an interview, persuade potential employers during the job interview to consider them for a job, market their skills and abilities during the job interview, make the best impression during the job interview, and get their point across in the job interview.

In addition, the questionnaire included items measuring students' beliefs and attitudes toward the project. e.g. beliefs that they were highly involved in this project, it was important to them to carefully complete this project, the project was interesting, the project was of concern/relevant to them, the project was enjoyable and pleasant. Again, a 7-point agreement scale was used in this section of the survey.

Finally, in addition to structured questions several unstructured questions are asked as part of the interpretive approach. Specifically, students are asked to describe the strong points of the project, explain how helpful each component of the project was in preparing them for future job interviews, describe the most important single thing they learned while working on the project, describe what they like about the project, and discuss what they would do differently if assigned a similar project in the future. These questions allow us to delve deeply into various outcomes of engaging students in higher-order critical thinking. Posing open-ended questions allows to probe for the learning outcomes such as skills and knowledge acquisition, task performance, self-awareness, enhanced perceptions of the course (Dahl, Peltier, & Schibrowsky, 2018). Students are queried regarding what they found meaningful while completing the project. The findings will be analyzed according to methods described by Richards (2020, 2012). To ensure validity, results are triangulated across multiple methods.

Results

The mean responses to each of the attitudinal statements are shown in Table A and Table B. Mean responses for two parts of evaluation are above the average in a statistically significant way, indicating that students found the Informational Interviews Field Research Project to be a valuable educational experience. The mean responses for the attitudinal statements evaluating the project in general (Table B) indicated that students believed that the project helped to build enthusiasm for the course, increased interest in career planning, involving, helped to get to know other students in the class. In addition, students believed the project was important to them, was very interesting, relevant, very enjoyable, and very pleasant. According to Table A, the project was helpful for preparing for actual interviews, increased confidence in ability to communicate skills to an employer in a positive way, increased knowledge of questions employers might ask that can be difficult to answer, improved ability to get the point across in the job interview, and increased understanding of how to prepare for the job interview and kind of introductory questions that are asked by employers. Table A indicates that the students' work on the project successfully increased students' self-confidence in their ability to get ready for their first job interview and enhanced their understanding of what career path they want to take and how to get there. The amount of energy an individual puts into a behavior and is determined by the individual's motivation. The higher the motivation and interest, the higher the effort of the student is likely to be. This research demonstrates that students involved in the Informational Interviews Field Research Project believe that the project clarified job interviewing process, increase knowledge of the job search process, and increased motivation to put a lot of effort into further developing interviewing skills to land a dream job. Finally, Table A suggests that the project is a good teaching technique and integrator of business communication principles as they apply to the effective preparation to a successful selection interview, and as such is an effective experiential project that increases knowledge of and confidence about the interviewing process. For example, the following statements received high ratings: “I have a good idea about what kind of introductory questions are asked by employers,” “I understand how to make the best impression during the job interview, ” “I understand how to market my skills and abilities during the job interview,” and “ I feel confident that I can communicate my skills to an employer in a positive way.” Overall, the results provide strong student support for the the Informational Interviews Field Research Project as an effective learning experience and the authentic assessment technique. The project helped to reinforce the importance of understanding of how to prepare for the first job interview and to understand the significance of determining a complete set of criteria desired in each position, clarified job interviewing process, and taught how define the value proposition: describe how students skills and qualities will be of value to the organization.

Common themes were found in participants’ responses to the open-ended questions as the following: (a) Developing ability to persuade potential employers during the job interview; (b) Increased knowledge of the job selection interviewing process; (c) Understanding expectations and developing ability to persuade potential employers during the job interview; (d) enhanced teamwork, time management and , and communication skills; (e) feeling better prepared for the future career path and anticipating future successful performance.

The responses indicated overwhelming strong support for the project as a learning experience that increased knowledge of the job selection interviewing process. One student noted that “the strong point was the experience of getting an in depth look to what a successful interview should look like.” Another student noted that “The project helped me to better understand process of interviewing and interview concepts as well. Now I feel that I am ready to do interview with any company in my major.” Ather students noted that the strong point is an opportunity to develop “skills to interview a person” and “talking to an interviewer and learning what it takes to conduct an interview so we can be prepared in the future.” Another student commented that “interviewing someone gave me the confidence for a job search. Good skills and preparation.” Commenting on the benefits of the project another student noted: “The thing I liked about the project was that it gave me the confidence to actually go up to a professional and inquire them about ins and outs of an interview. I was able to realize what goes on in the interviewer’s head and how they analyze the candidate in order to decide whether he/she is right for the job vacancy.”

Common themes were found in participants’ responses concerning their feeling better prepared for the future career path and anticipating future successful performance at the job interviews. Participants indicated their perceptions of an increased understanding of knowledge and skills needed to succeed when applying for employment opportunities. One student commented on the importance of “communication. Networking. Being prepared, having knowledge, positive attitudes, having open mind to listen and learn.” Another student recognized importance of “communication and interpersonal skills.” Other examples of responses included “finding out what employers look for regarding new candidates for a position as well as learning from a superior. Being able to analyze the differences between the interviewing process of different places of work. Also, getting to hear an employer’s perspective of things they look for. The strong points of the project are getting prepared for your dream job with having a good idea about the interview and the project itself helps you mentally and prepares you for your professional career. The strong points of the project are that it laid out the details to develop skills and tested them simultaneously as we were paired with people in the class. This helped improve my communication skills as the project was practical.” Another student noted that one of the outcomes was “being able to see myself progress as a better and more confident individual.”

Common themes were found in participants’ responses concerning their enhanced teamwork, time management and, and communication skills. Participants indicated their perceptions of an enhanced ability to collaborate with other students while working on the project. One student commented: “The project helped me to know some of my fellow classmates and enabled me to learn how a business works on the inside (operations and hiring process).” Another students noted that the project taught how to ”work/collaborate with other students to prepare an adequate written report properly analyzing those opinions.” Other examples of strong points included: “Sharing hiring experiences with teammates to get better perspectives”; “Utilizing time management to meet with specific due dates,” “Putting a lot of time, effort, and concentration into your work, “ Making good use of research and being supportive to your team members when collaborating,” “Networking,” “Analysis with classmates to come together and get to know one another,””The most important single thing I learned is that collaboration is key when figuring out on what to do when it comes to a project of 2 or more people.” Another student noted that it was important “to step outside my comfort zone and to see I am capable of things I thought I am not. Also, communicating with my partner, but it was easy because we got along well.”

Many students found the project conducive to improved understanding of employer expectations and, as a result, improved ability to persuade potential employers during the job interview. Examples of responses included, “Each component of the project was very helpful. I understand what are some things to expect in a job interview,” “It helped me understand what people are looking for and paying attention to,” “Helped me gain insight on what to expect and how to approach an interview in a positive attitude,” “Each component of the project was helpful in preparing for future job interviews. Learning of how candidates are evaluated, what makes one standout, what questions to ask and much more,” “The questions I asked the interviewer gave me a lot of insight on what they look for beyond basic qualities,” “Each component has helped me to develop certain skills that will be useful for future job interviews,” “Gave critical insights on what to expect and what to present when attending a job interview,” “each component of this project was helpful for me in preparing for my future job interview by giving me insight in the types of questions they will ask and how I should answer to make a good impression on them,” ”Each component was very helpful in preparing for future job interview because it helped me to prepare for the questions and what to expect.” When commenting on the benefits of the project, students noted: “…you should be enthusiastic about the job you are applying to during the interview. Never go in with a negative attitude or looking bored,” ‘”I learned to talk as a professional, I learned many things that would help me achieve my goals and my dream job, ”The most important thing that I learned from the project was process of preparation for interviews well as requirements for particular job position,” “It is important to show interest in the job, you are interviewing for. This can be done by researching about the industry, the field, or the company itself in order to get a gist of the responsibilities that will be offered.”

Many students found the project enjoyable and interesting. Examples of responses included, “It was enjoyable, smooth, very interesting. I liked the project as it helps you build your personality and to start to think earlier towards what do you want to be” and “I liked getting to go off on my own to find a professional to speak with. It gave me the chance to make networking opportunities as well as find a professional who works in an interesting field, and “I liked that I was able to get as much information as I could and apply it into my writing since I like dealing with essays.” Students enjoyed “the real-world experience it gave,” thought that “project is very helpful,” liked “the insight it provided,” and thought that it was a “good way to prepare for future interviews.” One student commented “I enjoyed working with my partner and being able to compare our interview experience,” “I like that the project was very well structured and straightforward, and it was able to allow me to grow on my networking skills.”

Conclusion

It is important for marketing educators to help students to identify key competencies relevant to the interviewing process including interactive skills and interview preparation skills that will result in a sustainable competitive advantage and enhance students’ prospects for employment. This study presents an innovative and applied experiential approach to help students to learn about the underlying mix of competencies and skills that might result in building such a competitive advantage. The principal benefits of conducting the Informational Interviews Field Research Project are that the process brings together a set of key skills for a very relevant purpose. Students can hone their written presentation skills by jointly producing a written report. They gain experience of being an interviewer, asking questions, learning about skills and competencies to have a successful selection interview, and getting over some of the fear factors inherent in interviews. Equally valuable is seeing interviewing from a hiring manager perspective, from determining job and person specification, to learning about organizing and running a job interview. Not only this promotes experience of team working while analyzing primary data, it allows students to think about what employers are looking for. All of this is invaluable experience when it comes to the real business of applying for jobs.

The overwhelming majority of students found the project relevant and took it very seriously. Students rated the whole project as a very important piece of key skills training in the introductory business course. Therefore, a concentration in this area in the introductory business class may prove most fruitful in aiding our students within the very competitive internship and job market.

Table A

Items Measuring Learning Outcomes

Post-project Statements	Mean Ratings[1]
Was the project helpful for preparing for actual interviews? (1= not at all helpful; 7= extremely helpful)	6.51*
How important is the development of interviewing skills to you? (1=not important at all; 7= very important)	6.54*
I can define my value proposition: I can describe how my skills and qualities will be of value to the organization.	5.57*
Persuade potential employers during the job interview to consider you for a job?	5.66*
Market your skills and abilities during the job interview?	4.69*
I have a good idea about the top skills employers are looking for when hiring someone.	6.09*
I feel confident that I can communicate my skills to an employer in a positive way.	5.91*
I have a good idea about questions employers might ask that can be difficult to answer.	4.78*
Make the best impression during the job interview?	6.11*

Get your point across in the job interview?	5.83*
I have a good idea about how to prepare for my job interview.	6.09*
I have a good idea about what kind of introductory questions are asked by employers	5.97*
I can explain the reasons I left my last job to the interviewer.	5.83*
I feel like I am on a direct path to my dream job.	5.40*
I believe that networking with a lot of people is the key to landing my dream job.	6.34*
I need to spend more time on my interviewing skills to land my dream job.	5.60*
This project has allowed me to better understand exactly what career path I want to take and how to get there	5.29*
The project increase knowledge of, confidence about, and preparation for the job search	5.91*
It gave me a much better understanding of what questions to expect	6.09*
The project showed me how I need to prepare for my first actual interview	5.91*
This project has strengthened ability to project a positive attitude	5.94*
I now understand the significance of determining a complete set of criteria desired in each position	5.94*
The project clarified job interviewing process	6.26*
Learning Outcomes (average of above items)	5.84*

[1] As measured on a seven-point scale, where 7 = "strongly agree," "extremely helpful" or "very important, "1 = "strongly disagree," "not at all helpful" or "not important at all"and 4 = "indifferent" or "don't know."

* $p < 0.05$ (significance of the mean is relative to a 4 rating).

Table B

Items Measuring Project Satisfaction

Post-project Statements	Mean Ratings[1]
The project helped to build enthusiasm for the course	5.57*
The project increased my interest in career planning	5.66*
The project helped me get to know other students in the class	4.31*
I was highly involved in this project	6.40*
It was important to me to carefully complete this project	6.60*
The Informational Interviews Field Research Project was very interesting	6.20*
This project was important to me	6.14*
The project was of concern/relevant to me	5.86*
The Informational Interviews Field Research Project was very enjoyable	5. 60*
The Informational Interviews Field Research Project was very pleasant	5. 57*
Project Satisfaction (average of above items)	5.86*

[1] As measured on a seven-point scale, where 7 = “strongly agree,” 1 = “strongly disagree,” and 4 = “indifferent” or “don’t know.”

* $p < 0.05$ (significance of the mean is relative to a 4 rating).

REFERENCES CAN BE PROVIDED UPON REQUEST

Financial Acumen Skills Required of Marketing and Sales Professionals

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Abstract

This study explores financial acumen skills among 41 marketing and sales professionals, shedding light on competencies, skill variations between roles, and educational impacts. The quantitative analysis reveals distinct patterns, emphasizing the need for targeted training programs. Examining marketing versus sales roles uncovers nuanced disparities, calling for tailored education and training strategies aligned with individual and organizational objectives. Non-supervisory versus supervisory roles exhibit differences in risk aversion and confidence levels, impacting training program design. Variances between respondents with and without a college degree and perceived education adequacy require further investigation. Qualitative responses provide insights into the industry-education gap, emphasizing ongoing training and program effectiveness.

Keywords: Financial acumen, marketing professionals, sales professionals, competencies, skill variations, higher education impacts

This paper follows the research initiated in the Review of Financial Acumen Curricula in University Sales Center Alliance Full-Member Universities (Wasyliszyn et al., 2023). That paper focused on identifying the courses typically offered in higher education marketing and sales programs. This paper identifies the financial acumen-related skills today's marketing and sales professionals need. This study analyzes the financial acumen skills among 41 marketing and sales professionals and then highlights the variances among four subgroups. These subgroups include marketing or sales roles, non-supervisory or supervisory roles, with or without a college degree, and the perceived adequacy of financial acumen in higher education.

Literature Review

This literature review examines the current knowledge of financial acumen skills for marketing and sales professionals and identifies best practices and the potential challenges in developing and enhancing these skills. It covers financial acumen, financial acumen for marketing and sales professionals, and human capital theory.

Financial Acumen

This paper defines *financial acumen* as comprehending and applying financial information for informed business decisions. Financial acumen is crucial for marketing and sales professionals engaged in product value communication, negotiation, pricing strategy optimization, and budget management (AMA, 2020). Recent graduates often lack financial competency, hindering effective communication of vital financial information (Harvard Business Review, 2022; Molloy, 2022; Harper, 2023). Organizations require employees with financial acumen at all levels to make sound decisions, involving understanding financial statements, assessing core performance measures, and recognizing potential financial impacts (Kane, 2023). These skills enable professionals to align strategies with organizational and customer financial goals, demonstrating returns on investment. Advantexe (n.d.) suggests sales professionals use term and volume deals for customer benefits, ensuring predictable revenue, while marketers utilize financial acumen to measure campaign effectiveness, optimize spending, and justify budget requests.

Financial Acumen for Marketing and Sales Professionals

Many marketing and sales professionals require either stronger financial acumen skills or the ability to apply these skills more proficiently. A Harvard Business Review (2022) survey found that nearly 90% of leaders feel that financial skills are essential to advancing their careers, but only 28% feel confident in their financial acumen. According to Bendle and Bagga (2016), some marketing and sales professionals may need to learn more about financial concepts such as gross margin, return on investment, or net margin or face damage to their credibility and reputation. Despite the many similarities between marketing and sales, some skills are marketing or sales-specific.

Marketing Specific. DiGregorio et al. (2019) investigated the most in-demand marketing skills to find opportunities for future marketing professionals and identify five employability skill categories. Within these five skill categories are analytical skills, which include financial acumen-related knowledge. Earlier research by Harrigan and Hulbert (2011) determined that analytical skills are in short supply among marketing alumnae. They suggest educators update marketing curricula to focus on analytical skills and to include a more holistic approach.

Sales Specific. Doyle (2019) explains that inviting finance specialists to key sales meetings may be an option. However, they rarely do well communicating how a product or service would impact customer's financial outcomes. He also states, "In today's competitive environment, marketing and sales professionals need to differentiate themselves and deliver a great "sales experience" to the customer (para. 2). Additionally, Razmak et al. (2022) explored the skills required for salespeople to maximize their success. They found 110 relevant sales skills and 28 themes, some pertaining to financial acumen. Regardless of marketing or sales specifics, the need for financial acumen skills can be studied using human capital theory.

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory is an economic and sociological framework that views education, training, and other investments in human beings as forms of capital or wealth. This theory suggests that individuals can enhance their productive capacity and increase their economic output through investments in themselves, much like a company can invest in physical capital like machinery and equipment. Developed primarily by economists such as Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964), human capital theory provides insight into the role of education, skills, and knowledge in economic growth and individual success.

The fundamental principles of human capital theory include viewing human capital as an investment, seeing returns on human capital, and identifying the role of formal education and on-the-job training and experience in developing human capital (Schultz, 1971; Woodhall, 1987). This theory posits that the more human capital an individual possesses, the greater their earning potential and economic contributions (Schaeffer, 1985). Human capital theory has important implications for individuals and societies. On an individual level, it highlights the importance of education and skills development for career success and financial well-being (Haveman & Wolfe, 1984; Herr, 1989). On a societal level, it emphasizes the role of education and workforce training in promoting economic growth and reducing income inequality (Mincer, 1984; Donovan & Watts, 1990).

Critics of human capital theory argue that it may oversimplify the complexities of human development and ignore social factors that can limit access to education and opportunities (Kolomiiets & Petrushenko, 2017; Tan, 2014). Additionally, critics argue that the theory may place too much emphasis on economic outcomes and neglect the broader social and cultural aspects of human well-being. Despite these criticisms, human capital theory significantly influences many countries' education policies, labor market policies, and workforce development strategies (Bishop, 1977; Strober, 1990; Sima et al., 2020). This theory continues to inform discussions on the importance of investing in human potential for individual and societal advancement. The authors use human capital theory to inform this study.

Justification

Professional mainstream publications offer subjective content on financial acumen skills for marketing and sales professionals, but limited scholarly research exists. This paper addresses this deficit by identifying the financial acumen skills required for marketing and sales professionals and using the resulting skills gap to inform organizational trainers and those responsible for developing undergraduate marketing and sales curricula. The subsequent analysis with a quantitative approach will discuss financial acumen variations, role-specific disparities, and the educational impact.

Methods

The data for this study were obtained using a Qualtrics survey (Appendix A), distributed via convenience sampling, and forwarded through LinkedIn and the Sales Education Foundation. This survey was open for two weeks during the fall of 2023. It contained a request for demographic data, a 24-item Likert scale questionnaire exploring the financial acumen of marketing and sales professionals, and one open-ended qualitative research question. The research question read, "To what degree are various financial acumen skills/knowledge items needed/required for marketing and sales professionals."

Results

Survey results were evaluated using quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative results are provided graphically, with the findings summarized. The qualitative analysis includes the overall results with notable items selected for further delineation.

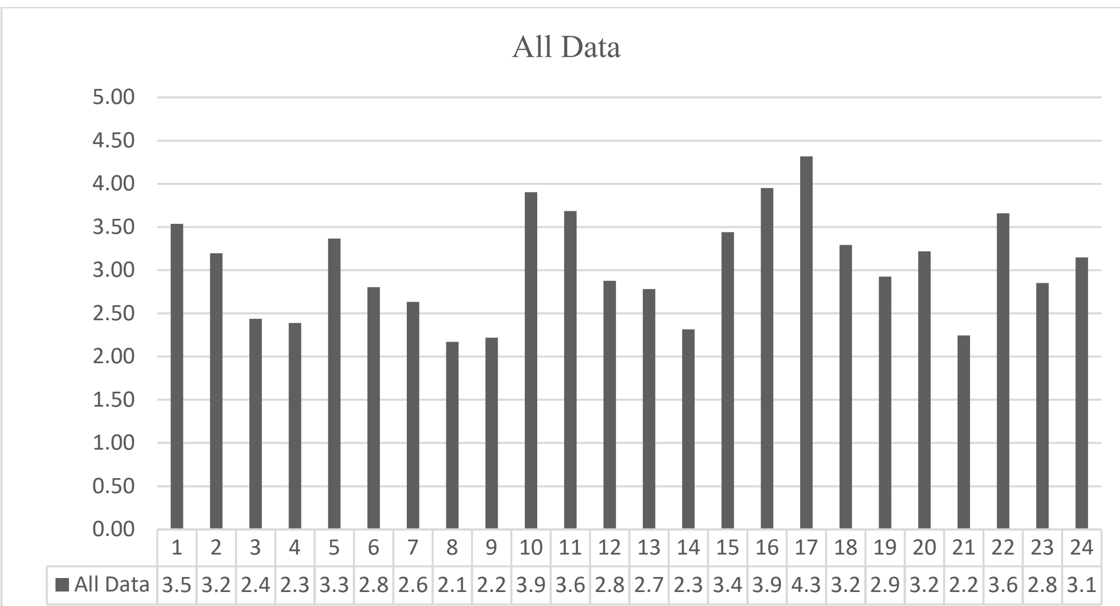
Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis consists of 24 items on a five-point Likert scale with the following choices: (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Sometimes, (4) Often, (5) Regularly. (Appendix A). Although the survey starts with N = 45, four were partially completed. These partially completed surveys were eliminated from the analysis, resulting in N = 41.

Overall results

Chart 1

All Data N = 41



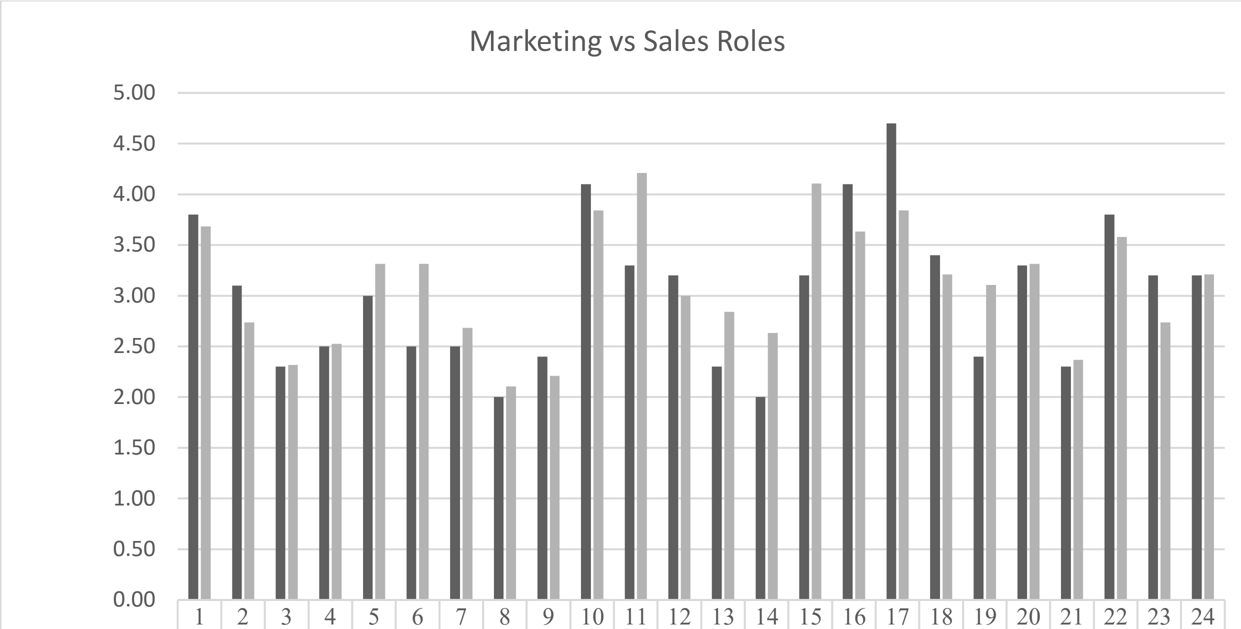
Results. Examining financial acumen within a cohort of N = 41 marketing and sales professionals reveals distinct patterns in competencies. Notably, the top 10% demonstrate remarkable proficiency in understanding liabilities (#16) and warranties (#17), indicating a firm grasp of financial risks and customer protection. Conversely, the bottom 10% of respondents highlight potential weaknesses in comprehending and managing cash flow (#8) and product transfer of ownership (#9). When expanding the analysis to the top 20%, additional strengths appear in areas such as the triple bottom line (#10) and Excel skills/tools (#11), suggesting a broader spectrum of financial proficiency. Conversely, the lowest 20% of respondents expose challenges in comprehending sales dynamics such as sales returns, discounts and allowances (#14), and sunk costs (#21).

Marketing Versus Sales Roles

Participants indicated if they are in marketing, sales, or another role. If in another role, they were asked to specify this role. The breakdown was marketing N = 10, sales N = 19, and other N = 12. The participants checking other list the following roles: Leadership Development, Unemployed, Marketing Analytics, Research, Marketing Public Relations, Higher Education, Retail Merchandising, Project Manager, Customer Success, Retail Consulting, Business Consultant, and Half Marketing/Half Sales. Because the other category is vast, only those indicating a marketing or sales role are included in this analysis portion. A standard paired t-test was applied to determine significant differences between marketing or sales roles.

