EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING PROJECTS: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF LIVE CASE AND SIMULATION METHODS

Jill K. Maher, Robert Morris University
Renee Shaw Hughner, Arizona State University East

ABSTRACT

While experiential projects have been documented as powerful pedagogical tools for linking theory to practice, it is unknown whether students prefer the experience to be real or hypothetical. This paper explores the impact of a real client-based project versus a simulated client project on students' perceptions and ratings of the marketing project. Student perceptions of learning are also investigated. Results indicate that both formats are effective in fostering perceptions of reality, favorable project evaluations, and enhanced perceptions of learning.

INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of real-world learning experiences in business curricula has been suggested by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools (AACSB) curriculum guidelines. Furthermore, educators have stressed the importance of linking theory and practice in the classroom in order to make the classroom as similar to the practical business world as possible (Granitz 2001; Nofz 1990; Kolb 1984; Schibrowsky and Peltier 1995; Stern and Tseng 2002). These linkages benefit students by providing hands-on experience, business competencies, and valuable skills.

Previous research has discussed the effectiveness of experiential learning techniques in improving marketing pedagogy (Bridges 1999; Drafke, Schoenbachler, and Gordon 1996; Gruca 2000; Hamer 2000; Petkus 2000; Specht 1985). Much of this research suggests that the incorporation of experiential marketing projects can be useful in increasing student involvement levels, comprehension, and retention of information, while providing students with hands-on experience and fostering a linkage between theory and practice. One example of experiential learning is a project method (PMA) or "live-case" approach (Dommeyer 1986; Goretsky 1984; Malhotra, Tashchian, and Jain 1989; McDaniel 1984); another is the use of simulated research experiences (SRE) (Malhotra, Tashchian, and Mahmoud 1987). Many instructors use variations of these experiential projects in marketing curriculum.

These projects can take two general forms: a simulated marketing project that contains a hypothetical marketing problem and client, or a "real" project consisting of an actual client who seeks to use the student project to answer an actual marketing problem. While there is good concep-tual reasoning and empirical support for the inclusion of an experiential project in marketing pedagogy, there has been very little empirical research investigating whether "reality" plays an important part in the learning process and outcome (for exception, see Granitz 2001).

The purpose of this study is to empirically test whether students' project perceptions, ratings, and perceptions of learning differ between the two formats of experiential projects – live case or simulated. In other words, this research addresses whether there are differences in the impact of experiential research projects when the experience is real versus hypothetical. This question is explored in the context of a marketing research course – a course that lends itself well to the two general project formats. Gaining insight as to the virtues of real client projects versus simulated experiential exercises is clearly of importance and interest to marketing instructors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Experiential learning is defined as "a process whereby knowledge is created and learning is promoted through the transformation of experience" (Kolb 1984, p. 38). Previous research has recognized the value of experiential learning in marketing curriculum (Bridges 1999; de los Santos and Jensen 1985; Graeff 1997; O'Hara and Shaffer 1995; Wynd 1989). It has been found that this method assists students in developing essential marketing and business skills. Students become more involved in learning with emphasis on personalization of subject matter and higher-order thinking (Hamer 2000).

In a special issue of the *Journal of Marketing Education* dedicated to experiential learning activities, Hamer (2000) states that experiential techniques are categorized in two groups: (1) semi-structured classroom activities,

which are short in nature and contain moderate complexity, and (2) loosely structured experiential activities which take longer to complete and are more complex.

In semi-structured classroom activities, the instructor directs groups of students to complete a small task designed to reinforce course concepts. These activities are short in duration, generally very focused, and are completed during the class period.

The loosely structured experiential activities require greater amounts of time and are broader in scope. These activities include the project method (PMA) or live-case approach, debates, and simulated experiences. The benefit of these types of experiential learning activities is that they are often somewhat ambiguous and more difficult, requiring students to process information more deeply. In addition, these types of experiential activities are useful in courses such as marketing research, as they provide students with the opportunity to experience every facet of the marketing research process over an entire semester. Previous research in various disciplines suggests that the incorporation of loosely structured experiential activities improves student performance (Perry et al. 1996), increases instructor and student enthusiasm for the course (Dabbour 1997), and increases students' perceived value in the learning experience (Graeff 1997).

Loosely structured experiential activities can employ hypothetical or actual data. Using the PMA as an example, students can participate in the marketing project by responding to a hypothetical client and problem, or they can be challenged by an actual client with an actual marketing problem. In the latter case, the client "hires" the students to conduct research in order to investigate a problem important to the client, provide findings, and ultimately suggest marketing strategies based on the findings. In the former, students generally participate in the marketing project using a simulated or hypothetical client and are sometimes provided with previously-generated data. Many marketing textbooks include software containing marketing plans and data sets for these purposes.

PMAs

The project method or "live-case" approach in marketing curriculum is an integrative method which links theory and practice; it provides students with the opportunity to experience marketing problems with real clients. Selection of these clients is one of the most important aspects of the PMA. Previous research suggests that the client be very involved in the students' experiences by providing a well-defined problem for investigation, meeting with students, and offering financial assistance whenever possible (e.g., for administrative costs) (Malhotra, Tashchian, and Jain 1989). This involvement gives students the opportunity to experience a real client relationship.

Research on the PMA was extensive in the 1980s. Malhotra, Tashchian, and Jain (1989) provide a useful summary of studies examining the PMA throughout this time period. This summary categorized previous research in three areas: (1) studies that examine both clients' and students' opinions regarding the effectiveness of the PMA (Ramocki 1987; McDaniel 1984, Richardson and Raveed 1980), (2) studies that discuss structured approaches for selecting a group project and accompanying teaching methods (Dommeyer 1986; Goretsky 1984; McCain and Lincoln 1982), and (3) narratives detailing instructors' experiences with PMAs (Humphreys 1981; Dean 1982; de los Santos and Jensen 1985). In general, this stream of research suggests that a project method approach to learning concepts is preferred to an unstructured (lecture-based) method by students.

More recent research suggests that the integration of the PMA with several different types of experiential activities – as compared to a single experiential component – increases student learning and influences the type of conceptual information learned by students (Hamer 2000). Granitz (2001) examined student perceptions of courses using an active project method approach to learning, as compared to those employing more passive techniques. Results indicated that students believed active learning courses to be more meaningful than courses using more passive techniques. Examples of student testimonials extolling the merits of a client-sponsored project were provided. Referring to the project, one student stated it "was the most meaningful because I learned a lot of what I'll be