Chart 2

Data Sorted by Marketing and Sales Roles N = 29



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Marketing	3.8	3.1	2.3	2.5	3.0	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.4	4.1	3.3	3.2	2.3	2.0	3.2	4.1	4.7	3.4	2.4	3.3	2.3	3.8	3.2	3.2
Sales	3.6	2.7	2.3	2.5	3.3	3.3	2.6	2.1	2.2	3.8	4.2	3.0	2.8	2.6	4.1	3.6	3.8	3.2	3.1	3.3	2.3	3.5	2.7	3.2

Results. The statistical analysis, utilizing a standard paired t-test, reveals no significant difference in responses between individuals in marketing and sales roles ($p = 0.205$). However, closer inspection of the data reveals nuanced disparities that merit attention. Markedly, participants in sales roles exhibit higher demand for competencies relating to managing receivables, Excel skills/tools, and credit terms than their marketing counterparts.

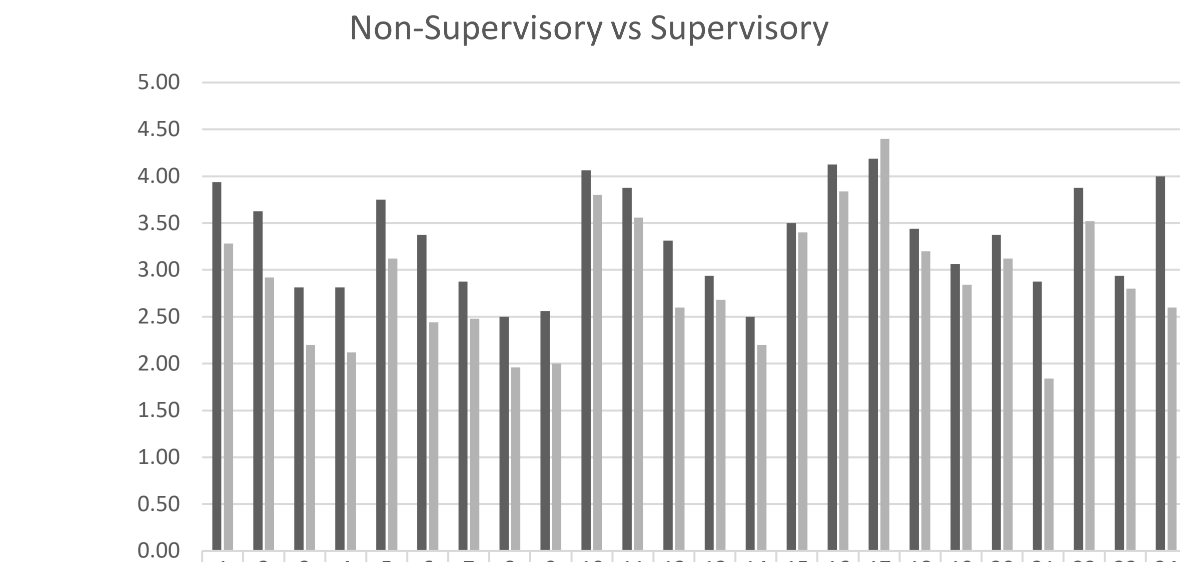
Conversely, marketing roles were associated with a greater emphasis on warranties (#17) than sales roles. Interestingly, interest rates, return on investment, price elasticity, and overall management financial concerns demonstrated uniform importance for both marketing and sales roles. These findings underscore the profusion of skill requirements in marketing and sales professions, emphasizing the need for skill development and training tailored to each role's distinct demands.

Non-Supervisory Versus Supervisory Roles

Participants were asked if they held non-supervisory or manager/supervisory roles. The breakdown was *non-supervisory* N = 16 and *manager/supervisory* N = 25. A standard paired t-test was applied to analyze if there were any significant differences between those who held a non-supervisory or manager/supervisory role.

Chart 3

Data Sorted by Non-supervisory and Supervisory Roles N = 41



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Non Supervisory	3.9	3.6	2.8	2.8	3.7	3.3	2.8	2.5	2.5	4.0	3.8	3.3	2.9	2.5	3.5	4.1	4.1	3.4	3.0	3.3	2.8	3.8	2.9	4.0
Supervisory	3.2	2.9	2.2	2.1	3.1	2.4	2.4	1.9	2.0	3.8	3.5	2.6	2.6	2.2	3.4	3.8	4.4	3.2	2.8	3.1	1.8	3.5	2.8	2.6

Results. Among the N = 41 individuals in the non-supervisory or manager/supervisory capacities, there was a statistically significant distinction in responses ($p < 0.05$). The most pronounced disparities, falling within the highest 10%, were related to items #21 (sunk costs) and #24 (overall management financial concerns). Notably, respondents in non-supervisory roles consistently assigned higher rankings to both aforementioned items compared to their counterparts in manager/supervisory positions.

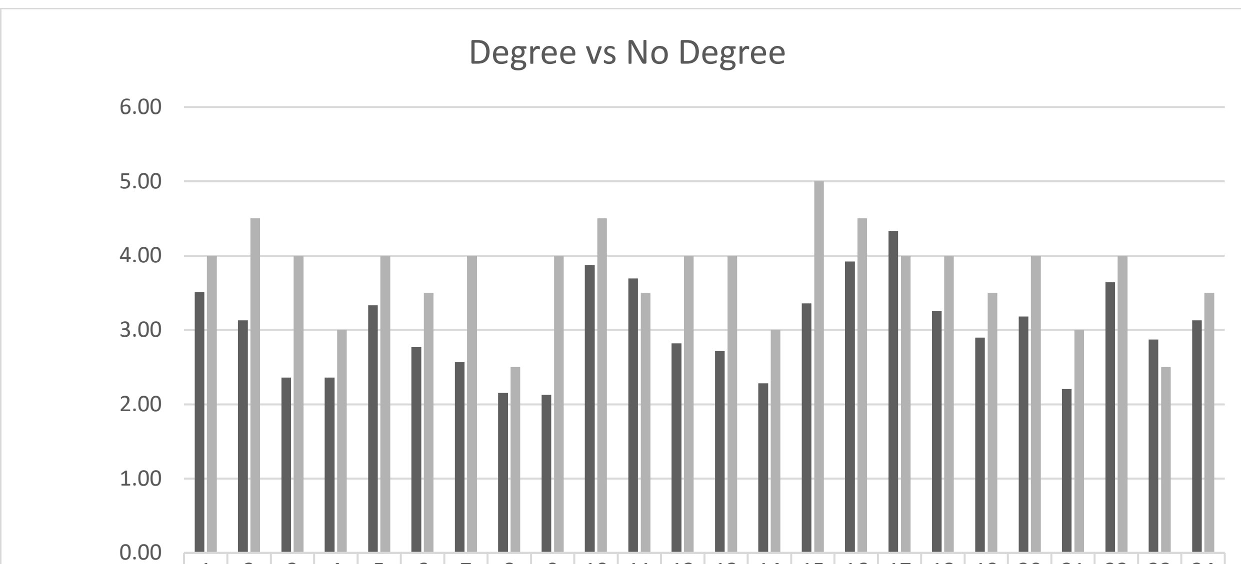
Conversely, the narrowest differentials, confined to the lowest 10%, were evident in items #15 (credit terms) and #23 (overall state of the economy), indicating little distinction between non-supervisory and manager/supervisory roles. Strikingly, except for item #17 (warranties), each item exhibits higher rankings among individuals in non-supervisory roles than in manager/supervisory positions.

College Degree Versus No College Degree

Participants were asked if they held a college degree. The breakdown was *college degree* N = 39 and no *college degree* N = 2. A standard paired t-test was applied to analyze if there were any significant differences between those holding a college degree and those who do not.

Chart 4

Data Sorted by College Degree and No College Degree N = 41



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Degree	3.5	3.1	2.3	2.3	3.3	2.7	2.5	2.1	2.1	3.8	3.6	2.8	2.7	2.2	3.3	3.9	4.3	3.2	2.9	3.1	2.2	3.6	2.8	3.1
No Degree	4.0	4.5	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.5	4.0	2.5	4.0	4.5	3.5	4.0	4.0	3.0	5.0	4.5	4.0	4.0	3.5	4.0	3.0	4.0	2.5	3.5

Results. In the cohort of N = 41, those subjected to analysis based on the criterion of possessing a college degree or those who do not, there was a statistically significant divergence in responses ($p < 0.05$). The most pronounced disparities, located within the top 10%, were observed in items #3 (interest rates), #9 (product transfer of ownership), and #15 (credit terms). Notably, these areas were deemed more imperative for individuals without a college degree.

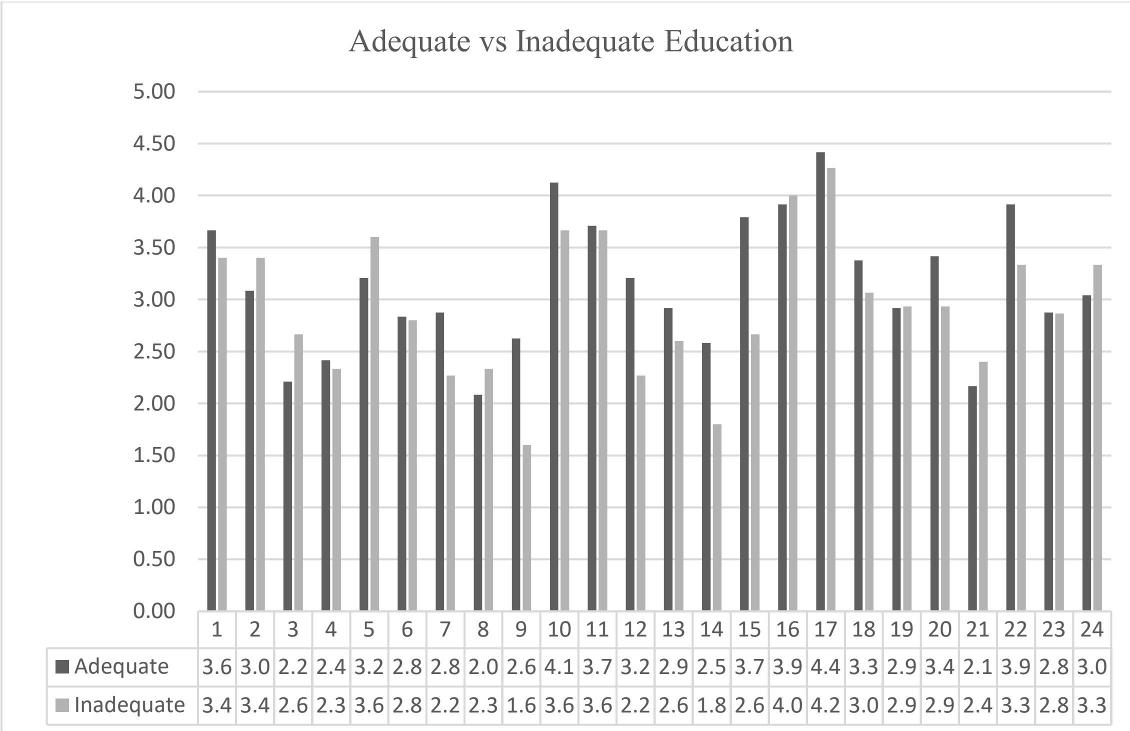
Conversely, the minimal differentials, confined to the lower 10%, were evident in items #11 (Excel skills/tools) and #17 (warranties), indicative of the limited distinctions between respondents possessing a college degree and those who do not in these specific domains. A key point to emphasize is, except for items #11 (Excel skills/tools), #17 (warranties), and #23 (overall state of the economy), each item received higher rankings from participants lacking a college degree in contrast to their counterparts with a college degree. Importantly, as there were only N = 2 non-degree responses, caution must be exercised when considering these results to indicate the broader population.

Adequate Education Versus Inadequate Education

Participants indicating that they held a college degree were asked if they felt their education was adequate for each item of financial acumen. The breakdown was adequate education N = 24 and inadequate education N = 15. A standard paired t-test was used to analyze if there were any significant differences between those with a college degree and those without.

Chart 5

Data Sorted by Adequate and Inadequate Education N = 39



Results. In the cohort of N = 39 individuals subjected to analysis based on their rating of adequate versus inadequate education, there is a statistically significant difference in responses ($p < 0.05$). The most salient disparities, falling within the upper 10%, were in items #9 (product transfer of ownership) and #15 (credit terms). These specific items were viewed as more vital by the subgroup reporting their education as adequate.

Conversely, the marginal differentials, confined to the lower 10%, were noted in items #19 (supply/demand) and #23 (overall state of the economy), indicating a similar ranking between individuals with adequate and inadequate education.

Qualitative Analysis Results

The survey included the open-ended question, “If you would like to share anything else that could potentially assist in this research, please feel free to do so here.” The following seven responses were provided.

(1) “The most critical area is dissecting and understanding the critical business drivers and risk that is gained from Annual Reports, 10K, 10Q, etc.”

(2) “The ability to ask questions of numbers - to understand the implication of financial decisions - one cannot be a high level salesperson without those skills.”

(3) “Although I do think college prepared me in a lot of ways there is a lot of day-to-day tasks that I learned on the job. College I think more so prepares you for handling multiple projects at once and makes sure you know how to manage your time. In the real world you need to be able to critically think on the spot.”

(4) “ARR (annual reoccurring revenue), MRR (monthly reoccurring revenue), is also say touching on risk & loss in sales (specifically SAAS) is critical, pipeline management, and forecasting are all critical”

(5) “My career in sales was more by circumstances than by design. I was fortunate to have regular sales training throughout my 19-year airline career.”

(6) “I feel like a more in depth excel course would have been helpful and projects that utilized that in terms of the multiple functions excel has! I also think financial accounting/managerial accounting were a waste of time and money as I don’t use those skills at all. A class on analytics would have been more helpful! Business stats was also not helpful.”

(7) “When placing sales candidates, hiring managers find out during the interview process that candidates at times have a gap with math/financials.”

Discussion

The preceding sections delved into the financial acumen skills among marketing and sales professionals by examining competencies, skill variations, and educational impacts. The subsequent section presents key findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Responses

Overall patterns in financial acumen within a cohort of N=41 marketing and sales professionals reveal factors influencing their competencies. The standout of the top 10% in understanding liabilities and warranties suggests a keen awareness of financial risks and commitment to customer protection. Conversely, the weaknesses of the bottom 10% in cash flow management and product transfer of ownership point to gaps in foundational financial skills. Further examination of the top 20% reveals a broader array of financial proficiency, including triple bottom line and Excel skills/tools. In contrast, the lowest 20% indicates the need for help comprehending sales dynamics such as sales returns, discounts, allowances, and sunk costs. These findings reinforce the need for targeted training programs addressing financial competencies ranging from foundational to the more advanced. These findings also suggest future research exploring enhanced financial acumen’s impact on organizational performance and employee perceptions.

Marketing Versus Sales Roles

The study reveals key distinctions in skill requirements between those in marketing and sales positions. Unique organizational characteristics or variances in goals/strategies are significant contributors. For example, marketing professionals focus on brand building and lead generation, while sales professionals prioritize closing deals and meeting revenue targets. In addition, the dichotomy between analytical and interpersonal skills reinforces the importance of tailored training, and a strong financial acumen foundation gained through higher education.

The study also revealed a fascinating insight into how sales and marketing professionals view their inclusion in the sales and marketing profession. While identifying themselves as valid participants for the study, those in public relations, marketing analytics, marketing research, merchandising, and consulting designate themselves as "others," not as being in a marketing or sales role. This distancing from the profession deserves further study.

Non-supervisory Versus Supervisory Roles

The study suggests differing perceptions of factors influencing purchasing decisions between non-supervisory and supervisory roles. Non-supervisory employees exhibit greater concern with sunk costs and overall financial matters, potentially indicating greater risk aversion and external influence. Practical implications again include the need for tailored training programs addressing varying levels of concern and risk aversion.

College Degree Versus No College Degree

Education level significantly influences financial acumen knowledge, as respondents without a college degree express a higher need for various financial skills. Conversely, college degree holders report lower requirements, suggesting greater confidence or competence in managing financial matters. While limited by a small sample size for non-degree respondents, further research with a more representative sample is essential to confirm or refute these findings.

Adequate Education Versus Inadequate Education

Perceived education adequacy shapes financial acumen knowledge, with those feeling adequately educated expressing higher requirements for specific financial topics. Conversely, respondents perceiving their education as inadequate report lower needs, indicating potential areas for increased confidence or motivation to learn. However, recognizing the subjectivity inherent in determining educational adequacy, further research with objective measures is crucial to validate or expand upon these findings.

Qualitative Responses

Qualitative responses enabled respondents to provide additional detail about their experience with financial acumen skills in the marketing and sales profession. Implications include varying perceptions of education adequacy, with some expressing a need for more practical courses. Respondents acknowledge the importance of financial skills for job performance and career growth. A notable gap exists between the required financial acumen for these roles and the education provided, impacting tasks, client communication, and career progression. These findings indicate the need for further research to bridge this gap and enable the design of more effective financial acumen education and training for marketing and sales professionals.

Limitations and Future Research

Examining financial acumen among 41 marketing and sales professionals yields valuable information, but limitations exist. The small sample size may limit generalizability, and reliance on self-reported data introduces potential response bias. Future research should use larger, more diverse samples to address these issues. Exploring the impact of enhanced financial acumen on organizational performance and employee perceptions is recommended. Analysis of skill requirements in marketing and sales roles underscores the need for tailored training and recruitment aligned with organizational objectives. Future research could examine organizational outcomes associated with varying skill sets, offering insights for strategic decision-making.

Perceptions of non-supervisory and managerial employees reveal differences in risk aversion and confidence levels, suggesting implications for training programs and undergraduate education. Further research should explore causal relationships between managerial roles and decision-making processes.

A comparison of respondents with and without a college degree highlights the challenges faced by those who do not. Caution is needed in generalizing due to the small sample size of non-degree respondents. Future research should aim for a larger, more representative sample to refine the findings. Analysis based on perceived education adequacy reveals differences in financial acumen knowledge, emphasizing the need for more objective measures. Exploring the relationship between education adequacy and financial skill requirements could enhance understanding.

Conclusion

This paper identifies the financial acumen-related skills today's marketing and sales professionals need. Data from N=41 respondents was used to provide a quantitative and qualitative analysis of financial acumen skills, highlighting the variations between four subgroups.

The analysis shows distinctions in skill requirements between those in marketing versus those in sales, those in supervisory versus non-supervisory roles, and those with a college degree versus those without a college degree. This analysis justifies the need for adequate financial acumen education as well as training programs tailored to the individualized needs of the specific marketing or sales role.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent and Financial Acumen Survey

Informed Consent

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research about financial acumen in regard to marketing and sales professionals.

Terminology
The term *financial acumen* refers to the knowledge and understanding of various financial and accounting principles.

Researchers
This research is a collaborative effort of the authors (removed for blind peer review).

What is this study about?
This study explores financial acumen of marketing and sales professionals. Specifically, the researchers are investigating the degree various skills/knowledge are required of marketing and sales professionals. The research is quantitative and consists of one 24-item quantitative questionnaires and one open ended qualitative question. Your participation in this study will help contribute to the body of knowledge regarding financial acumen skills/knowledge of marketing and sales professionals.

Why am I being asked to participate?
You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a professional in the area of marketing and/or sales. Your participation is voluntary and if you initially agree to participate and later change your mind, you may withdraw from this research at any time without penalty or consequence of any kind. You can also refuse to participate in any portion of this study, including not answering any particular question you do not wish to answer.

What will I be asked to do if I participate?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the following items:
1. Demographic data (general information about yourself)
2. A 24-item questionnaires about skills/knowledge of various financial acumen items
3. An open-ended question allowing you to add anything you would like to share
Note: *Your combined total time contribution will be approximately 5 minutes to complete the listed items.*

What are the risks and benefits of participating in this study?
Participation in this study does not involve risks beyond those associated with normal day to day living. Although you may not necessarily benefit directly from this research, participation will benefit the body of knowledge regarding the financial acumen of marketing and sales professions. The results will assist the researchers in determining if marketing and sales professionals receive enough financial acumen education, particularly whether or not universities provide a sufficient number of financial acumen courses for marketing and sales majors.

Is there any compensation or costs to participating?
There is no cost to participate in this study and there is no compensation for participating in this study.

What happens to the information I provide?
All information you provide will be confidential. Although the information will be used in a published paper, which will be presented at a national conference, no identifiable individual information will be disclosed.

What if I do not want to participate or I want to quit?
Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any consequence. Additionally, you are not required to answer any item on either of the questionnaires you do not want to answer.

Will I find out about the results of the study?
The research will be published in the proceedings of a national marketing conference. If you would like to be e-mailed the link to the published paper, please send a request to the primary researcher at the below email address.

Who do I contact if I have concerns or questions?
If you have any questions or concerns about this study or what is expected of you, please feel free to contact the primary researcher: (removed for blind peer review)

Statement of Consent:
I have carefully reviewed this form and decided that I will participate in the research described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. **<u>My continuation of this survey and completion of the following questionnaires constitutes my consent</u>.**

Demographic Data

Please check which best represents the nature of your <u>current</u> position/role:
___Marketing
___Sales
___Other (please specify) ___________________________________

Please check which best represents the level of your <u>current</u> position/role:
___Non-supervisory
___Manager/supervisory

How many <u>total</u> years have you been in marketing/sales positions/roles? _____

What is your current job title? ____________________________________

Do you have a college degree?
___Yes
___No

If "yes," what was your field of study?_________________________

If you have a college degree, do you feel your coursework provided you with adequate financial acumen for your marketing/sales position/role?
___Yes
___No

Financial Acumen Questionnaires

Questionnaire

For the following financial acumen item, please indicate how often the skill has been needed/required for any of the marketing/sales roles you have held throughout your career. If you have no knowledge of the item, including not knowing what it is, please check the "never" option. If the item differs among the various roles you have held, please refer to the role where you needed/required the skill the most.

		Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Regularly (5)
1	Budgeting – Fiscal and Capital					
2	Annual Report Analysis					
3	Interest Rates					
4	Return on Investment					
5	Financing					
6	Managing Receivables					
7	Cost/Volume/Profit Analysis					
8	Cash Flow					
9	Product Transfer of Ownership (i.e., FOB Shipping Point/FOB Destination)					
10	Triple Bottom Line					
11	Excel Skills/Tools					
12	Analytical Skills/Tools					
13	Calculating Commissions/Compensation					
14	Sales Returns, Discounts, and Allowances					
15	Credit Terms (i.e., 2/10 net 30)					
16	Liability					
17	Warranties					
18	Inflation/Recession					

19	Supply/Demand					
20	Price Elasticity					
21	Sunk Costs					
22	Statistical Significance					
23	Overall state of the economy					
24	Overall management financial concerns					

If you would like to share anything else that could potentially assist in this research, please feel free to do so here. -
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Thank you very much for your time in contributing to our research by completing our survey!

Victory for Tony O: A Marketing Behavioral Change Case Study

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Mary U. Henderson, St. Catherine University

Abstract

This teaching-based case study tasks students with analyzing the marketing strategies used in a real-life case of marketing Major League Baseball player Tony Oliva (Tony O), for inclusion in the National Baseball Hall of Fame (HOF). The case study is guided by a scenario describing the strategic decision-making and actions undertaken by the volunteers who spearheaded a not-for-profit campaign and worked over ten years to earn Tony O HOF recognition. This one-of-a-kind case focuses on the complexities of marketing to a micro-audience of just 16 people. Using Fogg's Behavior Change Model, knowledge is gained by studying the campaign managers' strategic marketing decisions. This case study is intended for undergraduate students in sports marketing, marketing, non-profit marketing, and strategic marketing courses.

Keywords: Marketing strategy, sports marketing, Fogg's Behavior Change Model, storytelling, non-profit sport organizations, target audience.

Betenbough Homes: A Case Study in Customer Centric Marketing

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Abstract

Purpose:

This paper shares a narrative case study about Betenbough Homes, a regional home building company in west Texas, for use in developing students' understanding of providing great value, a customer centric relational approach to marketing, developing customers' trust and deep connection, and the implications of faith-driven values for the purpose and practice of business. The case is a companion learning resource to a brief documentary film (*Home*) about the company.

Method:

This is a case study of an exemplar of providing great value and a customer centric relational approach to serving customers.

Results:

The case augments the documentary film providing a rich contextual frame. It identifies many of the challenges the company faces in its sector and provides more details about how it provides a great value proposition, its efforts to develop deep authentic customer relationships, and its organizational culture and values. Students are asked to consider the implications of a deep commitment to serving customers well with great value and a positive customer experience and with deep relationships based on genuine care for customers as persons for an organization's operations, culture, impact, and viability.

Value to Marketing Education:

The case and its associated video resources are engaging learning resources that exemplify smart approaches to marketing in a very competitive sector. It demonstrates that an effort to serve customers well that is grounded in a faith-driven ethic of relational love can influence value propositions, customer experiences, and be a meaningful alternative to typical CRM based marketing approaches.

Keywords: Marketing Education; Value Proposition; Customer Experience; Relationship Marketing; Customer Relations; Customer Centricity; Trust; Values; Virtues; Faith and Business; Home Building

Laughter: Inducing Positive Affect and Its Benefits in the Marketing Classroom

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Abstract

Marketing educators use humor in the classroom to induce positive affect and its benefits. However, this doesn't come without risks. In this research paper, the author explores how and why humor is used in the classroom, the positive (Szabo 2003, Aldridge and Roesch 2008, Morreall 1983) and negative aspects of this practice (Kazarian and Martin 2006, Morreall 1983, Holmes 2004, Gorham and Christophel 1990), and presents a simpler and safer, alternative for obtaining the benefits of positive affect and humor.

Students have reported that they "look forward to being entertained in the classroom" (Schlee 2005) and Marks (2000) demonstrate that "when entertainment is combined with other aspects of quality teaching, it is plausible that quality learning will result, since entertainment improves student involvement." According to Tomkovick (2004), there are ten anchor points to connect students to the learning process and humor is one of them. Research has shown that the use of humor can be effective. "Academics should display a genuine interest in, and enthusiasm for, the subject and add a little humor, which we found contributes to overall dynamism" (Sweeney et al. 2009). It also helps create a positive environment (Granitz et al. 2009).

The extant literature shows that laughter, the sought-after end-product of humor, has many, if not all, of the same benefits of humor, without the problems. However, without humor, how is laughter brought about in a group? Forced laughter, which is not brought about by humorous stimuli but is deliberately evoked, stimulated, and activated, has been shown to have the same physiological and psychological benefits as naturally-induced

positive emotion (Foley et al. 2002; Giuliani et al. 2008; Hertzler 1970, p.2; Kataria 2010). Therefore, forced laughter should produce the same benefits that are linked to positive affect, humor, and laughter.

Forced laughter in the classroom can be implemented by using Laughter Yoga. Laughter Yoga is a complete wellbeing routine, started by Dr. Madan Kataria of India. In Laughter Yoga, participants laugh without "relying on humor, jokes, or comedy" and is based on the "fact that the body cannot differentiate between fake and real laughter" (Kataria 2010). Laughter Yoga routines (Kataria 2010) could be implemented for five minutes at the beginning of each class and by lasting only five minutes, one minute per exercise, it would not interfere with valuable teaching time.

The study involves using 'Laughter Yoga' as a practice before exams and other stress-inducing course activities such as public speaking. Students were asked to forcibly laugh, using no stimulus to induce laughter choosing to follow one of 5 available prompts ranging from 'No Money Laughter' to 'Think of a Socially Awkward Situation and Laugh at it.' Initial qualitative findings demonstrate that the students who embrace this practice report findings of decreased stress before exams.

Keywords: Education, laughter, affect, humor

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Exploring the Role of ChatGPT in Student Engagement and Class Satisfaction

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Abstract

Recent technological developments, such as the advent of artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT, have received widespread attention and sparked heated debates concerning implications for higher education. It is essential for marketing educators to understand how to effectively integrate this AI tool into their teaching methodologies to better train students for the increasing demands of the contemporary market and to enhance their career readiness. This study examines the effects of ChatGPT on student engagement (i.e., physical engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement), as well as its influence on students' learning outcome (i.e., class satisfaction). Our focus lies in discerning whether students' awareness of ChatGPT and their experience with this tool affect their engagement and satisfaction with the class. Data were collected during the Spring 2023 semester from several undergraduate marketing classes at an American public university. The data analysis results show that in the first half year of ChatGPT introduction, about 75.1% of marketing students heard of ChatGPT and 42% of them had the experience. Most of them accessed ChatGPT service through their laptop or desktop. The findings also found that neither student awareness of ChatGPT nor their experience with it significantly influenced their engagement with the class. However, students' awareness of ChatGPT exhibited a noteworthy positive impact on their satisfaction with the course, whereas their experience with the tool did not have a significant effect on class satisfaction. Due to limited empirical studies on ChatGPT in the extant literature, the results will serve as a steppingstone in the academic research on ChatGPT's role in marketing education. Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings for both marketing education research and practitioners, while also acknowledging limitations.

Keywords: ChatGPT, AI (artificially intelligent), Physical Engagement, Emotional Engagement, Cognitive Engagement, Class Satisfaction

Mindfulness in Minutes: Exploring the Effectiveness of Brief Mindfulness Training Program on Test Anxiety

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Purpose of the Study: This study aims to assess the effectiveness of a concise 5-minute, 2-week mindfulness program in comparison to the standard 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program in reducing test anxiety. Additionally, we explore potential underlying factors, such gender and participants' impression of the program that may influence the impact of mindfulness on test anxiety reduction.

Method/Design and Sample: Sixty students enrolled in the Algebra math classes at a local high school participated the two-week mindfulness training program, with each session lasting 5 minutes. Each student participates the mindfulness training in class and before bedtime. Participants completed pre- and post-training assessments measuring their mindfulness status and test anxiety level using the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), Westside Test Anxiety Scale Validation (WTASV), and Test Anxiety Inventory for Children and Adolescents (TAICA).

Results: The findings demonstrate the effectiveness of the brief mindfulness training program in improving students' mindfulness level, reducing test anxiety, and promoting relaxation. Although females initially exhibited higher levels of test anxiety, the post-training results indicate comparable gains in mindfulness skills and reductions in test anxiety among both genders. Moreover, the participants' impressions of the program and their post-trained mindfulness status lead to higher relaxation.

Value to Marketing Education: This study contributes to the literature on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) by highlighting the efficacy of an accessible mindfulness training program in mitigating test anxiety. Our findings suggest a potential solution to issues of disengagement and fatigue associated with extensive and lengthy MBSR program. The successful implementation of this accessible mindfulness program offers a practical strategy for educational institutions seeking to address test anxiety. However, the study acknowledges the need for further research to understand the underlying mechanisms driving the effectiveness of brief mindfulness training and the necessity of longitudinal studies to track academic performance outcomes.

Keywords: Mindfulness, test anxiety, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program

Engaging the Future:

Experiential Learning Strategies in Marketing Education for Societal Impact

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Purpose of the Study: Community engagement is a significant experiential learning approach effective in developing 21st-century skills among students, as it allows them to apply theoretical knowledge to understand societal issues, collaborate with multiple stakeholders, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. This paper shares insights on the design and implementation of semester-long community-engaged course projects in collaboration with community partners, the transformative impact of such projects on student learning, and the benefits community partners yield from such collaboration.

Method/Design and Sample: This paper offers insights from a two-year study involving pre- and post-course surveys and reflection exercises. It examines how social marketing principles can be applied to promote social good and influence behavior, detailing the project's design and implementation. The course, integrating 21st-century skills, adapted to a hybrid structure during and after the pandemic, using CANVAS and Zoom. The course's success is attributed to its hands-on approach, real-world impact, and enhancement of student's professional skills, providing double credit as a business/marketing elective and a civic learning course.

Results: Findings highlight that students gain practical skills such as data analysis, communication, and networking through community-engaged projects, transcending traditional classroom learning. They develop a deeper understanding of societal issues, apply academic knowledge to real-world situations, and enhance soft skills like emotional intelligence and time management. This experiential learning fosters civic responsibility by engaging the students on projects aimed at addressing local community challenges and equips them with diverse competencies for professional advancement. Collaboration with community partners bolsters their confidence in leading projects and prepares them to be proactive contributors to societal development and change.

Value to Marketing Education: This paper highlights the benefits marketing education can derive from integrating 21st-century skills and community engagement in a marketing course. This approach enriches learning, imbues a sense of civic responsibility, and equips students with essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, complex problem-solving, and teamwork. Engaging with community partners benefits students and provides valuable insights for the organizations involved. Despite challenges like time constraints and coordination efforts, this approach helps business students connect academic theories with discipline-relevant issues with societal implications, ultimately producing well-rounded future business leaders.

Keywords: Community Engagement, Collaboration, Community Partner, 21st century learning skills, Civic Learning, Transformative

Mapping Financial Literacy Landscapes –
Insights, Disparities, and Pathways to Empowerment

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Abstract: *This research synthesis explores diverse aspects of financial literacy education, drawing insights from 11 studies encompassing secondary schools, community-based programs, and higher education, with a focus on Hispanic populations. Comparative analysis reveals variations in financial literacy determinants, instructional strategies, and demographic influences. Recommendations include prioritizing comprehensive financial education legislation, refining curricula to address critical topics, and enhancing inclusive teaching approaches. Future research should explore tailored interventions at Hispanic Serving Institutions, assess program effectiveness longitudinally, and delve into the nuanced socio-cultural influences on financial literacy. These findings provide a foundation for developing targeted financial education initiatives and advancing the understanding of financial literacy dynamics, particularly within Hispanic communities.*

Key Words: financial knowledge, financial literacy, motivation, self-efficacy

INTRODUCTION

The level of financial literacy in both developed and developing economies is generally low. The National Financial Education Council (NFEC) notes that there is a "financial illiteracy epidemic" in the United States in its recent 2019 report (NFEC, 2019). Numerous surveys and studies have revealed a significant deficiency in financial literacy among a substantial portion of the U.S. population. Individuals commonly lack fundamental knowledge of budgeting, saving, investing, and debt management concepts. The repercussions of this low financial literacy extend directly to personal finances, resulting in suboptimal financial decision-making and prevalent issues such as high debt levels, insufficient retirement savings, and financial stress. Moreover, disparities in financial education further compound these challenges, as some individuals enjoy better access to resources and opportunities for financial literacy education than others, raising concerns about the accessibility of such education in schools and communities. Acknowledging the crucial role of early financial education, discussions have emerged regarding integrating financial literacy into school curricula, particularly at various levels, including high schools.

This paper examines current challenges and proposes solutions for improving financial literacy in education. Initially, we conduct a thorough literature review to gather insights from existing studies and research on financial literacy, education disparities, and interventions. This provides a foundation for understanding the current state of knowledge on the subject. Then we use a mixed-methods approach, to offer a well-rounded examination of the financial literacy challenges highlighted in the premise.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mandell and Klein (2009) examined 79 high school students who took a personal finance management course in high school and were no more financially literate than those who had not. This study was based on students who had taken a course in the preceding one to four years, it tested their application of the course material and also their personal feelings on financial management. The breakdown in this study is due to an impractical introduction. Finding a more effective way to engage students in the importance and practicality of wealth management is crucial.

In an opposing study, Kim and Chatterjee (2013), find that socialization of financial management of youth, at young ages may be more beneficial depending on the source of the education. It was shown that young adults, children, and adolescents performed all different life choices once they were of age to be financially independent. "Respondents who owned bank accounts and had their spending monitored by parents in childhood were more likely to own financial assets and had more positive attitudes toward personal finance as young adults." (Kim and Chatterjee 2013). They go on to show that the factors (independent variables), such as mathematic capability, parents' financial awareness, and if the child received an allowance all played into how the child would make financial decisions when they gained independence.

Junior Achievement used their programs to provide similar studies to Kim and Chatterjee. After interviewing Mike MacDonnell, the Chief Learning Officer of the Rocky Mountain Junior Achievement Division; he showed studies that their programs have had a strong positive impact on financially independent young adults. The 2016-2017 Alumni report shows a significant increase in the correlation to graduates of Junior Achievement: increased high school graduates, four-year college graduates, advanced college degrees, and management or above positions in their careers. According to Flynn (2023) research:

- Only 57% of American adults are financially literate.
- 73% of teens want a more personal finance education.
- Americans lose an average of $1,819 annually due to financial illiteracy.
- 77% of Americans are financially anxious.

Hite, et.al. (2011) assessed the status of personal financial education in Kansas secondary schools in the aftermath of the economic crisis, focusing on the perspectives of business teachers. Results indicate that 20% of schools in the state require a personal finance course before high school graduation, with an additional 12% considering such a requirement. Despite a state mandate to teach financial literacy, 20% of schools are not in compliance. The study reveals a positive impact of the recession on financial literacy enrollments in Kansas, with a notable increase in personal finance course enrollments at the high school level. The findings suggest a potential nationwide trend in increased interest and enrollment in personal finance courses. However, further research is needed to confirm such trends in other states. The study emphasizes the need for legislation requiring personal finance courses in the remaining states, given the individual financial challenges experienced during the recession. Despite budget constraints in schools, 81% of surveyed schools in Kansas offer financial literacy instruction. At the high school level, financial literacy is predominantly taught in business departments by teachers with relevant coursework in personal or business finance. The study highlights appropriate emphasis on topics such as spending, credit, banking services, and savings in personal finance classes. However, it raises concerns about the inadequate coverage of crucial topics like retirement planning, consumer laws and rights, and investments, which are deemed essential for citizens facing uncertainties in

Social Security and potential financial losses in retirement accounts. The study advocates for increased emphasis on these topics in personal finance classes at all education levels.

A nationwide online survey of financial educators in adult community-based financial education programs in the US was conducted to examine teaching beliefs, related curriculum, and teaching strategies used to reach underserved populations. Using a transformative learning theoretical framework Taylor, et.al. (2012) explored how financial education engages learners concerning their lives. Survey findings reveal that financial educators in community-based settings are predominantly White, female, college-educated, and experienced. They see their role as providing expert information for informed financial choices, often adapting materials to reflect learners' life circumstances. Learners are racially diverse, mostly having attended high school and recognizing their financial need for program participation. Programs are not specific to certain groups, often free, and held in various face-to-face settings. Implications suggest that best practices for financial educators should incorporate inclusive, culturally responsive pedagogies. This study contributes to knowledge about community-based financial literacy education for adults, offering insights into educators, class locations, student demographics, and hosting programs. Notably, it provides a unique perspective from the financial educator's viewpoint, exploring their beliefs about teaching financial literacy and the relationship between beliefs, practice, and contextual factors (e.g., setting, curriculum, technology). The transformative adult learning theoretical grounding offers a means to understand factors shaping practice and fostering positive changes in teaching, presenting a departure from non-educational frameworks commonly used in financial literacy studies. Taylor, et.al. (2012) underscored that becoming financially competent and changing behavior is a gradual process, requiring tailored curriculum, innovative pedagogical techniques, and authentic assessment throughout the financial literacy education program.

Brown, et.al. (2016) explored the impact of statewide mathematics, economics, and financial education reforms on the debt behavior of young U.S. consumers in the decade following high school. The study reveals that increased mathematics requirements generally enhance perceived creditworthiness, decrease reliance on various debt categories (excluding student loans), and reduce the likelihood of accounts in collections. Results align with prior research indicating that higher exposure to mathematics training correlates with higher average incomes and savings. Similarly, financial education requirements exhibit positive effects, leading to improvements in repayment behavior, reduced reliance on nonstudent debt, and increased prevalence of credit reports. However, these effects tend to diminish with age. In contrast, economic education is associated with adverse outcomes, such as increased likelihood of outstanding debt, higher rates of delinquency, and bankruptcy. These findings suggest potential complexities in the welfare implications of economic training, as increased reliance on debt may coincide with enhanced overall welfare indicators such as steeper income profiles and increased asset returns.

Erner (2016) conducted a survey among tenth-grade students to assess their financial literacy levels and associated factors. Results indicate a prevalent lack of financial knowledge among high school students, with approximately two-thirds answering basic financial literacy questions correctly, and even fewer answering sophisticated questions accurately. Comparing student and adult literacy levels revealed similarities but with distinct compositions. Sociodemographic factors, including gender, integration level, mathematical skills, cognitive aptitude, and foreign language skills, were found to influence financial literacy. These findings underscore the need for targeted financial literacy programs, especially for subpopulations exhibiting lower knowledge levels.

Gill and Bhattacharya (2019) conducted a study teaching financial concepts to 12th-grade economics students, with one treatment focusing on intensive money management (MM) topics and the other on financial investment (FI) topics. Two control groups, including 11th-grade students without exposure to economics and 12th-grade economics students with no treatment, were established. Both treatment groups demonstrated a significant 13 percentage point increase in test scores from pretest to posttest, while neither control group exhibited gains. The study did not find a significant difference in financial literacy test performance between the MM and FI treatment groups. The results suggest a need for continued financial education in high school, emphasizing the effectiveness of a short-duration financial literacy treatment. The study highlights the current integration of personal finance into existing courses in various states, with a specific focus on California, where financial literacy is typically taught within an economics class. However, the study does not assert that a traditional economics class can be entirely replaced by one heavily infused with financial literacy. They determined that further research using more differentiated curricula and a comprehensive assessment of treatment-specific and common content is deemed necessary to establish the overall effectiveness of one curriculum over the other.

Pesando (2018) utilized data from the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for Italy to investigate the impact of financial literacy skills on the value high school students attribute to education. The author hypothesizes that higher financial literacy enhances students' awareness of the benefits and costs associated with education, affecting their perceived value of schooling. Analyzing time commitment to education and attitudes towards school as measures of students' valuation of schooling, the study finds that higher financial literacy increases the perceived value of schooling by boosting students' time commitment to education. However, no robust evidence is found regarding the influence of financial literacy on students' attitudes towards school. The discrepancy between financial literacy shaping time commitment, but not attitudes challenges the notion that attitude changes precede behavioral changes. The study offers three hypotheses to reconcile this discrepancy, suggesting that attitude-related questions may not be a valid proxy for perceived value, objective measurement of behavior is more reliable, and the practical nature of financial literacy facilitates immediate behavioral changes. Regarding time commitment, instrumental variable estimates indicate a significant positive effect of financial literacy, with an increase in one financial literacy proficiency level associated with reduced school delays, absences, and increased out-of-school study time. The study emphasizes the role of financial literacy in human capital accumulation, particularly in decision-making, time management, and awareness of costs and benefits associated with education. It suggests that students with lower financial literacy may exert less effort and show less motivation in their educational pursuits. Pesando (2018) anticipated positive spillover effects on later-life outcomes such as occupation choice, wealth, earnings, savings, stock-market participation, and retirement preparedness.

Walstad & Rebeck (2017) developed the Test of Financial Literacy (TFL) to assess the financial knowledge of high school students based on the National Standards for Financial Literacy. The test underwent a meticulous development process, including extensive item writing and review. Evaluation of test data from 1,218 high schools indicated that the TFL is reliable and valid, and the test items contribute to its effectiveness. Further analysis using an item response theory (IRT) model demonstrated the TFL's efficacy in assessing financial literacy across a diverse range of student abilities. Content validity, a crucial aspect of educational achievement tests, was addressed by aligning the TFL with the content specified in the Financial Literacy Standards. The development process, guided by twelfth-grade benchmarks, resulted in a test covering personal finance concepts expected to be taught in high school. The test content was rigorously reviewed by five professionals in personal finance and economics, along with two project directors, to ensure validity and address potential bias or reading problems. Norming process results supported the construct validity of the TFL. Students reporting personal finance instruction scored higher than those without instruction across various group breakdowns and individual items. All items demonstrated discrimination between high- and lower-scoring students. From a classical test theory perspective, the TFL emerged as a valid and reliable instrument for assessing high school students' financial knowledge. Analysis using a four-parameter IRT model reinforced the TFL's ability to assess financial literacy across a broad spectrum of student abilities or achievements.

Walstad & Wagner (2023) investigated the impact of required and voluntary financial education on the saving behaviors of U.S. adults, comparing three groups with different financial education experiences. A statistical method called probit analysis was employed to estimate the effects on four saving behaviors: having a savings account, maintaining an emergency fund, saving for investing, and saving for retirement. Walstad & Wagner (2023) revealed positive outcomes for both required and voluntary financial education across all saving behaviors, with no apparent difference based on self-selection. Multiple exposures to financial education in various venues (high school, college, or employment) showed greater effects on saving behaviors compared to a single exposure. The findings support the positive influence of financial education on saving behaviors and emphasize the cumulative effects of multiple exposures, suggesting the need for more financial education in higher education and employment settings. This study underscores the importance of focusing on saving behaviors in financial education, acknowledging the heterogeneity of financial education experiences.

Phung, et.al. (2023) examined the relationship between learning motivation and financial literacy performance among 730 undergraduates. They found significant correlations between overall motivation and its components (especially self-efficacy, financial learning value, and achievement goals) with students' financial literacy scores. The study considered various student characteristics, such as academic seniority, university type, parents' education, and extra math study during high school, and identified that these factors moderated the motivation-financial literacy link. The results suggest that policymakers, researchers, and educators should recognize the importance of motivation in financial literacy education programs. Self-efficacy and financial learning value were highlighted as the most influential components of motivation, aligning with the expectancy-value theoretical model. The study also emphasized the enduring impact of motivation on learning, emphasizing the need for educational programs that trigger and sustain learners' motivational forces. This analysis revealed that academic seniority plays a moderating role, indicating a stronger relationship between financial literacy performance and motivation for students with higher academic seniority. Additionally, the type of university showed a significant moderation effect, with public university students generally achieving better financial literacy scores but exhibiting a weaker motivation-financial literacy link compared to private university students.

Angrisani et al. (2021) conducted a study to investigate the determinants of the racial/ethnic gap in financial literacy within the general population and across income classes, focusing on childhood family circumstances and neighborhood socioeconomic characteristics. Examining Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics in the United States, the study found that individual characteristics and neighborhood socioeconomic status contribute the most to the explained gap for Blacks and Hispanics, explaining 48% and 57% of the observed gap, respectively. The gap narrows in higher income classes, but the model's ability to explain it decreases monotonically. Within income classes, demographic characteristics (gender, age, education) are primarily responsible for the explained part of the gap. Notably, contributions of these variables vary across racial/ethnic and income groups, especially in the middle-income class. For instance, adjusting the gender composition could significantly reduce the White–Black gap, while age and education differences play a larger role in the White–Hispanic gap. Angrisani, et.al (2021) highlights the contribution of neighborhood socioeconomic characteristics, accounting for 9%–11% of the gap within low-income classes and becoming more substantial as income increases. Differences in the number of banks in the neighborhood also impact the financial literacy gap, particularly in the middle-income class. Analyzing financial literacy scores by income level, the study observes that the gap between racial/ethnic groups and Whites diminishes as income increases. However, a notable unexplained gap remains, with variations across income classes. The middle-income class shows stronger correlations between adverse family financial circumstances, neighborhood socioeconomic status, and financial literacy, indicating a higher likelihood of investing in financial sophistication and improving financial literacy in response to past financial strain. In summary, the study suggests that while individual and environmental factors explain a significant portion of the racial/ethnic gap in financial literacy, a considerable part remains unexplained, varying significantly across income classes.

González-Corzo (2015) offers a comprehensive overview of the asset ownership characteristics of U.S. Hispanic households. The study reveals that, overall, Hispanic households display lower levels of financial asset ownership across all asset classes compared to the general population. Various socioeconomic factors, such as social networks, collective belief systems, and cultural barriers, directly contribute to these disparities. The paper suggests strategies for financial institutions and intermediaries to enhance financial asset ownership among Hispanics. Financial planners can play a crucial role by increasing financial education and literacy, supporting initiatives for greater Hispanic inclusion in the formal financial system, and providing personalized financial planning strategies tailored to the unique needs of Hispanics in the United States.

In summary, a comprehensive overview of financial literacy education emerges, offering insights into varied dimensions and populations. Hite et al. (2011) investigate the status of personal financial education in Kansas secondary schools post-economic crisis, revealing positive impacts on enrollments and advocating for nationwide legislation. Taylor et al. (2012) delve into financial educators' perspectives, emphasizing the need for inclusive, culturally responsive pedagogies. Brown et al. (2016) explore the impacts of statewide reforms, with mathematics requirements positively influencing creditworthiness, financial education improving repayment behavior, and economic education leading to adverse outcomes. Erner (2016) assesses financial literacy among high school students, highlighting a prevalent lack of knowledge and sociodemographic influences, calling for targeted programs. Gill and Bhattacharya's study (2019) demonstrates the effectiveness of short-duration financial literacy treatments, emphasizing the need for continued high school financial education. Pesando (2018) explores financial literacy's impact on students' valuation of education, revealing potential positive spillover effects on later-life outcomes. Walstad and Rebeck (2017) develop the Test of Financial Literacy (TFL), a reliable and valid tool for assessing financial knowledge in high school students. Walstad and Wagner (2023) investigate the impact of financial education on saving behaviors, highlighting positive outcomes and the cumulative effects of multiple exposures. Phung et al. (2023) reveal significant correlations between learning motivation and financial literacy, with self-efficacy and financial learning value playing key roles. Angrisani et al.'s (2021) study focuses on the determinants of the racial/ethnic gap in financial literacy, emphasizing individual characteristics and neighborhood socioeconomic status. Finally, González-Corzo (2015) provides a comprehensive overview of asset ownership among U.S. Hispanic households, citing socioeconomic factors as contributors to lower financial asset ownership. Collectively, these studies underscore the multifaceted nature of financial literacy education, emphasizing the importance of targeted programs, inclusive pedagogies, and the need for ongoing research to address evolving challenges and disparities.

DISCUSSION

To enhance financial literacy among students attending a Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS), a multifaceted approach is recommended based on insights from a comprehensive review of relevant studies. The university should develop tailored financial literacy programs that specifically address the unique challenges faced by Hispanic students, ensuring cultural relevance in curricula and materials. Educators should receive training on cultural sensitivity to deliver financial literacy content effectively. Collaboration with Hispanic financial planners and engagement with local communities can provide valuable insights and real-world exposure. Longitudinal financial literacy programs, as suggested by Phung et al. (2023), should be implemented to ensure lasting impacts on learning. Additionally, the university should advocate for nationwide legislation mandating personal finance courses in high schools, as proposed by Hite et al. (2011), to ensure broader access and compliance. Regular assessments of program effectiveness, as recommended by Walstad and Rebeck (2017), should inform continuous refinement and improvement. Such actions collectively aim to bridge the financial literacy gap and empower Hispanic students with essential financial knowledge and skills. Based on the information from the 11 entries, here are specific actions your Hispanic Serving University can consider to improve Hispanic financial literacy:

1. Tailored Financial Literacy Programs: Develop targeted financial literacy programs specifically designed to address the unique needs and challenges faced by Hispanic students, considering insights from González-Corzo (2015) and Angrisani et al. (2021).
2. Incorporate Cultural Relevance: Ensure that financial literacy curricula and materials are culturally relevant and responsive to the backgrounds and experiences of Hispanic students, aligning with the inclusive pedagogies recommended by Taylor et al. (2012).
3. Engage Hispanic Financial Planners: Collaborate with Hispanic financial planners who can provide insights into the cultural and financial contexts of the community, contributing to the development of effective financial education strategies.
4. Teacher Training on Cultural Sensitivity: Provide training for educators to enhance cultural sensitivity in delivering financial literacy content, acknowledging the impact of cultural and experiential barriers identified by González-Corzo (2015).
5. Community-Based Financial Education: Extend financial literacy programs beyond the university setting by engaging with local Hispanic communities, leveraging community-based financial education strategies as suggested by Taylor et al. (2012).
6. Partnerships with Financial Institutions: Establish partnerships with financial institutions to facilitate real-world exposure and experiences for Hispanic students, enhancing their understanding of financial systems, as recommended by González-Corzo (2015).
7. Research on Motivational Factors: Conduct research on motivational factors influencing Hispanic students' financial literacy, considering the insights from Phung et al. (2023), to tailor interventions that resonate with their specific motivations.

8. Longitudinal Financial Literacy Programs: Implement longitudinal financial literacy programs that extend over an extended period, aligning with the findings of Phung et al. (2023) to ensure lasting impacts on learning.
9. Assessment and Improvement: Regularly assess the effectiveness of financial literacy programs through reliable assessments, as suggested by Walstad and Rebeck (2017), and use the findings to continually refine and improve educational strategies.
10. Advocacy for Nationwide Legislation: Advocate for nationwide legislation mandating personal finance courses in high schools, emphasizing the need for such requirements nationwide, as proposed by Hite et al. (2011), to ensure broader access and compliance.

The widespread presence of mandatory diversity classes in universities, while lacking mandatory financial literacy or personal finance courses, reflects the evolving priorities in higher education. Diversity classes are typically instituted to foster inclusivity, cultural understanding, and awareness of societal differences, aligning with the broader goals of promoting social equity and tolerance. These courses address issues related to race, ethnicity, gender, and other dimensions of diversity, contributing to a more inclusive campus environment.

On the other hand, the absence of mandatory financial literacy or personal finance courses highlights a potential oversight in preparing students for practical life skills. Financial literacy is integral to navigating the complex landscape of personal finance, making informed decisions, and achieving long-term economic well-being. Despite its critical importance, financial education often takes a backseat in traditional academic curricula.

Introducing mandatory financial literacy courses alongside diversity classes can provide a more holistic education, equipping students not only with cultural competence but also with essential life skills to manage their finances effectively. Integrating financial education into the curriculum aligns with the university's responsibility to prepare students for the challenges they will face beyond academia.

A balanced approach that combines diversity education with mandatory financial literacy courses for all students of every major ensures that students graduate with a well-rounded skill set, ready to navigate both the cultural complexities of a diverse world and the practical challenges of personal finance. This dual focus empowers students to make informed decisions, fostering a more financially savvy and socially conscious citizenry. As universities adapt to the evolving needs of their student bodies and society at large, considering the inclusion of mandatory financial literacy courses becomes imperative for a comprehensive and relevant educational experience without regard to the major selected.

THE WAY AHEAD

The research findings suggest three key areas for further exploration through quantitative or qualitative research at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI):

Assessment of Financial Literacy Programs

Conduct comprehensive evaluations of existing financial literacy programs at HSI to assess their effectiveness in enhancing students' financial knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Utilize both quantitative measures, such as pre-and post-program assessments, and qualitative methods, including focus group discussions, to gain insights into the program's impact and areas for improvement. Understanding the specific needs and preferences of the Hispanic student population can inform the design and refinement of financial literacy interventions tailored to their unique context.

Exploration of Socioeconomic Factors

Investigate the influence of socioeconomic factors, including family background, cultural beliefs, and community characteristics, on financial literacy outcomes among Hispanic students at an HSI. Employ qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and case studies, to uncover nuanced insights into how these factors shape financial behaviors and decision-making. A deeper understanding of the socio-cultural context can inform the development of culturally sensitive financial education initiatives that resonate with the experiences and values of Hispanic students.

Longitudinal Studies on Financial Behavior

Undertake longitudinal studies to track the financial behaviors and decision-making patterns of Hispanic students over an extended period. This research could involve both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews conducted at multiple points in a student's academic journey. By examining changes in financial literacy levels, attitudes, and behaviors over time, researchers can identify critical milestones, challenges, and factors influencing the financial trajectories of Hispanic students. Longitudinal insights can contribute to the refinement of financial education strategies and support services offered at HSIs.

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Incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Marketing Education: Description and Evaluation of a Social Media Project that Leverages ChatGPT

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As the use of Artificial Intelligence tools continues to grow in the marketing landscape, educators must integrate these tools into their courses to better prepare their students for the dynamic business world. ChatGPT is one such tool that is very popular, however there is limited research on the use of ChatGPT in marketing education. As such, we propose and evaluate a class project that utilizes ChatGPT in a social media marketing course. Our proposed project results in overwhelmingly favorable student perceived learning outcomes related to both social media marketing, as well as ChatGPT.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI, ChatGPT, social media marketing, marketing curriculum.

POSITION PAPERS

Artificial Intelligence [AI] in the Integrated Marketing Communication Classroom: Practical Application of User-Driven Marketing Campaigns

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Keyword: Artificial Intelligence, Marketing Pedagogy, Transformative Learning, ChatGPT

Purpose of Study

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to receive love and backlash in equal amounts, its permeation continues to be a rhizome taking root in unprecedented ways, even in Academia. These new technologies provided marketing education with a new set of topics and domains to inspire the classroom (Guba et al., 2023). Specifically, AI's ubiquity and exponential growth, particularly in the field of marketing is fast evolving, from innovative marketing strategies such as personalization and automation, creative design, and mapping customer journeys, to tracking performance to achieve data-driven decision-making and impact desired outcomes of marketing initiatives. Ai is far from perfect and this includes ChatGPT (Guba et al., 2023). Consumers from faculty look at errors in the AI tools such as 'hallucinations' of AI (Athaluri et al., 2023), bias from political and gender perspectives (Rutinowski et al., 2023), and incorrect references in academic projects (Athaluri et al., 2023). Existing companies leveraging AI in their marketing activities have proven immense potential AI has to revolutionize the marketing landscape. For example, Studio 71 out of Los Angeles uses AI tools to develop marketing email campaigns and create taglines and posts for client LinkedIn pages (Davies, 2023). Coco-Cola has been using BAIn and AI software that is internal to the company however they do not disclose how specifically they are utilizing the software (Springer, 2023). Snapple "fAIct" bottle cap campaign working with consumers who use ChaptGPT to build more and better cap facts (Springer, 2023, 2).

AI-marketing-driven is reshaping and re-organizing the marketing workforce, demanding skills and knowledge that align with AI. This brings to question whether academic institutions are sufficiently preparing for the demands of AI-powered marketing careers. Our point of inquiry seeks to interrogate this question: Will our current marketing curriculum, teaching systems, and practices adequately prepare marketing students for the challenges, threats, and opportunities in the AI-marketing-driven future?

Method Design

In the classroom, we will be a comparative study where the students create the campaigns without AI and then the second prompt is to use AI. The AI assignments for the Email Campaign and the LinkedIn Marketing Posts can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. The user AI tools that are available for students to use in the assignments can be found in Appendix C. The assignment will be launched in class in the Spring 2024 semester. Students will complete the Qualtrics survey after the completion of the user AI assignment. The student will assess their perceptions of AI, usage of AI, ethical stance on AI, and the pedagogical effects of transformative and experiential learning. The findings and results will be shared at the conference.

References available upon Request

Conceptualizing Meaningful and Memorable Learning Experiences

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

This study aims to understand what makes learning experiences meaningful and memorable. When we look back at our own life experiences, certain moments stand out—those that truly made an impact and stuck with us. Why do these moments matter so much, and how do they shape our understanding of learning?

This question is especially relevant in the field of higher education. As universities strive to distinguish themselves in a competitive landscape, the quality of student experiences emerges as a crucial element of their appeal. This study aims to identify dimensions that contribute to meaningful and memorable learning.

Conceptual Background

This study builds on several conceptual ideas: how customers experience things, what makes an experience memorable, what gives it meaning, and how we learn from it. We have conducted a brief examination of existing literature to trace the evolution of the concept of customer experiences within academic discourse. Historically, the emphasis was predominantly on singular, extraordinary events that stood out due to their uniqueness and impact. However, contemporary research has broadened this perspective to include the significance of everyday experiences. These are the moments that, despite their apparent mundanity, hold profound implications for the learner, particularly within the context of higher education. This shift reflects a growing recognition of the value of the commonplace in shaping our understanding and engagement with the world around us. We also explored what makes an experience memorable, using ideas from tourism research. These insights help us to understand how memorable and meaningful learning experiences are constructed.

Method

Adopting a qualitative, mostly inductive approach, this study involves students as both participants and data collectors to capture the essence of meaningful learning experiences from their perspective. Data collection comprised two phases: narratives and interviews, allowing for a multifaceted exploration of students' experiences. This methodological choice not only facilitates a deeper understanding of students' experiences but also underscores the value of peer-to-peer interaction in eliciting rich, authentic insights.

Results

The analysis reveals diverse dimensions of learning experiences, categorized into significant learning experiences, spaces and places of learning, emotions associated with learning, and interactions within the learning process. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of learning experiences, highlighting the importance of context, emotional engagement, and social interaction in fostering meaningful and memorable learning experiences.

Implications for Marketing Educators

The findings provide suggestions on how to structure educational content and experiences that connect with students in a meaningful way. Understanding how social interaction, emotions, and the contexts of learning contribute to meaningful education can help educators craft settings that enhance and enrich learning outcomes. This research underscores the importance of integrating experiential marketing concepts into educational strategies, focusing on crafting impactful, memorable learning journeys.

Keywords: Meaningful learning experience, memorable learning experience, higher education, narrative research, qualitative research

An Exploratory Analysis Of Students' Use Of Generative Artificial Intelegence (Ai)

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INTRODUCTION

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been hailed in the press as both the saviour and devil of both business and academe. Academics of all stripes have weighed in that student use of AI needs to be either controlled and/or promoted.

The major concern of professors is the ability of students to use AI to 'cheat' in classes. Overall, 43% of college students say they have experience using AI tools like ChatGPT. Of those who have used AI, half (50%) say they've used these tools on assignments or exams[1]. Alternatively, other suggest the opposite. "AI tools have revolutionized education by providing personalized learning experiences, making education more accessible, and enhancing student engagement. With continued advancements in AI technology, the future of education holds great promise, as it continues to evolve and adapt to the changing needs of students"[2].

The purpose of this study is to identify how students use AI and what further education they would like to learn with regard to using AI as a productivity tool.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory survey was conducted of undergraduate students at a US regional university. One hundred and sixty-six students responded. Of those responding, 63% of the students indicated that they used AI in the last six months and were therefore eligible to complete the survey. The survey consisted of three parts. The first part requested information on which AI platform they had used. The second part asked on a 1-5 Likert type scale the purpose for which they employed AI. Lastly, students were asked what AI subjects they would like to learn more about.

RESULTS

Overall, students mostly rated themselves as "novice" (26.8%) or "beginners" (40.2%) regarding their knowledge of AI. Only 9.3% rated themselves as 'competent" with the remaining 23.7% self-rating of proficient. None of the students rated themselves as 'expert'. Given the relative newness of AI platforms, this is hardly surprising. However, it is indicative of a gap in knowledge that presents an opportunity for academe to fill.

Half of students have used ChatGPT, followed with 13-15% for ClaudeAI and Google's Bard platform. Only about 7% have used Microsoft's Bing AI platform. The few others specified under the 'other' category included Snapchat, Stable, and CanvaAI. From this it is apparent that ChatGPT maintains its first mover advantage, even with larger companies with more resources having integrated their AI into popular search engines (e.g., Bard, and Bing).

Slightly less than half of students indicated that they use AI to complete homework or projects directly. This is largely in line with national surveys. Many students suggest that they use AI for generating ideas (2.67), explaining concepts (2.47), searching for information (2.37) and finding additional information to complete projects (2.29). These were measured on a five-point scale from Never to Always. Alternatively, AI is used least frequently to create drafts of assignments (1.57) and respond to queries or emails (1.27). AI use for proofreading (2.14) and finding additional sources/citations (1.88) were also not as common. For all questions in this section, less than 4% of students responded that they 'always' use AI for a particular task. Interestingly, when students were surveyed on the same 1-5 scale on what they wanted to learn about AI, the averages were significantly higher than for the questions related to what they already use it for. This is indicative of a knowledge gap and interest that academe has a vested interest in fulfilling. In general, most students would be interested in a class on the basic uses of AI (3.99). This was closely followed by specific knowledge desires for uses in the education (3.65) and potential job uses (3.79). Interestingly, students were also highly desired to learn how to use AI entertainment and fun (3.75). While there was significant interest in learning how to use AI for responding to emails (3.03) and coding (3.02), they rated significantly less than the other categories.

More specific student learning objectives regarding prompt development were also asked. Students seem generally interested in this subject with all ratings above 3.4. Specifically students showed interest in learning to write prompts that a) encouraged AI to take on a specific role (3.42); b) respond withing a specific context (3.58); c) generating specific task related information (3.84); generating information in a specific format such as a table or pptx (3.70); verifying current work or documents (3.79); improving writing to create final drafts (3.82) and generally writing better prompts (3.84). This suggests that students are interested on not only learning what AI can be used for, but the specifics of how to write better prompts.

Making Contemporary Connections using Pop Culture with Marketing Pedagogical Practices

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Introduction

Pop culture has, in some form or another, been prevalent in American consumer society (Kidd, et al 2017.). From the leisure class purchasing of silks and jewels in Madison Avenue boutiques in the 1920s (Veblen, 1992), to the spectacle of celebrity in the 1960s (DeBord, 1983), to the modern iteration of the iconic brand (Rushkoff, 2000), it lives in the minds and desires of the modern person (Rosenblatt, 1999). Arendt, (2004) argued that it adds "snob value" to the one who has 'it' (as one might say), compared to the one that doesn't. Self-interested corporations watching their bottom lines, implement creative marketing schemes to corrupt human desires, clouding one's ability to identify their actual needs (Marcuse, 1964, 2004). The goal is for consumers to never have enough (Rosenblatt, 1999), stoking their ever-increasing want for more (Miller, 1998). Ever seeking newer and more innovative products cool hunters search for 'the edge' of culture, especially amongst teenagers that constantly create new and more unique social worlds, affecting everything from fashion, to music, to entertainment, to lifestyle choices (Gladwell, 1997.) For instance, Refuel Agency has over 18,000 teenagers in their investigator network seeking out what is new and cool amongst the eclectic crowd. An research agency created by Gen Zers called @dolescentcontent.com, specializes (not surprisingly) in marketing to Gen Z.

These days, social media has blasted onto the cultural innovation scene a cacophony of images, ads, and brands in attempts to entice ever shifting tastes and identities. Some marketing innovations such as the BudLite fiasco, wherein a SuperBowl ad using a transexual influencer for selling beer in order to enter into new markets was rejected by its primary customers, may appear to brilliant pop-culture advertising in the apparent intention but a failure in understanding their core markets (Torrenzano, 2023). Others are accidental successes “gone viral” on Facebook capturing a positive social cause such as the Ice Bucket Challenge (Chaffin, 2022) where individuals were challenged to dump a bucket of ice over their heads, challenge their online friends to do the same, and then make a donation to ALS. Tik Tok gets in on the marketing game with accidentally selling Cranberry juice in the most peculiar video short of a Native American middle-aged working-class skater guy Nathan Apodaka dreamily cruising home from work to Fleetwood Mac’s song Dreams on his headphones (Morales, 2020). In an appropriate and savvy marketing response, Ocean Spray executives presented Apodaka with a cranberry-colored pickup truck filled with a lifetime supply of cranberry juice. So, social media in many ways is a crap-shoot – both intentional and accidental marketing - at trying to find the latest ‘viral moment’ in which to place a product, engage a buyer, and sell ever more things that people don’t really need.

Most recently, Tik Tok has appeared on the marketing scene as the Google Search for GenZers as Riki Schlott (2024) wrote in her recent editorial. The speed with which one finds something new is seconds with the simple swipe on the phone to find TikTok posts, texts, Snapchat, or Instagrams. Millennials have a12 second attention span, while the GenZ has reduced that to 8 seconds (Nielson, 2017.). We are left with the apparent post-advent of print, television, books, and magazines that are Old School when compared to the New School of speedy spins about something, on the new platforms where self-appointed specialists become influencers on everything from diets to home décor, to footwear, to vacations, or whatever (Lasch, 1979). An advanced degree, a professional license, or organizational accountability are unnecessary. Seal (2023) argues that there is a “smartphonification of life” distilling the complexity of human life into these types of short snippets. Price (2018) states, “What we pay attention to in the moment adds up to our life” rather than anything more substantial. She goes on to show how our minds are distracted into “paying attention to our phones” limiting thinking or remembering more complex tasks.

Marc Prensky (2001) coined the term “digital immigrants” and “digital natives” contrasting the difference between those who have learned technology later in life compared to the youth who have grown up with. It is assumed by many that the older adult is less adept at using and understanding social media, especially the ever changing platforms, like TikTok, created for the younger audiences. Students, it seems, assume professors know nothing about TikTok or whatever is ‘current and cool’ in the digital space. Professors counter that the social media concentrated student, loses their ability to speak with others face-to-face or -even- read a book. Williams (n.d.) makes a prescient assessment that, “while there may be some merit to the teacher’s assertions that student’s communication skills have decreased, it could be said that the digital immigrant teachers are not willing to accept socially interactive technologies as credible forms of community”. This disparity clearly will affect the student-teacher educational relationships. Digital native students don’t take the digital immigrant teacher seriously. The digital immigrant teacher views the digital native student who cannot effectively communicate as incompetent. This chasm is problematic in that it sets up mistrust in the classroom.

So, what does a marketing professor who seems like Old School to freshmen students, and do in a classroom where the GenZ and even younger students may perceive the elderly sage as unwise and not “with it”? How does one open a course to new students and not instantly alienate their students? What is a method to draw in students to a course? To some degree, at least, ‘if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em!’ as the saying goes. This workshop presents a pedagogical method I have used in my marketing courses to community college freshmen to overcome this digital generation gap. It shows how I integrate popular culture into my marketing course from the outset by creating a culturally savvy interactive assignment that is doubly fun and entertaining to the point of being absurd, while teaching a key marketing concept.

Defining pop culture

Pop culture deserves academic study because it reflects what's important to the masses and what society values. The simple definition is that "it is what is popular" as one student remarked. While this is true, there is a complex understanding built on social and marketing theory.

Merton (1967) demonstrated how conventional conformity – or what can be termed pop culture - is the convergence of lifestyle innovation and changing cultural rituals that is subsequently promoted in mass media aiming to have consumers conform to these new cultural mores. Fine (1988) argues that "cultural worlds are developed within social worlds" (Fine,1988, p. 2). He goes on to describe how the idioculture of face-to-face interaction creates defined rituals and actions between people as they relate to one another and build a close tradition. Applying this to consumer theory and branding Gobe, (2002) writes, "products must reach beyond the fashionable to respond to those "hidden" human desires and needs that have yet to be realized. This concept implies a sort of visionary and inspirational divining of what could make people's lives better" (Gobe, 2002, p.99) whether that is true or not. However, Rifkin claims that there is a "misguided belief that commercially directed relationships and electronically mediated networks can substitute for traditional relationships and communities (Rifkin, p. 241)." Products are not for the people, but to sell something fleeting as a material product or entertainment.

Modern American consumer society is driven by market segmentation, wherein each demographic group is defined based on its ability to purchase a particular brand identity or product type (Kuttner, 1997; Underhill, 2000; Cohen, 2003). Through media manipulation of the masses, humans are corrupted by images of what the corporate advertisers sell to the social conscience overshadowing any sense of subjective morality, ethic, or religious belief. (Marcuse, 1964; Debord, 1983; Rushkoff, 2000.). Veblen (1992) argued that consumers were resorting to purchasing simply for the purpose of display. Hine (2002) elaborates on this idea,

> "For Veblen, emulation is the key mechanism by which this vicious consumption cycle is driven. One looks to the people at the top, more likely, or to those who slightly outrank you, and seeks to have the same things they do, and something more besides. Your taste in goods is thus determined entirely by people with power and wealth."

In laymen's terms, everyone is trying to "keep up with the Joneses" (p. 157).

Popular culture speaks only of the good towards which one is moving, not of the realities that persist in the world in which one lives or the problems popular culture might bring. It is an unbalanced view of culture that is fully tilted towards markets. This has become the bourgeois epoch with a "claim to happiness". As the individual "takes provision of his needs" it bears direct relationship to his specialization or vocation (Lebergott,1996; Rosenblatt, 1999; Marcuse, 2004). Bell (1976) contends that cultural choices are no longer determined by others, but that popular culture, the mass culture, has so invaded society that there are few choices. However, Schwartz (2016) much later has claimed there is now so much choice, that the result is a "paradox of choice" where consumers don't know what to buy so they buy nothing. In the current milieu of pop-culture invading social media there is a constant barrage of choices. (Schwartz, 2016). Lasch (1978) argues that it, "educates the masses into an unappeasable appetite not only for goods but for new experiences and personal fulfillment" (p. 137). Pop cultural choices are “taste publics” (Gans, 1999 p. 7). In these confined categories where products and services are hyper-targeted at certain micro-groups, Gans (1999) opens it up by stating that “people no longer limit their taste choices to one culture”.

It has traditionally been thought that the market determined the supply of culture, but the creators of culture also have a direct influence in creating taste cultures. Culture production has moved to public from private. Tik Tok is a prime example of this trend. Debord (1982) argued that society had become a media spectacle of itself with only its representation of oneself being of importance, creating a society of empty character, ethics, or moral value. The self has been swallowed into a shallow world of social media clips. Relationships, then, are determined based on comparisons with what others have or how they appear to be on the phone screen. People “love what the others have” or they “hate what the others have” (Marcuse, 1964 p.5) and align their own lives accordingly. Debord (1982) argued that society had become a “spectacle of itself” with only its representation of itself being of importance. The self is swallowed into a shallow sense of appearances and self-image. What appears good, or is represented as good, must then be good, whether it is authentically good or not. Appearances and contrived celebrity spectacle images are what matter, not the real self in its simplicity and austerity. In the prosperous post-war era there is in America now a situation where most everyone’s basic needs are met (Cohen, 2003), so satisfaction comes beyond the provision of basic needs so social media is a new ever faster platform and pseudo-community to satisfy craving or being bored (Turkle, 2011).

Tik-Tok especially is a platform for relativistic self-discovery with social media speeding, the idea of each person being able to find themselves, becomes the new mantra with self-actualization and self-love becoming the preeminent reality (Ellul, 1967; Lasch, 1978;

Lebergott, 1996; Gottdeiner, 2000; Hine, 2002). But how can one find self-love when the only thing to love is a popular image? In this new era Tik-Tok has an answer for that too! What is most important is one's own self-love, taken care of through therapy, through specialists (Lasch, 1978; Twitchell, 2007; Ehrenreich, 2009.). This has bred an internet driven cottage industry of specialists who guide people in the process of finding themselves, for a like or view. This ranges from life gurus to religious leaders, to fitness instructors, to political commentators, to dieticians, to business leaders, to friends, to support groups and the like (Hipps, 2016). The consumer industry has entered this realm of the narcissistic self and realized the therapeutic can be sold as a popular product, such as a water cleanse with DeTox Water. As they have always done, humans crave authenticity, truth, values, meaning, and purpose and popular culture will not satisfy that yearning though it might help with thirst (Gans, 1999). Arendt (2004) observes humans constantly searching for this "deeper significance" that popular culture cannot bring. "The music of the soul is also the music of salesmanship. Exchange value, not truth value counts" (Marcuse, p. 67).

Principle of the Attention Getter Class Crowd breaker

Just as TikTok aims to grab quick attention in the online world of phoneization, attention getters have a long history in other social events. From the Master of Ceremonies jokes at the wedding, to the quick get to know you game at a party, to the opening welcome at a public meeting, attention getters draw the crowd in to break the ice. This is especially important in social situations where people don't know one another. The opening day in a freshman community college classroom is one of these awkward social situations; on the one hand students are excited to be going to college while on the other hand being nervous and even shy because they don't know anyone. This is doubly difficult in a commuter classroom where there are no other opportunities for classmates to get to know one another.

I have used a Class Crowd Breaker (CCB) as a teaching tool for the past ten years in my marketing courses using pop culture attention getters. When professors use pop culture with real world examples they initiate connections with students by meshing new ideas with familiar concepts. My desire is to try and make the lectures more interactive and promote participation and learning. Educators want students to do analytical reasoning to be great marketers in their future careers. Pop culture helps students to connect the dots between ideas that interest them and the academic content practicing basic reasoning. CCBs increase student engagement, as using popular cultural examples during lectures makes marketing come alive making it contemporary and fresh. The content (even on the first day of class) needs to be engaging and stimulating to encourage students to participate. When I talk with urban 18-year-olds about something on YouTube, Tik Tok, or Twitter we share an experience. It 'breaks the ice' between teacher and student, showing them that the professor may not be as Old School as their preconceived notions might be.

Soft Skills

CCBs increase soft skills as participants interact socially with one another. The future employers of marketing students are asking educators to continue to teach soft skills such as curiosity, being attentive with others, and interested and passionate about the people one works with. Hartman (2002) states that the goal of soft skills in marketing is "to examine their entire lives—all the ways in which the world's materials flow into and out of their purview—and evaluate them in ways that may entail changing long-term habits and modes of being (Hartman, p. 181). Rifkin (2001) argues that in the world of technological networks, "human connection requires more than electronic transmissions and receptions and computer interfacing, the deepest human connections always occur in geographic space" (pg.253). Hipps (2002) says the danger with "digital social networks [is it] inoculates people against the desire to be physically present with others in real social networks –networks like a church or a meal at someone's home (p. 115)." This would be just as true on a college campus. Sherry Turkle (2011), an early adopter of the power of the internet has shifted her early cheering that social media was the newest and most exciting development in recent times. Facebook, Instagram and whatever other social media platform emerges is tempered by her more recent analysis that humans need interaction and connection and "instinctively need each other" (Turkle, 2016). The current milieu of social media is one that "pushes people further and away from one another". CCBs bring them together.

What makes for an effective Pop Culture Classroom Crowd Breaker?

The key elements needed to make CCBs useful in a marketing class includes the following:

Elements:	**Questions to ask:**
Unusual, Unique	Is it different? Is it innovative?
Ridiculous, Absurd	Is it unconventional? Is it something the average person might not do or buy?
Fun, Entertaining	Does it make you laugh? Is it humorous? Is it somewhat not serious?
Visually Striking	Is it colorful? Does it draw in the optical?
Discussable	Can it be discussed on why it is viral? Is it a talking point? Is it interesting to the students that they will want to talk about it?

Examples of Pop Culture Class Crowd breakers used in a Marketing Course

The following are some recent TikTok based pop CCBs I have used successfully.

Yellow Croc Boots: These are rubber oversized boots that are clunky and comical that emerged from the silicone rubber Croc shoes. It fits within the genre of "shocking streetwear". Paris Hilton initially made them popular by wearing Jumbo Yellow Crocs which have a cartoony shape. To create the viral trend, they were debuted by Estonian rapper Tommy Cash at Rick Owens SS24 runway show during Paris Fashion Week. They are a derivation of the Big Red Boot trend. The cost is $500 to $600.

Big Ugly Red Boots: These boots are based on fictional cartoon characters being inspired by the Anime Astro Boy. Founded in 2016, they are still viral and a collector's item. They were debuted at New York Fashion Week by Vogue, created by the art collective MSCHF (pronounced mischief) based in Brooklyn, NY. The artistic ridiculousness is to poke fun at sneaker culture and are clever about it. They are not practical, and driving is tough in these boots. The cost is about $300.

Golden Goose Sneakers: These are grungy and edgy canvas sneakers that are deliberately distressed to appear like they are rags, even homeless worn. They were popular from 2016-2018. They were designed by an Italian luxury brand to appeal to the "lowbrow" luxury crowd, harkening back to a century ago when the upper class would dress-down and visit the poverty-stricken neighborhood like Manhattan's Five Corners. Depending on how one interprets wearing them, it could be construed as a disguise or mock luxury.

The Stanley cup: This is not the famous trophy of the National Hockey League, though that in and of itself makes it an interesting discussion, as The Stanley Cup has its own hockey culture tradition. It is a reusable water bottle founded over 110 years ago. Stanley Quenchers are stainless steel tumblers that come in 6 sizes. It is designed for hikers or construction workers. The best-selling Green Thermoses were not marketed to women and "built for life". Now the trendy cups are in different limited-edition colors, and the most desirable being pink due to the Barbie pop culture factor. They are targeted at millennial Moms and young teenagers. It has become the symbol of social media fueling overconsumption. In viral moment a woman's car burned to a crisp, and she went on TikTok to video her Stanley cup that survived the fire and there was ice still in the cup. This propelled the popularity. Like the viral Ocean Spray Cranberry moment, the executives of Stanley presented her with a new car. Annual sales in 2023 for the cups were $730 million.

Conclusion

This paper has shown how to use popular culture as a useful pedagogy to draw in the short-attention spans of students who have grown up with their phones. Using TikTok viral sensations, Class Crowd Breakers introduce topics in marketing classes that make a positive connection between the Old School professor and New School student. It 'breaks the ice' in a classroom where students may be disinterested. A rubric consisting of interesting and intentional elements, is demonstrated through a variety of tested topics.

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Spoon Feeding Our Marketing Students

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It is believed that those who spoon feed knowledge assume that knowledge is fixed, not malleable (Raelin, 2009). Spoon-fed learning is essentially passive learning that arguably leads to regurgitation (Dehler & Welsh, 2013; McKay & Kember, 1997) rather than genuine learning. The instructor stands at the front of the classroom and provides a lecture for students to listen, take notes and then regurgitates the material at the end of a period on an exam or perhaps in a series of essays. Students will memorize and absorb to a certain extent a body of knowledge covered in the class without expanding on it. There are certain sets of "right answers" that do not require student input in trying to come to this conclusion with their own efforts. The correct answer and why it is the correct answer is explained in class, reducing students' self-initiative for a more analytic approach to understanding the material.

In contrast to spoon-fed learning, active learning techniques and methods have arisen that put more of the initiative for knowledge acquisition and even new knowledge creation into the hands of the learner (Bustard, Hsu & Fergie, 2023; Muncy & Eastman, 2012). Case-learning is one example, where students draw knowledge and principles out of real-life situations that occurred in business, and in some cases, generate new knowledge to apply to other business situations. A parallel development was the strategy simulation, a type of experiential learning (Hunter-Jones, 2012; Vos, 2015) that also aligns with an active learning framework (Young, 2010) focusing on development of insightful questions, specific knowledge acquisition, and immersive experiences to produce learning. As technology has developed, students are able to simulate online the running of a company's marketing department, sales, market research, and even managing various types of companies. This is not passive learning, but rather the utilization of knowledge learned earlier in a program to help develop skills that will be useful in future business careers.

There is an understandable eagerness on the part of marketing educators to move students along to independence and active learning. It is seen as more beneficial for students and more efficient for educators to equip students to take an active role in their own education. Given this trend, the question arises: Does spoon feeding have any place at all in marketing education or have we moved past that point? Is there any room for spoon feeding whereby this type of learning may prove more effective in achieving student learning outcomes?

Taken together, this research aims at answering the following questions: Is spoon feeding or independent, self-motivated learning more effective in more analytic marketing courses? Do students who are incremental theorists perform better than entity theorists in these courses? Do students who are more intuitive relative to students who are sensors perform better at a later stage in the course? This research may also touch on and elucidate the important topic of teaching creativity in marketing. Many marketing courses hinge on students' creative approach to extract meaningful insights for business. As such, can creativity be taught or encouraged in marketing students? And if so, what heuristic should be used to help students develop this critical skill? (Ramocki, 2014; McCorkle, Payan, Reardon, & Kling, 2007).

Keywords: spoon feeding, active learning, passive learning, lay theories, creativity

Cultivating Career-Readiness Competencies in Marketing and International Business Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop a fast-changing workforce and job market, developing career readiness competencies during the standard four-year undergraduate program is of paramount importance for business students' long-term career success. This project explores the value of a current career-focused lower division business course in the standard four-year business curriculum in a large public AACSB accredited institution. Current literature on career readiness competencies and program development are reviewed. Students' perceptions of key career-readiness competencies, and the effectiveness of various learning activities to enhance career-readiness are collected and analyzed. The results and discussions provide practical implications for designing and improving career and professional development programs in business schools.

Keywords: Career readiness, core career competencies, career success, professionalism

Part I. Literature review

Importance of Career Readiness in Business & Marketing Education

Career readiness is a "foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management."[1] Students depend on the universities that they attend to provide the students with

[1] What is Career Readiness? (naceweb.org).

the fundamental skills to be able to grow their careers. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report that the average worker changes jobs 12 times in their career[2]. This statistic highlights the importance of career readiness which is in flux largely due to the prevalence of technology as it is tied to the employment process. In the past, unemployed individuals used the want ads to find jobs in newspapers. Today, the Internet houses websites that help unemployed individuals find jobs (i.e. LinkedIn, Indeed, ZipRecruiter, CareerBuilder and Glassdoor). The university has the potential to be a valuable resource for students in their pursuit to earn their degrees. According to Gallup, the amount of pay is the major factor that shows that a college graduate has a "good job" followed by the mission and purpose of the job[3]. It is also estimated that only thirty percent of recent college graduates felt that they achieved their goal in finding one of these "good jobs." This information highlights the importance of career readiness given the number of jobs that the average worker has as well as the point that upon graduating, most graduates may not be in the ideal situation as far as their employment status is concerned. It was reported that the presence of "applied learning experiences (including internships), conversations with employers who are in the student's field of interest and conversations with faculty members about students' career options" can increase the chances that recent college graduates can find "good jobs."[4] Amoroso and Burke (2018) also reaffirm that it is important to prepare business students to be career ready. At the university used for the study, career readiness was integrated into the curriculum to the extent to which every year included a different and more intensive offering. Bacon, Stewart, Hartley and Paul conducted a study which sought to place a dollar value on various components of marketing education from the perspective of marketing managers. The study concluded that

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[2] https://hbr.org/2023/02/how-important-is-a-college-degree-compared-to-experience
[3] https://news.gallup.com/poll/312623/purpose-pay-define-good-job-college-grads.aspx.
[4] https://news.gallup.com/poll/312623/purpose-pay-define-good-job-college-grads.aspx

employers valued certifications and internships the most. The implications from this study are very important for faculty and advisers that have students who want to learn new competencies to make themselves more marketable.

The concept of career readiness and core career competencies

The concept of career readiness originated in a 1949 study of the United States military, which discovered that privates who modeled their attitudes and behaviors after those of officers were more likely to be promoted than those who did not. The conceptualization and implementation of career readiness underwent numerous changes. Furthermore, because each state defined career readiness differently, it was impossible to compare student learning across states (Mishkin, 2004). In the United States, college and career readiness refers to a multifaceted concept that includes a variety of academic and non-academic skills required for students' successful transition into postsecondary education and the workforce. While traditional measures of college readiness have primarily focused on academic achievements such as grades and test scores (Gaertner & McClarty, 2015), recent research has highlighted the importance of non-academic skills such as self-efficacy, resilience, and career self-efficacy in preparing students for college and career success (Lau et al., 2019; Liao & Ji, 2015). Furthermore, disparities in college and career readiness have been identified across racial and ethnic groups, emphasizing the importance of targeted interventions to close these gaps (Martinez et al., 2017). Both policymakers and scholars are interested in career readiness. The demand from labor market and workforce in the United States and the human capital trends in the global economy require highly educated and trained workers (Carnevale, Jayasundera, & Gulish, 2016). This emphasizes the importance of effectively teaching critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills, teamwork skills, information literacy, ethical judgment, decision-making skills, fluency in speaking and writing, problem-solving abilities, and a broad knowledge of liberal arts and sciences (ACT, 2012; An & Taylor, 2015).

According to Conley (2012), College and Career Readiness (CCR) combines cognitive and noncognitive domains into four broad dimensions: key cognitive strategies, content knowledge, learning skills and techniques, and transition knowledge and skills. Key cognitive strategies are intellectual behaviors required for college-level work (such as problem solving, research, interpretation, and communication). Key content knowledge includes the structure and fundamental content of core subjects, as well as technical knowledge and skills relevant to specific career fields. Key learning skills and techniques include learning ownership (e.g., goal setting, self-efficacy) as well as learning techniques. Finally, key transition knowledge and skills include information that students require to successfully transition (for example, college costs, majors, and career options).

As a national leader in systematically investigating the construct of Career Readiness in higher education, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has stated the work of developing and validating the construct and competencies of Career Readiness since 2014. Based on nearly decade-long large-scale systematic research involving colleges and universities and industry partners, NACE defines Career Readiness as "a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management" (NACE, 2022; NACE, 2021; Senter, 2019; Royer & Mcatee, 2021). These eight competencies are "Career & Self-Development", "Communication", "Critical Thinking", "Equity & inclusion", "Leadership", "Professionalism", "Teamwork", "Technology" (Table 1). Recent research has explored the effects of career planning on students' career readiness using NACE's competencies (Lee, 2022), and investigated the value of these competencies to STEM careers (Newell & Ulrich, 2022). Additionally, institutions rely on NACE's career-ready competencies to understand the nationwide job outlook and labor market trends (Dolechek & Lehenbauer, 2022). Furthermore, leveraging faculty mentoring in leadership development programs can build student capacity around career readiness (Fox, 2018). Studies have also shown a relationship between career guidance and job readiness, emphasizing the importance of work competency in preparing students for employment (Zainuddin & Rijal, 2022). Overall, these competencies play a crucial role in preparing college graduates for the demands of the workplace and are essential for their successful transition into their careers.

Part II. Career paths development in Cal Poly Pomona

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona is a Hispanic-serving institutions whose student body makeup is 45.57% Hispanic or Latino. At least 25% of the student body must be comprised of this group to be categorized as a Hispanic-serving institution[5]. Given this statistic, the university has earned accolades and recognition on a national level. The university is ranked number 3 in social mobility on the 2023 Social Mobility Index (SMI) as "the nation's highest-ranking polytechnic university for helping low-income students achieve their dreams of success and upward economic opportunity by graduating them into well-paying careers."[6] Despite the successes the university has experienced in teaching its students, there remains challenges that must be consistently attended to for the university to maintain its prominent national standing in this arena.

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[5] https://www.onlineu.com/magazine/hsis-with-highest-payoff

[6] https://www.socialmobilityindex.org

There are signs that there are jobs opportunities available to the most recent spring graduates. According to NBC news, “Businesses planned to hire 4% more graduates from the class of 2023 than from the class of 2022.”[7] According to the Washington Post, the latest unemployment rate for recent graduates is 4.4% which is higher than the general population as of November 2023.[8] That news is unfortunate, but it also shines the light on the fact that it is paramount that college students need to be prepared so that they are ready when the moment arises for a good job opportunity. As for graduates of business, the average salary of an individual with a bachelor’s degree was $60,695 a year in 2022.[9]. In the end, Cal Poly Pomona must continue to lay the groundwork for their students to be successful at providing the market equipped young professionals.

Under the leadership of Office of Academic Innovation, a Career-Readiness Model has been developed to address the University’s Strategic Plan initiative on students’ future career paths[10]. The university Career & Professional Readiness Model™ identified four distinct stages of students’ career development: 1) career exploration, 2) career engagement, 3) career attainment, 4) career advancement. Continuous developing career competencies throughout the four stages resonate with NACE’s Career Readiness concept as a foundation for life-long career management.

Embedding career readiness training in the undergraduate Business curriculum

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[7] https://www.nbcnews.com/business/economy/job-market-graduation-class-2023-outlook-rcna82020

[8] https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/11/19/college-grads-unemployed-jobs/

[9] https://www.naceweb.org/job-market/compensation/salary-projections-for-class-of-2022-bachelors-grads-a-mixed-bag/

[10] Cal Poly Pomona, Office of the President, Future Paths: Career and Professional Readiness Model https://www.cpp.edu/president/campus-conversations/futurepaths.shtml

The department of International Business & Marketing is one of the six functional areas in the College of Business Administration. The department has long established a 2-unit career focused course - IBM 2000 for its international business and marketing majors. The initial purpose of the course is to offer the opportunity for students to interact and engage with faculty advisors in the International Business and Marketing Department in various capacities. Whereas, students may feel intimidated in speaking with faculty, IBM 2000 provides a conduit where students can interact with faculty with varied backgrounds in a class setting. Over years, the goal of the course evolves to motivate students to identify the right career options and to prepare themselves to increase the odds of them attaining employment and for establishing a career path in the field of marketing management and international business. In the past, two adjunct professors taught the course. After the university transitioned from the quarter system to the semester system school term, the department decided that a more sizable representation of permanent and adjunct faculty was needed to instruct the course to produce more impact.

Students typically take this course in their second semester sophomore or first semester junior year. The concepts introduced to these students at this point in the curriculum are essential for these students at this stage. To help ensure that international business and marketing students take this class earlier in their course curriculum than later, IBM 2000 is designated as a prerequisite course for a lower-level core course in the International Business and Marketing curriculum. For those students who take the course during or after their third year, the information learned in the course may be redundant since those students will be nearing graduation. Thus, the information offered in the course may be already familiar to upperclassmen. For example, upperclassmen students should likely know the significance of the career center in helping them find employment, the importance of getting an internship or the benefits of joining a student club and networking on their own. In recent terms, two primary goals of IBM 2000 are: 1) to provide enrolled students with information to help them decide which career track or path to choose in international business or marketing, 2) to fortify students with the competencies and resources to secure employment with the hopes of establishing a career path in their major fields of study. Major modules of the course include the following.

Career Exploration

In one class module, the primary career center counselor speaks to the class about placement services and resume building. This is coupled with the students being assigned to complete a RIASEC Assessment to find out student interests and skills[11]. Some students have an idea of what they would like to do while others do not. Filling out this survey serves a guide for the students to identify their strengths that apply to the business world.

Career Engagement

In one class module, the faculty have an opportunity to share their personal career development journeys with the students. It is highlighted to the students that each person's journey may be different. The faculty want the students to realize that it is fine not to know which career direction they should pursue. That is the reason why students are exposed to the various departmental majors in this class. Some faculty highlight the fields that there is a high demand for. Other faculty emphasize the importance of exploring internships so that students can get a feel for a career in various occupations.

Career Attainment

The university Career Center offers the following platforms for students to take advantage to seek employment. The Center hosts employers that do a virtual drop for students to

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[11] RIASECA Assessment https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/DOE%20Forms/CTE/RIASEC.pdf

interact with businesses seeking employment. Also, class time has been set aside for companies/employers to introduce themselves to the students in the class. These companies are usually seeking interns in this case. The Career Center also hosts career fairs in person and virtually.

Career Advancement

A guest speaker from LinkedIn speaks and shares with the students how to increase the size of their network. Students are shown exemplary student and former student profiles on LinkedIn as well as given strategies to enhance their profile page to attract potential employers. Guest speakers conduct workshops on etiquette and forming an elevator speech have also been offered to help the students develop skills in different arenas.

Final Project

The final project is to interview a person in a job role that the student has an interest in pursuing as a career. This task helps students do research to have a better understanding of the responsibilities related to the job position. This experience can be eye opening for the students with some even deciding to change career paths after becoming more informed about the prospective position. Some students have even been hired their interviewees so the selection made by a student as it pertains to who they decide to interview can be a pivotal one.

Part III. Survey design, analysis and results

To understand students' experience with the IBM2000 course during the fall semester of 2023, 192 students enrolled in five sections were invited to respond to an "exit" survey through the Qualtrics platform. The survey was conducted over two weeks and ended on 12/15/2023. Students were asked at the beginning of the survey to provide their name, university ID number, and section number to grant them 3% of the course grade in extra credit. Students were also informed that their relative instructors would not have access to their input, their responses would be only used in aggregate forms for course improvement, and their lack of participation in the survey would not affect their grade performance in class.

Data was collected from 72 students who were asked first to rate eight-course modules on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=not helpful at all, 2=somewhat helpful, 3=helpful, 4=very helpful, 5= extremely helpful). Five of the eight modules were rated helpful, very helpful, or extremely helpful by at least 90% of the respondents as follows: W3: Career Track Talks was rated helpful to extremely helpful by 94.4% of the respondents (Mean = 3.9), while W2: Career Center Resources, W5: LinkedIn Workshop, W3: Career Planning Workshop, and W6: Mentors and Networking Workshop were rated helpful to extremely helpful by 91.7%, 91.7%, 90.3%, and 90.3% of the respondents respectively (Mean=3.7, 4.2, 3.9, and 3.8) as shown in Figures 1 to 5. The remaining three modules, W7: Meeting with Instructor, W8: Leveraging AI & Digital Job Search, and W4: CBA Student Club Presentations, were also rated helpful to extremely helpful by 87.5%, 86.1%, and 75% of the respondents respectively (Mean = 3.7, 3.7, and 3.6) as shown in Figures 6, 7, and 8.

Students were asked next what was overall the most important thing they learned from the course. Responses were collected from 65 students and answers were grouped into three main categories. Learning about career resources including LinkedIn, Campus, and College Resources was the most important category with 65 students discussing the importance of learning about them. Learning about LinkedIn and the platform networking and connections topped the list with 32 students discussing how it is "especially informative and essential for career growth" and how "networking and growing relationships with people in the industry [the students are] interested in will benefit [their] future." The importance of learning how to plan for their careers, including how essential it is to develop professional resumes and cover letters and be prepared for interviews was discussed by 24 students. One student noted “I feel more prepared now with the information I learned than I did before taking the course,” while another student reported how the interview assignment was the most important thing he learned from the course as it helped him realize after “interviewing someone working a job [he] thought [he] could see himself doing” that is not the career he should be planning for. The importance of learning about the different career tracks was discussed also by 16 students as it being the most important knowledge they gained from the course.

In the following questions, students rated the eight career competencies as identified by the *National Association of Colleges and Employers (*NACE) based on how essential they think they are for their professional success in the workplace and lifelong career management. The questions used a 1 to 5 Likert scale with 1=not important, 2= somehow important, 3= important, 4=very important, and 5=extremely important. The percentage of students who answered very important or extremely important are ordered as follows: Career and Self Development 90.3% (Mean = 4.54), Professionalism 87.5% (Mean = 4.44), Communication 83.3% (Mean – 4.39), Critical Thinking 76.4% (Mean = 4.17), Technology 73.6% (Mean = 4.14), Leadership 72.3% (Mean = 4.11), Equity and Inclusion 69.4% (Mean = 4.13), and Teamwork 66.6% (Mean = 3.89) as shown in Figures 9 to 17. When asked about which competencies students recommend focusing on, 64 responses mostly echoed the ratings in the previous question with 24 respondents suggesting focusing on the career and self-development competency because learning “what we are good at or where we might need to improve…can help [us] discover hidden talents or interests [which] can lead to finding a career that relates to [us]. The communication, critical thinking, and professionalism competencies were also recommended by 15, nine, and eight students respectively due to their importance in the context of developing "the necessary skills to communicate effectively [and work efficiently] and professionally among their colleagues and superiors." Technology, leadership, and teamwork competencies were also recommended by six respondents each while only one student suggested focusing on equity and inclusion. Lastly, when asked whether there are any other important competencies to include in the upcoming IBM2000 courses, only 25 students offered suggestions with the majority focusing on course content or design and not necessarily competencies. However, seven students suggested focusing on developing skills that align with self-development such as emotional intelligence, self-care, time management, and motivation which further capitalize on the importance of focusing on career and self-development competency.

Part IV. Implications and future directions

This study offers insights into how the current career course embedded in the marketing and international business curriculum is helping students developing the essential career skills and prepare them to be career ready. Survey results from students' perceptions of various current class modules and learning opportunities, as well their opinions on the core career competencies, provide valuable feedback for future development of a more expansive and integrated career and professional development program in the undergraduate business programs for all business majors. In order for business students to be competitive in the future workforce, universities colleges departments need to focus on helping those students acquire, and not only the basic skills for the workforce, education in their field of specialty, but also the ability to learn how to "reinvent" themselves for the future and being able to convert current skills into future needed skills whatever those may look like. Students will need to reposition themselves to be cutting edge and competitive in the future workplace with life-long career management competencies.

Career and self-development competency and professionalism are two core competencies are of paramount importance in career development courses and programs in business schools. Students need to understand what their strengths and weaknesses are, and continuously developing themselves and understanding how to set goals, advocate for themselves, ask questions, how to personally grow and expand their responsibilities in the field that they would like to work in. They need to establish relationships through networking, and creating a network of connections that could help them and support them and help them professionally. Students also need to have the opportunities to explore other options through either in class, activities, group, activities, campus activities internships, and the more involved they can be and assuming leadership roles, the more experience they can get the more successful they will be. Knowing how to advocate and communicate effectively, professionally, learning from others not only by asking questions, but also asking for guidance as needed.

The ability to connect with one another professionally not only through social media and networking sites but in person online remotely and finding ways to collaborate cooperate and communicate with team members not only locally but maybe globally as well. The ability to transfer known skills in newer skills and “reinventing” oneself will be a norm in the future. Giving our students the ability to “reinvent” themselves will be cutting edge for them to be successful. Specific modules of our IBM2000 course cover these topics by having a LinkedIn Workshop, Career Planning Workshop, and Mentors and Networking Workshop, all which over 90% of our students find extremely helpful.

Students need to have the ability to problem solve, critical thinking, flexibility and being able to position themselves in a competitive changing world. Learning how to find new trends, and what needs to change in their current skill sets to be competitive for the future. “Learning by doing”, as our university moto describes, our students are able to apply the education they receive in their respective fields in a practical application form. We need to encourage this and give them the tools to practice implementing this format because as careers evolve and employment opportunities change our students will be able to “reinvent” themselves each time. We don’t know what the future may look like, but we know where we came from, and we know we need to know how to adapt to future needs in our career paths. Technology is constantly changing and challenging us at a faster pace than ever before. Recognizing how to use these technologies in our favor, to better position ourselves, our students to be successful, and competitive and knowledgeable for a positive workforce and career outlook.

Business students need to be lifelong learners and not only willing to learn from all present opportunities, but also from their mistakes and adjusting to the needs of the workplace and in their lives. Understanding that this journey never ends, and students can be the best they are today as well as being the best they can be in the future.

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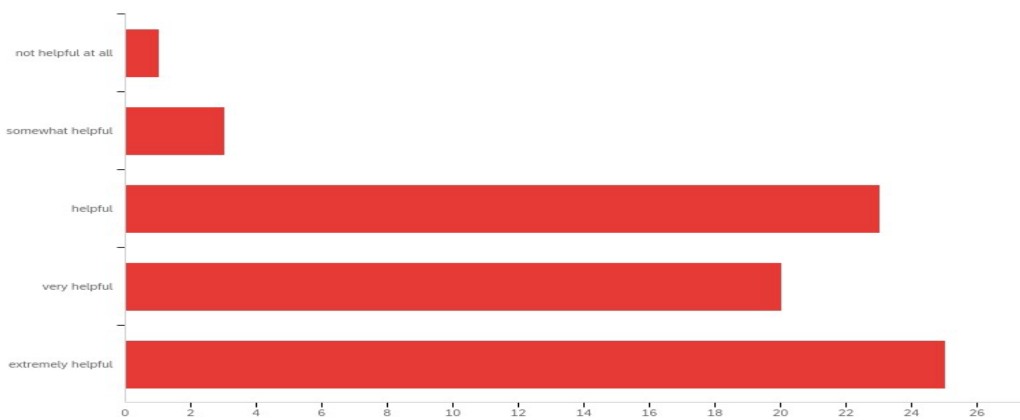
Appendix: Tables and Figures

Table 1

NACE CAREER COMPETENCIES	
Critical Thinking	Leadership
Communication	Professionalism
Teamwork	Career & Self Development
Technology	Equity & Inclusion

Figure 1

Week 3 Career Track Talks

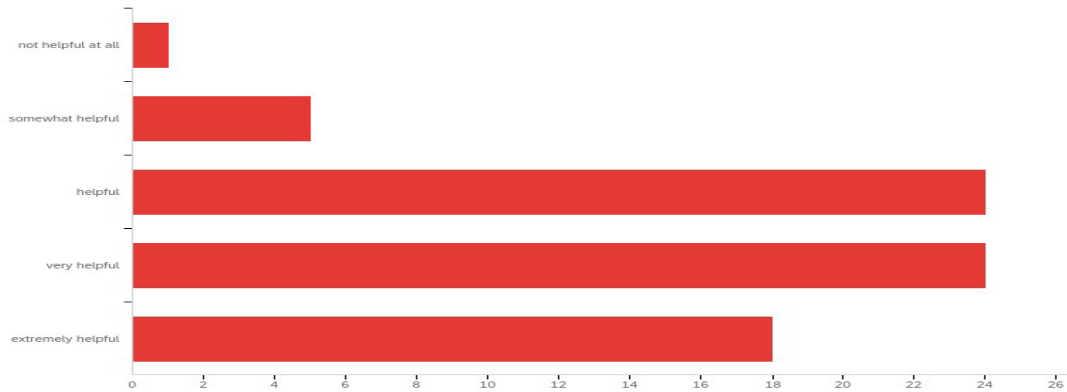


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not helpful at all	1.39%	1
2	somewhat helpful	4.17%	3
3	helpful	31.94%	23
4	very helpful	27.78%	20
5	extremely helpful	34.72%	25
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Career Track Talks	1.00	5.00	3.90	0.97	0.95	72

Figure 2

Week 2 Career Center Resources

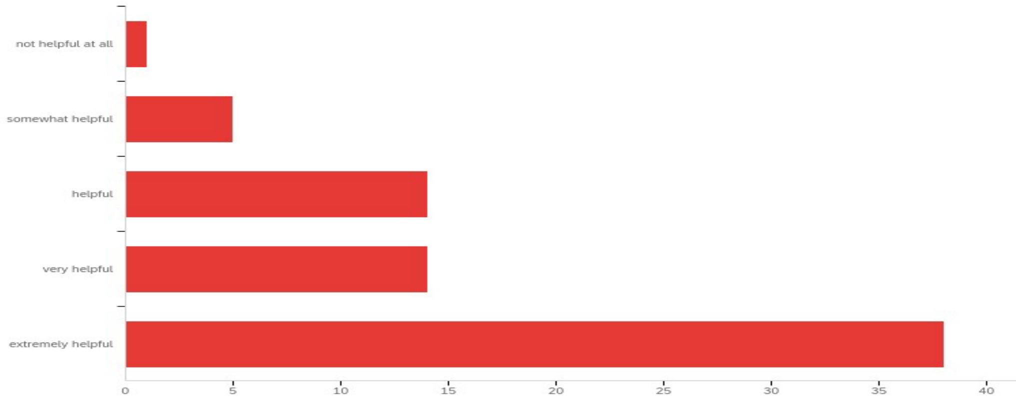


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not helpful at all	1.39%	1
2	somewhat helpful	6.94%	5
3	helpful	33.33%	24
4	very helpful	33.33%	24
5	extremely helpful	25.00%	18
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Career Center Resources	1.00	5.00	3.74	0.96	0.92	72

Figure 3

Week 5 LinkedIn Workshop

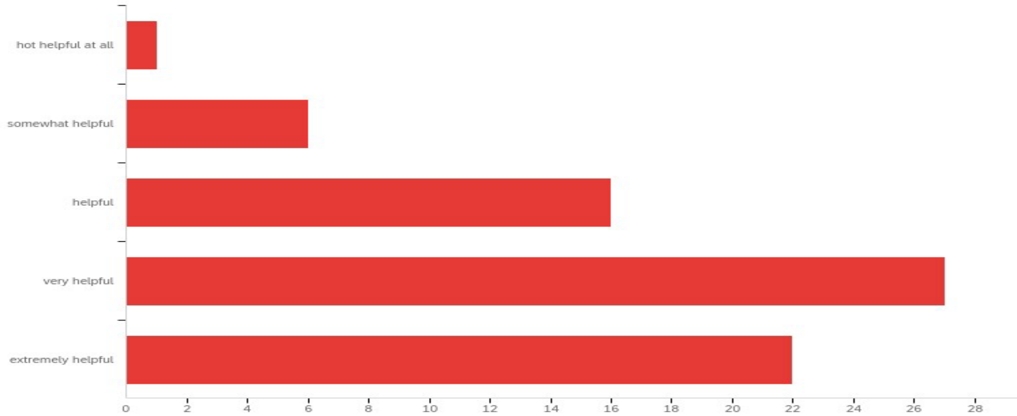


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not helpful at all	1.39%	1
2	somewhat helpful	6.94%	5
3	helpful	19.44%	14
4	very helpful	19.44%	14
5	extremely helpful	52.78%	38
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	LinkedIn Workshop	1.00	5.00	4.15	1.05	1.10	72

Figure 4

Week 3 Career Planning Workshop

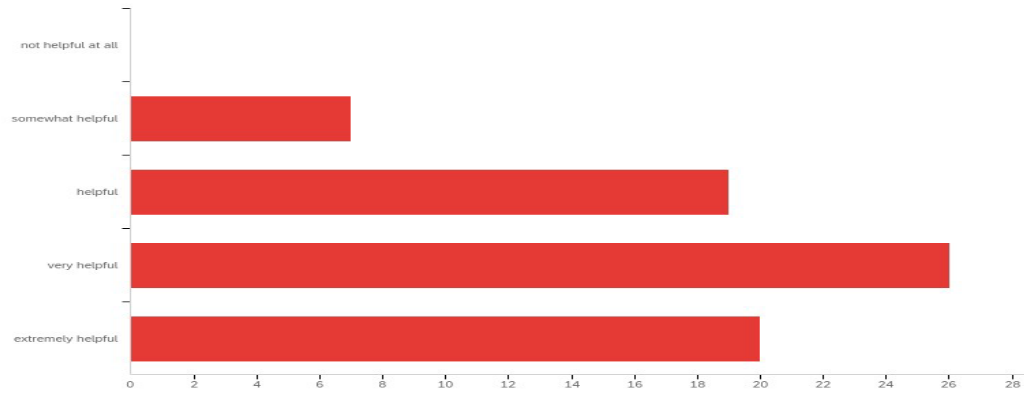


#	Answer	%	Count
1	hot helpful at all	1.39%	1
2	somewhat helpful	8.33%	6
3	helpful	22.22%	16
4	very helpful	37.50%	27
5	extremely helpful	30.56%	22
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Career Planning Workshop	1.00	5.00	3.88	0.99	0.97	72

Figure 5

Week 6 Mentors and Networking Workshop

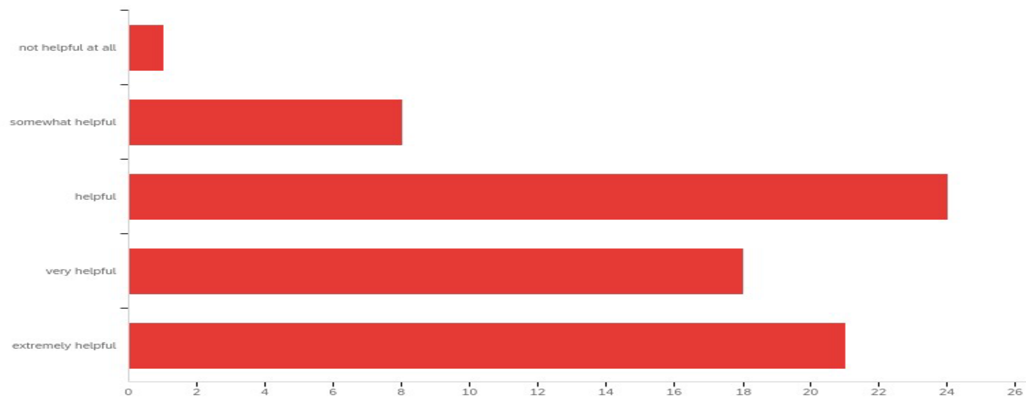


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not helpful at all	0.00%	0
2	somewhat helpful	9.72%	7
3	helpful	26.39%	19
4	very helpful	36.11%	26
5	extremely helpful	27.78%	20
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Mentors & Networking Workshop	2.00	5.00	3.82	0.95	0.90	72

Figure 6

Week 7 Meeting with Instructor

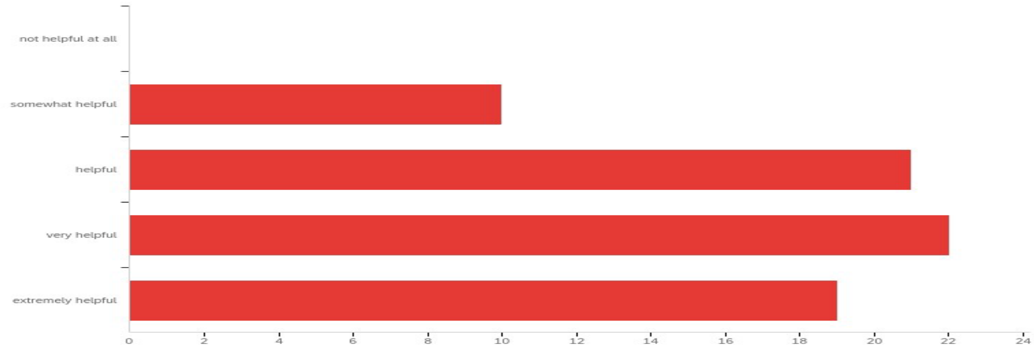


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not helpful at all	1.39%	1
2	somewhat helpful	11.11%	8
3	helpful	33.33%	24
4	very helpful	25.00%	18
5	extremely helpful	29.17%	21
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Meeting with Instructor	1.00	5.00	3.69	1.05	1.10	72

Figure 7

Week 8 Leveraging AI & Digital Job Search Workshop

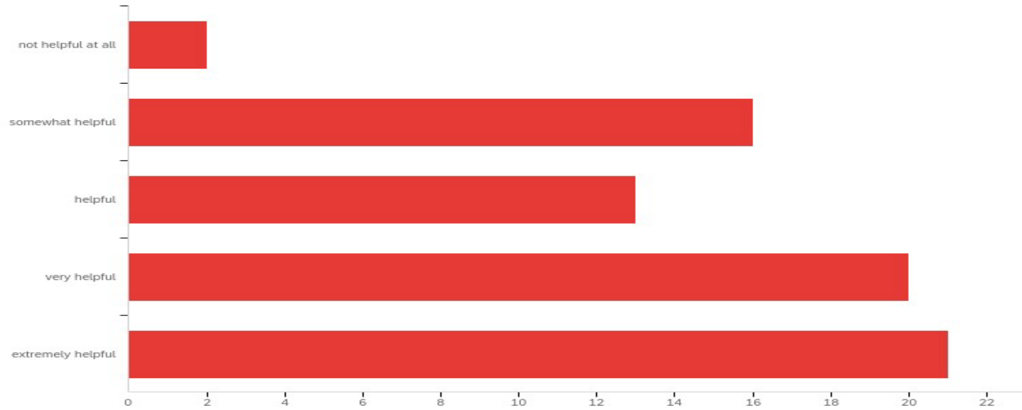


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not helpful at all	0.00%	0
2	somewhat helpful	13.89%	10
3	helpful	29.17%	21
4	very helpful	30.56%	22
5	extremely helpful	26.39%	19
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Leveraging AI & Digital Job Search Workshop	2.00	5.00	3.69	1.01	1.02	72

Figure 8

Week 4 CBA Student Club Presentations

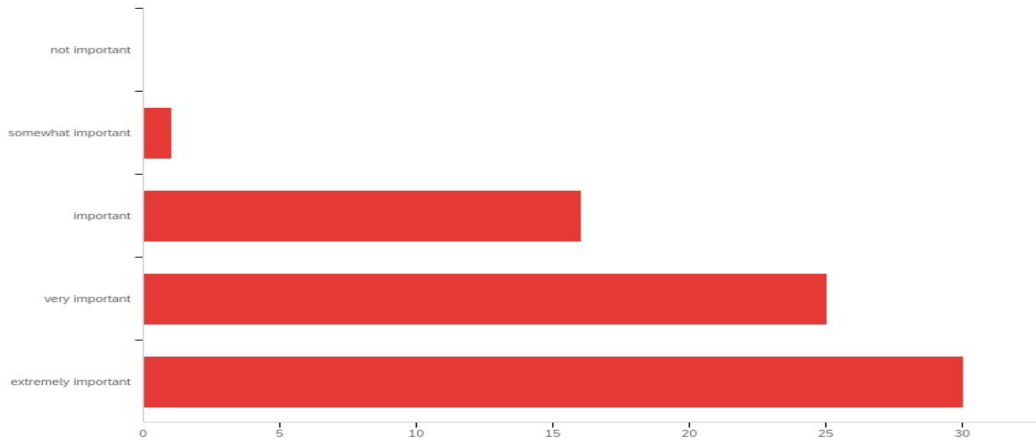


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not helpful at all	2.78%	2
2	somewhat helpful	22.22%	16
3	helpful	18.06%	13
4	very helpful	27.78%	20
5	extremely helpful	29.17%	21
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	CBA Student Club Presentations	1.00	5.00	3.58	1.20	1.44	72

Figure 9

Critical Thinking Competency

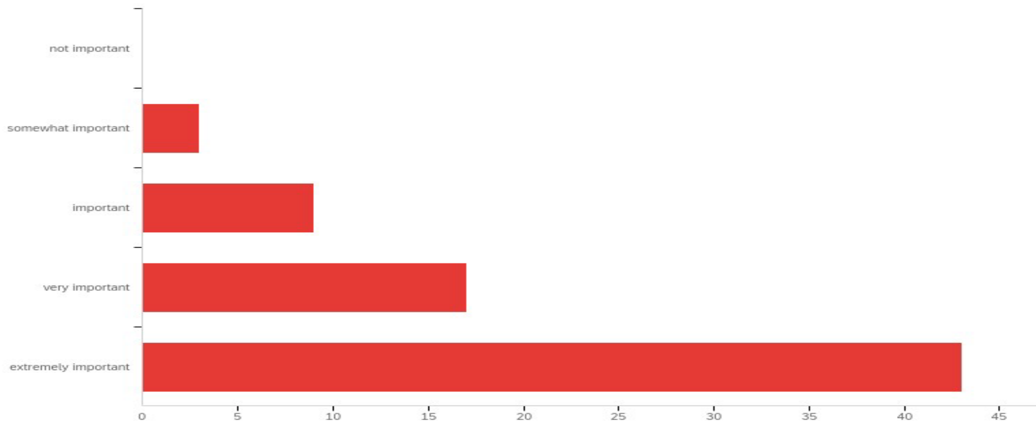


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not important	0.00%	0
2	somewhat important	1.39%	1
3	important	22.22%	16
4	very important	34.72%	25
5	extremely important	41.67%	30
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Critical thinking	2.00	5.00	4.17	0.82	0.67	72

Figure 10

Communication Competency

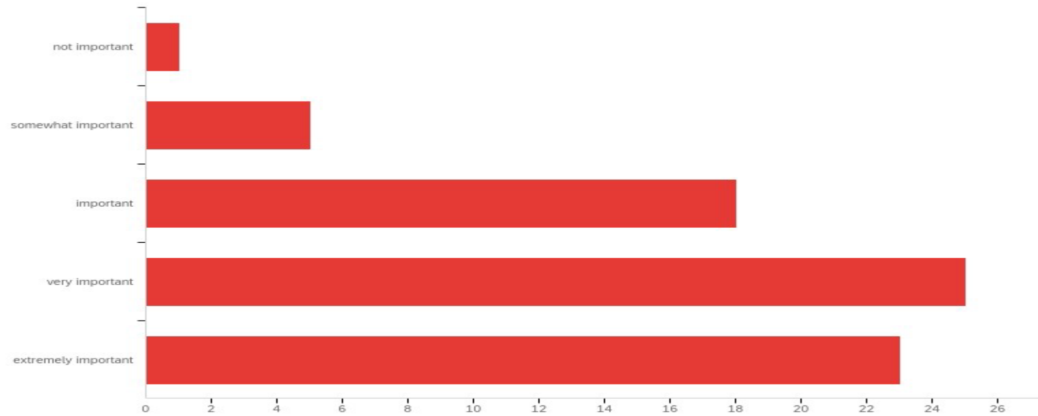


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not important	0.00%	0
2	somewhat important	4.17%	3
3	important	12.50%	9
4	very important	23.61%	17
5	extremely important	59.72%	43
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Communication	2.00	5.00	4.39	0.86	0.74	72

Figure 11

Teamwork Competency

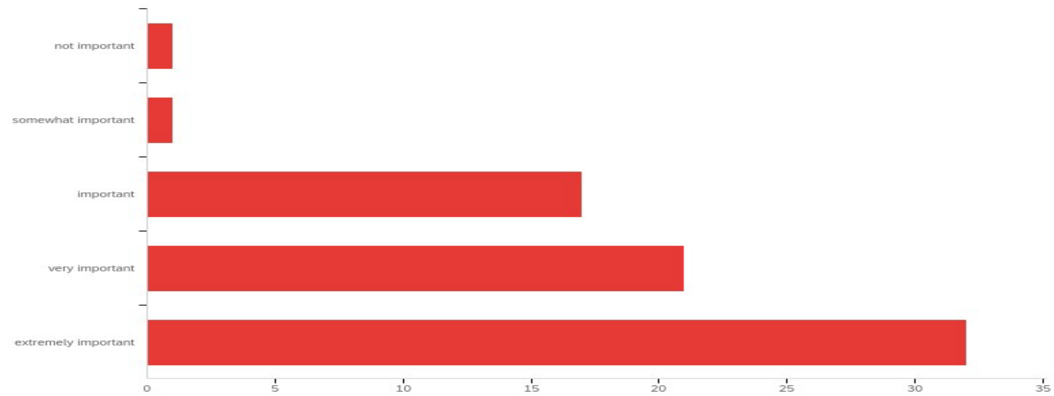


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not important	1.39%	1
2	somewhat important	6.94%	5
3	important	25.00%	18
4	very important	34.72%	25
5	extremely important	31.94%	23
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	3Teamwork	1.00	5.00	3.89	0.98	0.96	72

Figure 12

Technology Competency

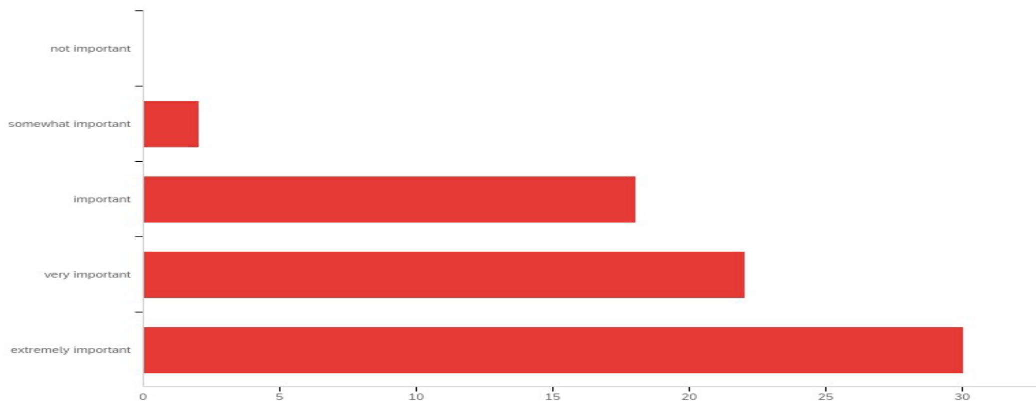


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not important	1.39%	1
2	somewhat important	1.39%	1
3	important	23.61%	17
4	very important	29.17%	21
5	extremely important	44.44%	32
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Technology	1.00	5.00	4.14	0.92	0.84	72

Figure 13

Leadership Competency

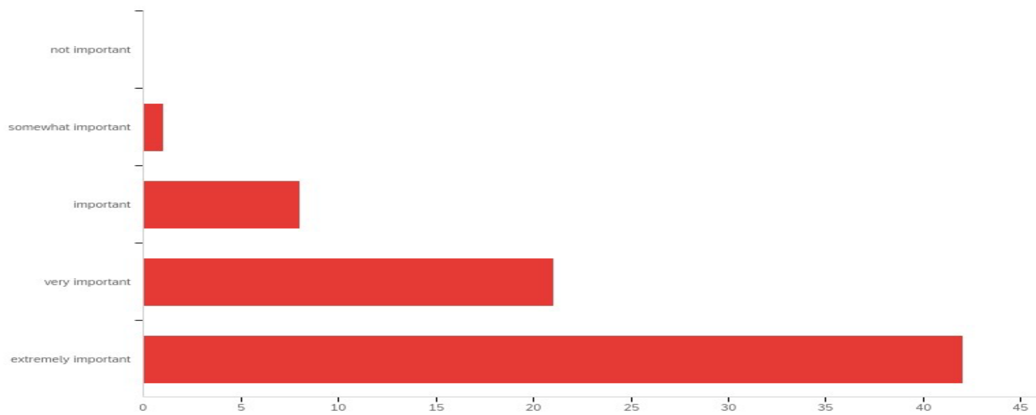


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not important	0.00%	0
2	somewhat important	2.78%	2
3	important	25.00%	18
4	very important	30.56%	22
5	extremely important	41.67%	30
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Leadership	2.00	5.00	4.11	0.87	0.77	72

Figure 14

Professionalism Competency

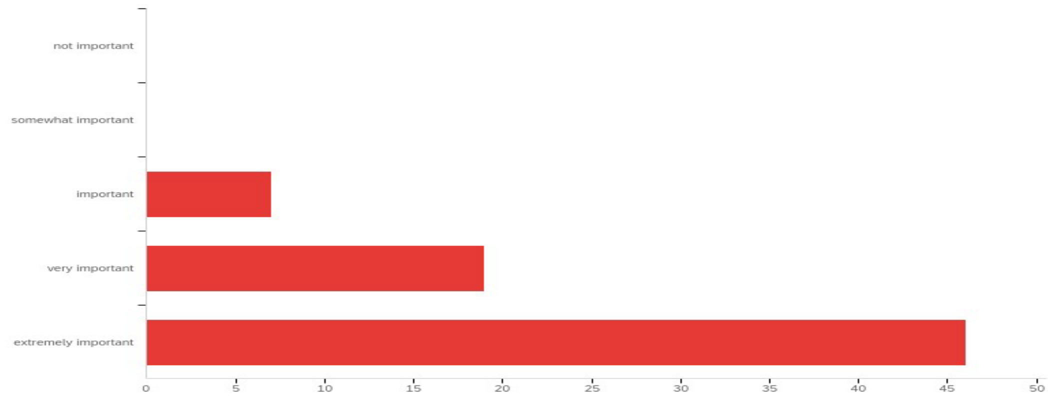


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not important	0.00%	0
2	somewhat important	1.39%	1
3	important	11.11%	8
4	very important	29.17%	21
5	extremely important	58.33%	42
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Professionalism	2.00	5.00	4.44	0.74	0.55	72

Figure 15

Career & Self-Development Competency

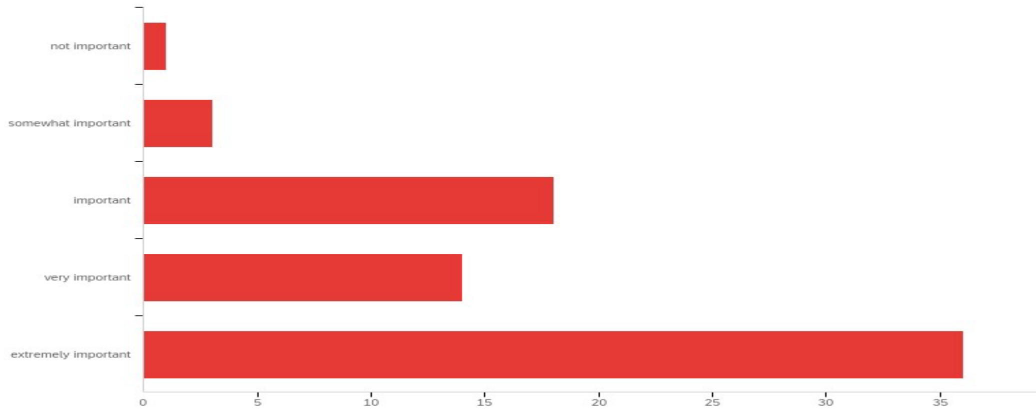


#	Answer	%	Count
1	not important	0.00%	0
2	somewhat important	0.00%	0
3	important	9.72%	7
4	very important	26.39%	19
5	extremely important	63.89%	46
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Career & Self-Development	3.00	5.00	4.54	0.67	0.44	72

Figure 16

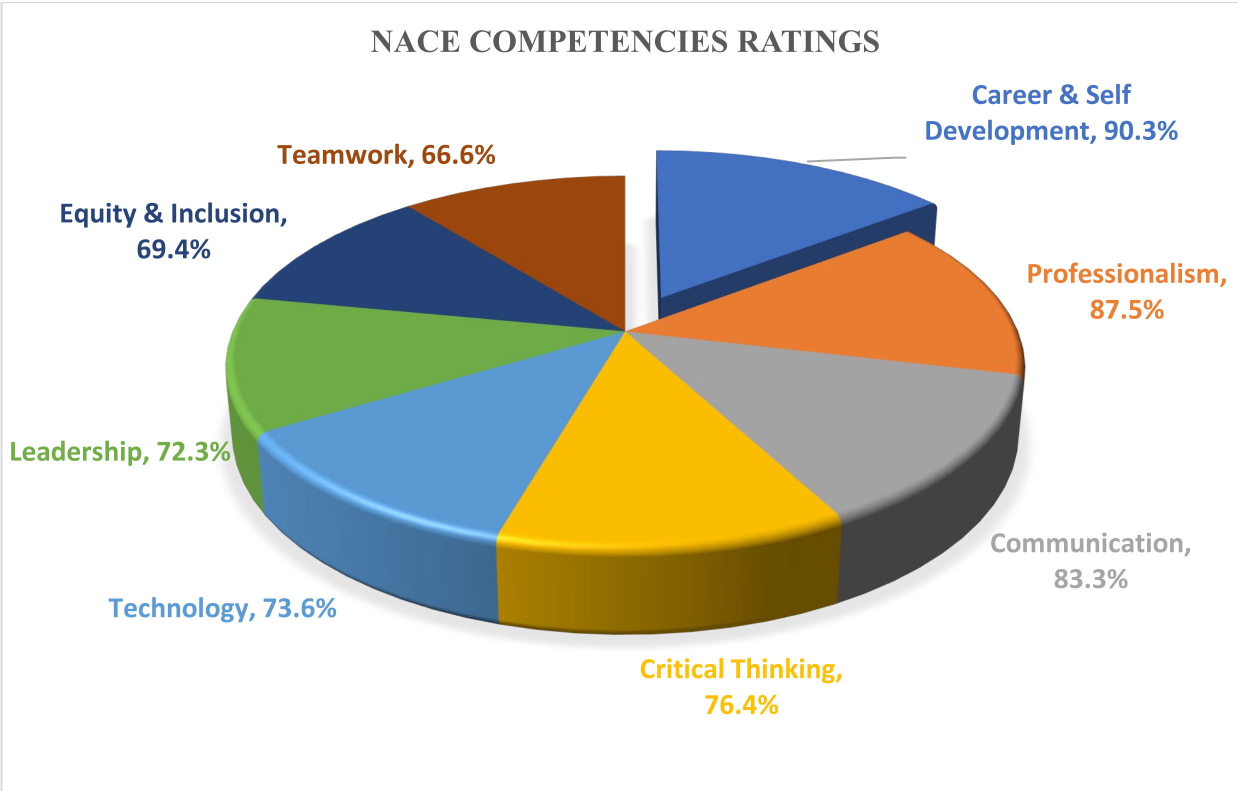
Equity and Inclusion Competency



#	Answer	%	Count
1	not important	1.39%	1
2	somewhat important	4.17%	3
3	important	25.00%	18
4	very important	19.44%	14
5	extremely important	50.00%	36
	Total	100%	72

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Equity & Inclusion	1.00	5.00	4.13	1.01	1.03	72

Figure 17


NACE COMPETENCIES RATINGS
Career & Self Development, 90.3%
Professionalism, 87.5%
Communication, 83.3%
Critical Thinking, 76.4%
Technology, 73.6%
Leadership, 72.3%
Equity & Inclusion, 69.4%
Teamwork, 66.6%

Incorporating no-code development into an interdisciplinary website development course

Tomasz Miaskiewicz, Associate Professor of Marketing
Katz School of Business, Fort Lewis College

The use of technology in marketing education has become increasingly important, and educators need to understand the technological environment that students will face (Malhotra, 2002). One of today's technological trends that marketing educators might want to consider incorporating into their courses is using no-code tools to develop websites, mobile applications, and other digital products. No-code is an approach to programming that does not involve writing any code. Instead, individuals generate the underlying code using drag and drop and other functionality provided by a no-code platform's Graphical User Interface (GUI).

This position paper addresses an innovative class that integrates no-code development as part of an interdisciplinary website development class. One of the main components of the class is a no-code development module. No-code development includes a wide range of tools such as Bubble.io, Webflow, and Airtable — each tool has a specific area of emphasis, such as website, mobile application, and dashboard development. Given the focus of the class, Webflow, a top-rated no-code website platform, was used. Webflow provides a visual interface to design, build, and host a fully functional website (Babich, 2019). Students use Webflow to design a fully functional website, develop dynamic and interactive elements, validate and address accessibility issues, and create high-quality website content.

A survey was administered at the end of the semester to assess the overall course design and the integration of no-code development. Seventeen students completed the survey out of the 24 enrolled in the class. Seven of the student respondents were CIS majors, four were Marketing majors, and six had another academic major (e.g., Communication Design), including being a double major. Students generally enjoyed learning no-code development and found it more efficient than directly developing a website in HTML and CSS. Additionally, students typically disagreed that the Webflow platform was challenging to learn and indicated that they are unlikely to code a website manually in the future (i.e., without using Webflow). Students also agreed with the need for additional courses on no-code development to be integrated into their academic major.

Integrating a no-code development platform called Webflow led to a dynamic learning environment. While the research findings are preliminary, they suggest that no-code development tools allow students from various technical backgrounds to develop websites effectively without an extensive learning curve. Future research should examine student learning throughout the semester and systematically evaluate how various no-code tools can be most effectively leveraged in regular coursework. Another future direction in this research is determining how no-code development fits more broadly within business schools.

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Student Success Assignments: Do They Help Increase Student Retention?

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According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021) the overall retention rate for college students was 71% in 2007 and continually increased to 75.6% in 2021. This statistic is measured for all full-time students regardless of academic year.

For MSU Denver, an urban university in the Mountain West region of the United States, this general statistic does not fit well. Being a commuter campus, 87% of students work at least 32 hours per week and many are not full-time students. However, the retention rate for MSU Denver College of Business students is 72.5% which is close to the overall retention rate listed above. The biggest challenge is retention of first year students. The retention rate for first year business students enrolled in Fall 2023 that reenrolled for Spring 2024 was 57.5%.

Freshman retention has always been a challenge at MSU Denver. Many programs have come and gone to try and improve it, but the low number of students retained continues. This research focuses on the newest retention effort and consists of a set of assignments designed to help students engage with the university and campus.

Lunden MacDonald, in a 2021 article in Hispania, introduced Student Success Assignments (SSA) which consist of seven assignments. Five are mandatory and two give students a choice to select what interests them the most (MacDonald, 2021).

These assignments are based on the premise that engendering a sense of belonging to campus community has positive impacts on self-motivation which in turn yields higher retention and success rates (Morrow & Ackerman, 2012; O'Keefe, 2013).

A pilot test of the project was conducted in Spring 2022 which showed that students who participated in the assignments reported a higher level of belonging to MSU Denver, indicated a desire to participate in future campus events, and that the activities enhanced their experience in class. These students reported statistically higher levels of sense of connection with MSU Denver and desire to continue attending MSU Denver. The next step of the program is to establish that this enhanced sense of connection leads to increased levels of retention.

The initial success and encouraging pilot data has prompted the University Administration to encourage their use across campus. In Fall 2023, 57 sections across various disciplines included the SSA in their courses. The College of Business had 7 professors that used the assignments in a total of 20 different classes. These classes were largely introductory classes that were aimed to reach out to students who are in the first or second year of their academic journeys.

Results from the Fall 2023 semester are being evaluated and will be ready to share with the Marketing Educators' Association at the 2024 annual conference. In this Position Paper we will discuss the Student Success Assignments and whether or not they increased retention of business students. The assignments and their requirements will be shared with MEA members.

Works Cited available upon request.

Similarities and Differences in Sales Education:
A Case Study Comparison between the United States and Finland

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Abstract

Although many salespeople in countries outside of the United States never take a sales course in college (Dugan, Rangarajan, Davis, Bolander, Pullins, Deeter-Schmelz, LeBon, and Agnihotri, 2020), a growing number of European universities have dedicated sales programs. Over 20 European institutions now compete in the annual European Sales Competition, which started in 2014. To learn if differences exist in sales education, this case study compares the programs at a United States and Finnish university, the latter having developed the first formal European university sales program in 2003. Both institutions are in an urban setting with a focus on training students for careers in sales. One characteristic difference was the Finnish program had many international students from a multitude of countries. Many similarities in teaching methods exist between the two, as well as notable differences. The approaches to sales education at both schools are successful and offer insight into where universities could potentially improve their programs.

The American institution has nearly a 100% job placement rate for students looking to begin their careers in sales, while the university in Finland has a plethora of successful students working throughout the country. The Finnish university has hundreds of students taking their sales classes, primarily because sales is a required course at the freshman level. It is the hope of this study that all faculty can examine the differences provided to determine if knowledge gaps exist in their own programs, whereby closing them will provide a more robust educational experience for their students.

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I just want to be "Me": Personal Brand Logo and Student Success in Undergraduate Introductory Marketing Courses

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Shanna Frank, Director, Emporia State University

Extended Abstract:

Purpose: Personal Brand Logos have been utilized in business courses to encourage professional development (Montoya & Vandehey, 2002), leadership (Rampersad, 2009) and creative design (Kucharska & Mikolajczak,2018) among others. This also comes on the helm of the Personal Branding Phenomenon (Khedher, 2014) which argues that individuals are adopting marketing principles to position themselves effectively in the professional landscape. The current study extends the literature by adopting the Personal Branding approach to increase student success in the classroom.

Method: Building upon Park and John (2014), the current study tested an intervention in the educational experience of students enrolled in an undergraduate introductory marketing course. The course was open to all business majors and minors which lead to having students from a wider range of fields of study than just marketing. These students were also primarily sophomores which have been shown to have some of the highest dropout rates among academic standings. Students were tasked to develop their own Personal Brand Logo (PBL) and to display this logo in class throughout the semester. Data was collected in the form of survey at the beginning and end of the study as well as reflective at the conclusion to assess how well students felt engaged and overall perceived understanding of concepts presented.

Results: Results showed that overall engagement was not significantly affected by the intervention. However, within the Engagement Scale, data showed a positive impact on

Emotional Engagement and Participation / Inclusion dimensions. Findings of this study suggest psychological activation through the stimulus development and display. Students denote positive perceived emotional impact through the activity as well as an increase in their willingness to be active participants in the educational experience. Impact on skills and content learning will need to be assessed through academic performance in future iterations of the study.

Value to Marketing Education: The above abstract provides a case study on a curriculum administered to a broad spectrum of students in an introductory marketing course. It demonstrates an innovation in how to engage with students to get emotional buy-in and higher participation in their educational experience. It also serves to reinforce key concepts of marketing to students such as brand equity, authentic brand associations, halo effect and logo design. It allows for these concepts to be personalized for each student, demonstrating the universal application of marketing principles. Finally, it provides a way to connect to the every changing student, offering a means to encourage and empower students to achieve success in their academic pursuits.

Keywords: Personal Branding, Logo, Brand Equity, Course Engagement

Student Perceptions of the Use of Business Simulations in University Classrooms

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C. Clifton Eason, Samford University

This paper seeks to address student perceptions of the use of simulations in marketing and business classes in the spring 2024 academic semester in a AACSB environment. Little has been written and published on student perceptions of academic simulations in marketing and business class contexts, and this study seeks to bridge the gap in this area of the literature. Anonymous surveys will be sent to students in marketing and business classes in the spring of 2024 (by their own professors) regarding their perceptions of the simulations they are engaging with, the effectiveness of these simulations, and any related thoughts or feelings that can better aid marketing and business faculty in both the use of simulations, as well as helping navigate possible future student resistance to the use of simulations in these business contexts.

AI-Assisted Writing Software, the Student Perspective

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Kimberly Ackerman, University of Southern California

Having reached a certain level of sophistication, researchers have been able to identify a number of uses for generative artificial intelligence in education (Zhang, 2023; Guha, Grewal, & Atlas, S. 2023). A commonly known application is its utilization in assisting students to write papers and memos. Grammarly is one such example of an AI app that corrects grammatical errors and provides writing suggestions (Dembsey, 2017). The more sophisticated ones such as ChatGPT actually write students' papers for them.

Compared to more traditional education services such as writing centers, AI software in general is capable of providing service to a wider audience and help more students within a given period of time at a lower monetary cost (Moran & Ackerman 2023). Students can receive help anywhere and at any time that is convenient for them. Also, it may be easier to use for more introverted students who are not as likely to seek out help in writing that involves face-to-face interaction. Another major advantage of using generative AI like ChatGPT is that it can scan and integrate writing from large numbers of articles and other sources into a coherent if imperfect paper, a task that would take countless hours of writing for a human. This allows students to skip the tedious task of synthesizing literature and offers the promise that students will be able to concentrate on analysis in their papers.

An unresolved question is how students themselves will react to AI programs such as Grammarly and ChatGPT. The authors collected preliminary data from fourth-year marketing students at a business school in Southern California and found that many, do not yet use such AI software for writing assignments in their classes and have little interest in doing so.

This finding begs the question of whether AI-assisted writing is optimal in all situations. AI-assisted writing may be good enough to assist in writing up a baseline or template for weekly memos or for other routine writing that just needs a bit of final tinkering. It might also be able to write an essay that has stringent requirements for every sentence in the paper. However, most projects are in between, having specific but flexible requirements that allow creativity. It may be challenging for students to assist generative AI in coming up with all, if not the minimal amount of writing in situations like this.

Another issue is whether the learning curve required to benefit from such software is worth the effort. Given the challenges mentioned above, it is by no means guaranteed that this effort will be rewarded with better writing and even less certain that it will be rewarded with better grades. If the results are the same or perhaps worse than before, then it will have been a wasted effort. Informal interviews about AI-assisted writing suggest that students are aware of these tradeoffs.

Clearly, students have not yet fully adopted AI-assisted writing software at this time. In the future, it would be appropriate to apply the Technology Adoption Model (Davis 1989) to incoming data from students to determine future patterns of technology adoption.

Keywords: Generative AI software, ChatGPT, Grammarly

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Fostering Student Creativity in Higher Education – Position Paper

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Abstract

"Imagination is more important than knowledge...knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world." (Einstein, n.d.). This position paper delves into the crucial role of creativity in higher education, drawing on insights from renowned experts such as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Teresa Amabile. It emphasizes the profound impact of creativity on students' academic success, innovative thinking, and overall development. The challenges faculty face, such as standardized testing, curriculum constraints, and cultural expectations, are acknowledged. Despite these challenges, this paper underscores the well-documented benefits of nurturing creativity in students and advocates for creativity as a necessity rather than a luxury in higher education.

Introduction

Creativity is "the ability to produce original and unusual ideas, or to make something new or imaginative" (Cambridge et al., n.d.). In his famous TED talk, *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* Sir Ken Robinson, an eminent creativity and educational expert, argues that creativity is as essential as literacy because it encourages students to think differently and innovatively (Robinson, 2006). Robinson emphasizes the need to recognize and nurture diverse student talents and argues that education systems often stifle creativity by adhering to standardized curricula and testing.

Creativity involves using the imagination to generate original ideas and evaluate solutions. It requires divergent thinking, problem-solving, and connecting seemingly unrelated concepts. Creativity is a driver of innovation and is a critical skill for success in today's complex and rapidly evolving world. Nevertheless, the traditional educational system's constraints create barriers to fostering creativity. Thus, educators must proactively foster student creativity to enhance academic achievement and prepare students for future careers and personal growth (Amabile, 1998; Puccio et al., 2017; Runco, 2014). Popular creativity theories are summarized, followed by techniques faculty can immediately implement to help foster student creativity.

Creativity Theories

Creativity theories contextualize the intricate processes that support the innovation of novel ideas and solutions. Popular creativity theories, such as *Flow*, *Systems Model of Creativity*, and *Componential Model of Creativity*, support fostering student creativity.

Flow Theory. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a prominent psychologist, is renowned for his concept of flow. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990; 1996; 1997), *flow* represents the optimal state individuals experience when engaging in challenging activities aligned with their skills. This optimal state or experience, also known as *flow*, is characterized by intense concentration, a distorted sense of time, and intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow theory has become integral to understanding human motivation and has been widely applied across various fields, including education, sports, and the workplace, to enhance performance and well-being significantly. Flow Theory also emphasizes the importance of finding activities that match one's skills and interests to promote a sense of fulfillment and happiness.

Systems Model of Creativity. In addition to Flow theory, Csikszentmihalyi (1999; 2014) also created the *Systems Model of Creativity* theory, which provides a more holistic view by considering the sociocultural context. According to this model, creativity is not solely an individual endeavor. Instead, it is deeply interconnected with the surrounding environment, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between specific knowledge or skills (domain), the cultural context (field), and the individual's own unique creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; 2014). The interaction among these components creates a dynamic system wherein creativity can freely unfold.

The Componential Model of Creativity. Teresa Amabile, a psychologist specializing in creativity, stresses the significance of work and social environments in fostering creativity (Amabile, 1998). She emphasizes the importance of supportive and conducive work environments that provide autonomy, psychological safety, resources, and recognition while simultaneously reducing external constraints (Amabile, 1998). Amabile (1983) posits that the *Componential Model of Creativity* emerges from three components: domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and task motivation. According to this model, creative individuals possess expertise within a specific domain, engage in creative thinking processes, and are motivated to work on tasks that challenge and inspire them (Amabile, 1983). This framework underscores the multifaceted nature of creativity, emphasizing the interplay between individual skills, cognitive processes, and intrinsic motivation.

Fostering Creativity in Students

While fostering student creativity is crucial, several challenges and barriers exist, including curriculum constraints, standardized testing, and teacher preparedness (Craft, 2005). Additionally, cultural and societal expectations may limit the expression of creativity within specific contexts (Kim, 2011). Even so, faculty can be pivotal in creating a positive and supportive atmosphere where students feel encouraged to take risks, share ideas, and engage in collaborative projects. When students perceive their ideas as valued, it enhances their creative confidence and willingness to explore innovative approaches to problem-solving. To help foster student creativity, faculty can implement several vital strategies within four constructs: educational environment, curriculum design, faculty practices, and assessment/evaluation.

Educational Environment. A positive classroom environment that encourages risk-taking and exploration helps foster creativity, which in turn fosters academic success (Sawyer, 2012). Students who are encouraged to think creatively often exhibit higher levels of engagement and motivation in their studies. Further drawing from Csikszentmihalyi's (1900; 1999) *Flow* and *Systems Model of Creativity* theories, faculty should strive to create an environment where students can experience the joy of learning. Faculty can accomplish this by structuring courses that include challenging tasks aligned with students' skills while allowing students to immerse themselves and intensely focus on the tasks. By cultivating a supportive environment, instructors set the precedence of establishing a positive and collaborative classroom atmosphere.

Curriculum Design. Incorporating creative activities into the curriculum, such as project-based learning, problem-solving tasks, and arts integration, can significantly enhance creativity (Puccio et al., 2020; 2017). Allowing students to choose topics that align with their interests while promoting self-directed learning and independent research fosters autonomy. Emphasizing the importance of challenging conventional wisdom and questioning assumptions helps to foster divergent thinking. Additionally, the design of collaborative projects and group discussions, in which diverse perspectives are encouraged and respected, fosters teamwork.

Faculty Practices. Faculty's attitudes and behaviors play a crucial role in fostering student creativity. Modeling creativity, providing constructive feedback, and asking open-ended questions help promote creativity (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014). Creative potential is stimulated when instructors provide autonomy and support to students (Grolnick & Ryan, 2017). Recognizing that creativity is not just confined to artistic pursuits but also involves thinking divergently and solving complex problems, these strategies are essential in higher education, and by implementing them, faculty can contribute to developing students' creative potential and preparing them for success well beyond the boundaries of academia.

Assessment and Evaluation. Although easier said than done, shifting from rigid, standardized assessments to more flexible, formative assessment methods encourages creative thinking (Sternberg, 2003). Faculty should consider student mistakes and errors essential to developing creativity and innovation by accepting revisions and resubmissions as a necessary part of the learning process. Additional practical tactics faculty can implement include eliminating check-the-box-for-points rubrics and replacing punitive point-assigned grading with detailed verbal or written feedback (Blum, 2020).

Conclusion

The insights from renowned creativity experts such as Csikszentmihalyi and Amabile underscore how fostering creativity profoundly impacts student academic success, innovative thinking, and overall development. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of creativity with individual skills, cognitive processes, and environmental factors. Although faculty experience challenges from curriculum constraints, standardized testing, and cultural expectations, the benefits of nurturing creativity in students are well-documented, making it a necessity, not a luxury. Faculty can play a pivotal role in fostering student creativity by creating favorable learning environments, designing innovative curricula, adopting creative teaching practices, and reimagining assessment methods. Furthermore, faculty can encourage exploration, risk-taking, and collaborative learning, which empowers students to think divergently and solve complex problems. Future research should explore specific and practical strategies and interventions faculty can implement to foster student creativity across diverse educational settings. Future research should also investigate how fostering creativity within the formal educational years leads to greater creativity and innovation within the workforce (Puccio, 1999).

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A Framework Linking Media to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

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Purpose of the Study: The media plays a crucial role as a valuable tool in fostering social changes and tackling obstacles hindering such changes. A pivotal function of news media is to aid citizens in becoming well-informed. Nonetheless, scholars and commentators argue that recent times have witnessed the rise of what is referred to as the 'misinformation society,' marked by the widespread presence of 'alternative facts' and the concept of a 'post-truth' era. This research explores the impact of media trust on advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Method/Design and Sample: Data was collected online by students of marketing research class through voluntary and anonymous participation. Participants shared the survey link to improve response rates and ensure representativeness. After screening for completeness and attention check failures, the final dataset comprised 457 responses.

Results: Media trust influences favoring progressive-focused over survival-focused goals, with this link influenced by people receptive to pseudo-profound statements and moderated by political affiliation.

Value to Marketing Education: Understanding the role of media and how individuals consider the welfare of others amidst global challenges can direct marketing educators to incorporate media literacy and digital channels in marketing curricula (e.g., in the context of advertising strategies, social media dynamics, and the role of influencers), ethical marketing practices, and global perspective for the development of responsible and effective marketing professionals.

Keywords: Media Trust, Pseudo-profound Bullshit Receptivity, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Trade-offs, Construal level

Authentic Assessments in the Marketing Classroom

Leslie Gould, Assistant Professor, Angelo State University

Abstract

This position paper introduces a research proposal aimed at examining the impact of authentic assessments in the marketing classroom. Assessments are an important part of the classroom, seen as both a way to evaluate students' achievements on learning objectives and a tool for teaching (Kinash, et al., 2018). Authentic assessments are hailed as being superior to traditional assessments regarding their real-world relevance, holistic evaluation, ability to engage and motivate students, and, perhaps most pertinent to this study, their positive impact on work readiness (Messier, 2022; Nicol et al., 2014; Wiewiora & Kowalkiewicz, 2018). A recent survey showed that 40% of managers believe recent college graduates are unprepared for the workforce (Intelligent, 2023) and college graduates often feel the same (Hansen, 2021). Given this information, it is crucial that we understand how authentic assessments influence student outcomes. For this study, I will replace traditional assessments (mid-term and final) with authentic assessments such as a hands-on assignment building a survey, and providing the students with opportunities to conduct an experiment, retail observation, and interviews. Using a mixed methods design, this study will investigate the impact of authentic assessments on student outcomes such as work readiness, satisfaction, and engagement. I hypothesize that authentic assessments will have a positive relationship with work readiness, satisfaction, and engagement. By examining these relationships, this research hopes to add to the growing body of knowledge surrounding authentic assessments, empowering educators with a deeper understanding of pedagogical practices backed up by empirical data. Practical implications include the potential for improved student learning outcomes, increased workforce readiness, and an increase in the quality of higher education.

Keywords: authentic assessment, work readiness, student satisfaction, student engagement

References available upon request.

SPECIAL SESSIONS

Teaching Tableau In a Skills Based Data Analytics Course

Rex T. Moody, Associate Professor of Marketing, Angelo State University

Abstract

While the use of the term, “Big Data” (which was coined by O’Reilly Media in 2005) has fallen out of favor, since the amount of data available for analysis continues to grow larger and larger, the need for graduates who have data analytics skills has not diminished. Future workers will have to understand and be able to use a data analytics application just as today’s workers need to know how to use basic productivity software (like Word or Excel). However, in the CMO survey conducted in August, 2018 by the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University, Deloitte LLP, and the American Marketing Association results show that spending on marketing analytics is expected to increase by 200% over the next three years and that a lack of trained professionals, tools, and processes are the main barriers to using marketing analytics within firms (CMO Survey, 2018).

In a 2017 MEA Conference paper, Moody, Pate and Veltri (2017) described a course shifting the content of the marketing research class for undergraduate students from traditional marketing research topics to one that focuses on data analytics. In 2019 Moody followed this up in an MEA position paper that described this course in more detail and how it had shifted to covering data visualization techniques and the use of the Tableau software package.

In the current Special Session, the author will describe how educators can teach Tableau at no cost to their schools or students, the resources available to help them with the class preparations

and take participants through a hands-on training session using Tableau. The basic outline of the author’s course will be covered along with a specific assignment that is used in the course.

References Available Upon Request

Artificial Intelligence in the Digital Marketing Classroom

Laurel Lane, M.A., Marketing Lecturer, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Dr. Sally Baalbaki-Yassine, Ph.D., Department Chair, Professor and Digital Marketing Program Director, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Special Session Purpose:

The purpose of this special session is to allow for a discussion among marketing faculty on how they have been incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom. The session would include a brief presentation about what Laurel Lane and Dr. Sally Baalbaki have implemented in digital marketing classes where AI is concerned in order to provide guidance for a discussion. The main goal is for marketing faculty from various schools to share ideas and hopefully gain some new ideas to help them as they try to tackle this continuously burgeoning topic. This forum would also allow for marketing faculty to share concerns about AI in the classroom as well as in the marketing landscape.

Rationale for Session:

AI erupted onto the academic landscape as well as into the main industrial world in the fall of 2022. The academic community immediately looked to how AI was impacting student work, and academic integrity. In the ensuing months, as we have seen major industry adopt AI platforms in their daily work, we recognized the need to start teaching students more about AI and how it is currently being used specifically in the marketing discipline.

At MEA 2023, there was a large focus on AI and there was some discussion on using AI in the classroom (some participants shared examples of classroom assignments), however, there was not a structured focus on specific assignments, how those assignments should connect to the "real world" or marketing, or how else we might incorporate AI into the classroom to help students be career/hands-on work ready.

We believe that discussing AI ideas specifically for digital marketing classes can be helpful for any marketing educators who may have been grappling with this topic over the past year.

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Plan for Session:

- Brief Presentation by Laurel Lane and Dr. Sally Baalbaki on our own current use of AI in the classroom
- Guided discussion on how others are using AI
    - Allowing use of AI to create assignments?

- Assignments allowing use of AI in order to learn how it works, where it may not work?
- Using AI to create assignments, exams?
- Using AI in conjunction with professional partner (aka client or network partner) for students to learn how it's being used in real time in the marketing workforce?
- Guest speakers on AI?

Bringing Marketing Students to the World and Bringing the World to Marketing Students

Olga Di Franco, California State University, Fullerton
Luis Salem, California State University, Fullerton
Eric Setten, California State University, Fullerton

Teaching global marketing can be an exciting opportunity to open boundaries for our students in the classroom, online, on site or through a virtual volunteer abroad experience. Studies have shown the positive outcomes of exposing of students to global marketing practices, applying their basic marketing knowledge with an international twist, adds value to our students. Not only will it educate them in global marketing business realities, but this experience will also allow them to develop and expand their own knowledge base and experience. It also an opportunity to develop competitive skills for future careers, learning how to adjust and integrate with other cultures, learning different ways of communicating, compromising, and collaborating. In addition to becoming well-rounded citizens of the world, students will begin to understand our interconnectedness, and develop skills like adaptability and enhanced communication. These and other associated skills like problem solving can only enhance their competitive posture in the workplace. Being able to teach global marketing on multiple platforms, such as being in the classroom or online through zoom or in person in a study abroad program or doing a virtual volunteer abroad experience for the graduate program, increases the quality of our student knowledge base and their ability to create transformational skills for their career.

Teaching Global Marketing using different modalities

Creating an effective online integrated learning community

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Purpose of the Study: Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a growing demand for flexible learning modalities among students. However, many course designs offering flexibility suffer from weaknesses such as a lack of collaborative learning, limited student-instructor interactions, and fewer discussions with diverse peers (Dumford and Miller, 2018). The proposed online integrated learning framework addresses these shortcomings by enabling students to interact and engage in collaborative learning activities.

Method/Design and Sample: Students enrolled in upper-level marketing courses during the Spring 2024 semester, which include both marketing and non-marketing students, will be tasked with completing an assignment requiring them to share their understanding and insights within their group. The online integrated learning framework is simple yet includes several layers to ensure student-to-student interactions and create a robust learning community. Each group must record their discussion, which will then be shared with other groups for online peer review. The entire class will convene to review the discussions and share insights collectively. Assessment of students' motivation to engage in dialogues within the learning community will employ both self-evaluation and peer evaluation methods. Additionally, their learning outcomes will be measured to ensure learning assurance through participation in the learning community.

Results: I anticipate observing the causal relationship between motivation and improved learning outcomes through this adapted learning community model. Additionally, I am curious about the role of autonomy in this relationship, as students were required to engage in group interactions to complete course assignments. It would be interesting to explore whether this course structure influenced students' attitudes toward learning.

Value to Marketing Education: This online integrated learning framework facilitates the following key components. First, it promotes all three distinct types of interactions. Students possess the autonomy to guide their own learning by preparing discussion question responses (i.e., student-subject interaction) prior to a small group meeting (i.e., student-student interaction) and participating in an instructor-moderated class discussion (i.e., student-instructor interaction), thereby refining their understanding of the subject. Secondly, it empowers students to master course content through collaborative learning. Both asynchronous and synchronous styles of interactions afford flexibility and grant students autonomy in their engagement with the learning process. It provides students with the opportunity to reflect on their contributions to discussions, fostering the creation of a learning community and the establishment of a classroom culture that welcomes diverse perspectives.

Keywords: Self-determination theory, Student-to-student engagement, hybrid, learning community

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"Expanding Horizons: Unleashing Potential through Study Abroad Programs for Business Students"

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Extended Abstract

Imagine a learning experience that not only enhances your business acumen but also transforms your worldview. This session promises an engaging journey into how international exposure can redefine the future of business education and career paths for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Objectives

With globalization reshaping the business landscape, the need for culturally savvy and globally aware leaders has never been more critical. This session will:

- Unpack the essence of global business intelligence gained through firsthand exposure to diverse business environments.
- Celebrate the profound personal development stemming from deep cultural immersion.
- Highlight the career-defining moments and opportunities sparked by global educational journeys.
- Illuminate the innovative educational models that bring academic theories to life in the global arena.

Discussion Points

1. **Global Business Insights:** Dive into the world of international business through the eyes of students who have navigated and conquered diverse market landscapes. Discover how understanding business across borders isn't just educational—it's exhilarating.

2. Cultural Immersion's Magic: Feel the pulse of different cultures and how these experiences sculpt soft skills that textbooks cannot teach. This segment promises stories of transformation, showcasing students who emerged more adaptable, empathetic, and globally minded.

3. Innovative Educational Journeys: Be captivated by the creativity of study abroad programs that marry classroom learning with real-world business challenges.

4. Career Trajectories Transformed: Hear how international experiences have become the cornerstone of successful careers. This discussion will reveal how study abroad alumni have leveraged their global networks and experiences to secure a place in the competitive business world.

5. Overcoming Barriers: Engage in an honest discussion about the hurdles to accessing study abroad opportunities and the innovative solutions being crafted to leap over them. From financial constraints to academic challenges, learn how obstacles are transformed into stepping stones towards global engagement.

6. Ethical and Sustainable Global Engagement: Delve into the importance of conducting study abroad programs ethically and sustainably. This thought-provoking discussion will challenge you to think about the impact of your global footprint and how to make positive contributions to host communities.

Conclusion

As an educator seeking to enrich your curriculum and nurture students’ interests in the global marketplace, this session will leave you enlightened, inspired, and eager to embark on your own international adventure. We explore the transformative power of study abroad programs and how they prepare business students for a future without borders.

Digital Marketing “texts”

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How do you teach a topic that’s constantly changing? This is a question that all marketing professors must consider but is particularly important within the field of digital marketing. In a recent retrospective article published in the *Journal of Marketing Education,* Parker, et al. write “Digital marketing as a field of study is a dynamic discipline that requires educators to evaluate their curricula and teaching methods constantly.” (Parker, James, Legget, & Al-Shammari 2023). Many of the topics taught within digital marketing (search engine optimization, web analytics, email marketing, etc.) have remained consistent over the years, but how these tools are executed constantly change, creating the dynamism of the discipline.

This special session will cover the tools to teach digital marketing with a focus on “the text”. Many researchers have addressed the use of resources such as certification exams (Cowley, Humphrey, & Munoz 2021; Laverie, Humphrey, Manis, & Freberg 2020; Staton, 2016) as a form of assessment, and experiential learning for conceptual application (Kemp, Randon McDougal, & Syrdal 2019) but little pedagogical discussion has addressed what resources instructors should deploy for learning outside the classroom. We will discuss some current “traditional” textbooks, “simulation” based learning systems, as well as the use of content marketing. There is no one way to teach a course, but this hopefully lively discussion will help identify the current state of digital marketing texts, as well as identify how it may adapt in the future.

One would think that traditional, physical textbooks would not have a place in a dynamic discipline such as digital marketing, yet there are many currently on the market. One example is Digital Marketing (8th edition) by Dave Chaffey and Fiona Ellis-Chadwick. This textbook is popular, regularly updated, and reasonably priced at $51 for a paperback edition. That said, this is less of a "digital marketing" textbook and more of a "marketing textbook using digital example", as many of the topics would be covered in an introductory course on marketing. According to the table of contents there are sections on topics such as "branding" and "setting SMART goals". For most upper level marketing students, this would be a review and redundant.

Another physical textbook currently on the market is Digital Marketing Strategy: An Integrated Approach to Online Strategy (3rd Edition) by Simon Kingsnorth. The first two sections cover digital consumer behavior and corporate strategic planning, while the next two sections ("Using channel strategy to reach your customers" and "Conversion, retention and measurement") cover are more tool-based. The fifth, and final section covers completing your digital marketing strategy. This book is also reasonably priced at $35.99 for a paperback copy.

The obvious problem with physical textbooks is the timeframe between writing, editing, publishing and adoption. The constant change inherent within digital marketing makes the use of physical textbooks sub-optimal for cutting-edge instruction. Another option is using online learning systems, such as the digital marketing simulation tools from Stukent. With payment of an access fee, students can access a regularly updated online digital marketing textbook and also use their included simulation "Mimic Pro" which allows students to experientially learn tools such as pay-per-click campaigns and AB testing (Miaskiewicz, 2022). While the simulation may be beneficial, tools are constantly changing as well as concepts, so making sure students are still getting the most up-to-date knowledge requires further faculty validation.

A third option for digital marketing text is the use of free content marketing such as eBooks, blogs, podcasts, videos, and certifications to explain the required concepts. For example, as part of their inbound / content marketing strategy MOZ created a free eBook entitled the “Beginner’s Guide to SEO”. Many digital marketers when they hire new employees require them to download and read the book to get a basic understanding of search engine optimization. Because it is in MOZ’s best interest to keep this resource up-to-date, faculty can also use it as the preliminary reading for their students to introduce search engine optimization. Other companies such as HubSpot (inbound marketing), TradeDesk (programmatic advertising), and HootSuite (social media management) also have created content marketing resources that faculty can use in lieu of traditional textbooks. One tremendous benefit of using these resources is that they are almost always free to access.

To serve the “dynamic discipline” perhaps faculty should employ a combination of the suggestions here. An online textbook, written and regularly updated by an academic, that supplements readings with examples of content marketing and industry certifications. Students are demanding industry relevant education, (Belkin, 2024) and marketing professors generally and digital marketing professor specifically are uniquely qualified to deliver the desired industry relevant education. What we teach is the easy part. How we teach it requires a great deal of thought.

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Adopting a Closed-Loop Value Chain in Marketing Education

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Abstract

This special session addresses the need to fully incorporate sustainability into the marketing curriculum. One natural place to do so is when covering the chapters in marketing principles, marketing management, and marketing strategy textbooks that address the traditional value chain model. In this session, we will discuss both “why” and “how” to incorporate sustainability concepts, such as recycling, repurposing, and reuse of products, in order to shift traditional value chain thinking towards a closed-loop model. A closed-loop approach to the value chain must be adopted by marketing educators to give students a more comprehensive and contemporary understanding of business practices. The special session will cover background on the role of a closed-loop cycle in business, current textbook coverage of sustainability, and resources that can be used by marketing educators.

Introduction

This special session addresses the need to fully incorporate sustainability into the marketing curriculum. One natural place to do so is when covering the chapters in marketing principles, marketing management, and marketing strategy textbooks that address the traditional value chain model. In this session, we will discuss both “why” and “how” to incorporate sustainability concepts, such as recycling, repurposing, and reuse of products, in order to shift traditional value chain thinking towards a closed-loop model. A closed-loop approach to the value chain must be adopted by marketing educators to give students a more comprehensive and contemporary understanding of business practices. This paper briefly describes the areas that will be covered in this special session: background on the role of a closed-loop cycle in business, current textbook coverage of sustainability, and resources that can be used by marketing educators.

Background: Sustainable Production and Consumption

In recent years, a growing acceptance of the negative consequences of business activities on the environment and society has led to actions by industry, government, and to some extent consumers. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 12 is: ensure sustainable production and consumption (United Nations, 2023). A key to achieving this goal is the creation of a circular economy, which means having zero waste products; instead of disposing of products, the materials are recycled into the next generation of products. This concept was introduced over 20 years ago in McDonough and Braungart's book Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the way we make things (2002). The central tenet of their proposal is that a radically different approach to production and consumption is needed to address our environmental problems; this next industrial revolution should be based on principles found in nature and aim not to be just less bad, but to be nourishing to the planet.

Producers are increasingly taking on this challenge. For example, Dow aims to collect, reuse, or recycle one million metric tons of plastic by 2030; by 2035 they aim to fully close the loop and ensure that all packaging products they produce are either reusable or recyclable (Idle, 2022). Shoe producer Rothy's expanded their sustainability efforts from using plastic water bottles in their production of shoes to launching a shoe take-back program that moves the producer towards circular production (Waldow, 2022). A closed-loop or circular value chain reduces environmental impact, can enhance a company's reputation, and increasingly aligns with the expectations of consumers.

Creating these circular systems requires both planning from producers as well as the participation of consumers. Dermody et al. (2015) note that “the need to transform consumption behaviour into more sustainable choice-making is fundamental in helping to solve our planet’s ecological crisis” (p. 1473). Marketing is a critical function for understanding and engaging consumers in sustainability, given its relationship to consumption and the consumer experience. Marketers influence where and what to buy and this influence can be extended to sustainable consumption (Fernandez, 2022) including what to do with goods at the end of life. As marketing educators, we need to prepare the next generation of marketing professionals to understand a sustainable, closed-loop supply chain as well as how to better engage consumers in the process.

Current marketing textbooks continue to include a traditional end-to-end value chain. While sustainability may be covered lightly in one chapter, the old way of creating, distributing, using, and disposing of products is being presented as the norm. The purpose of this special session is to introduce marketing educators to a closed-loop value chain that can be taught as the new norm in all marketing classes. We offer ideas on teaching materials and assignments to make the shift easier. We hope that a movement of marketing educators to apply these materials will in turn influence textbook authors and publishers to change the value change model in their materials.

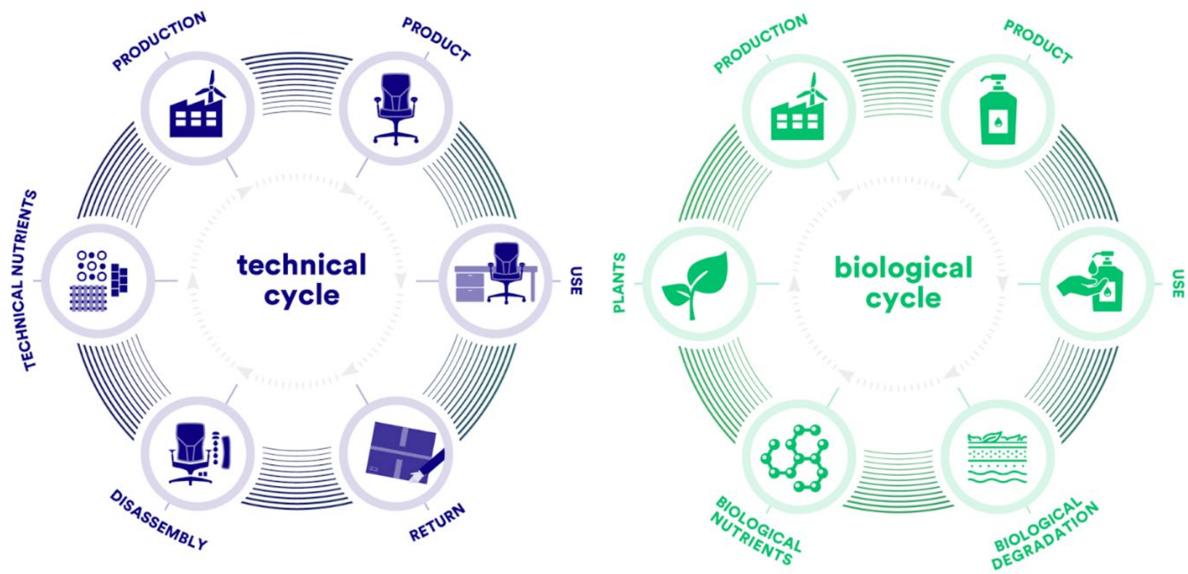
Current Teaching of Value Chain

In the session, we will provide an overview of several current marketing textbooks and how they address sustainability and the value chain. While most marketing textbooks do cover sustainable marketing, responsible marketing, and/or corporate social responsibility, they do not incorporate these concepts into the value chain. Sustainability is presented as a topic separate from traditional marketing concepts. Kotler & Armstrong, Principles of Marketing, 18th edition (2020) does suggest a theoretical framework for sustainability within the "marketing concept"; however, this is not comparable to what we are suggesting in terms of a sustainable value chain model.

Resources: Teaching the Closed-loop Value Chain

The purpose of this section of the special session is to provide marketing educators with resources and ideas for how to integrate a closed-loop/circular value chain into mainstream marketing classes. Circular value chain models vary based on industry and many are available online. We recommend a few options as a starting point. Exhibit A includes the value chains offered by the Cradle to Cradle Product Innovation Institute, which offers a certification program for companies around the world. They offer two value chains, one for technical products and one for plant-based products. While the technical product cycle emphasizes product return and disassembly, the biological cycle emphasizes the natural degradation and reabsorption process of plants.

Exhibit A: Cradle to cradle product innovation institute



(https://c2ccertified.org/topics/circular-economy)

Table A provides an overview of several of the teaching tools that will be discussed and provided in the special session.

Table A: Sustainable Value Chain Teaching Tools

Teaching Material	Purpose/Use
Slide set: The Link between Consumption, Materialism, and Environmentalism	Introduce the concept of responsible consumption.
Slide set: Circular, closed-loop models and their drivers	Provide several examples of circular models used by business; discuss elements of a closed loop, including material sourcing, production, reuse and recycling, and biological degradation.
Assignment: 2-slide presentation of circular products	Create an opportunity for students to do some research on circular products, their challenges and benefits.
https://c2ccertified.org/	Resource to better understand how circularity is being applied by businesses: Cradle-to-cradle certification; global standard for the shift to a circular economy. Case studies and research.
Assignment: Service Learning	Students gain a deeper understanding of sustainability through hands-on learning in the community.
Course:	Requirement for students to take a sustainability-related course.

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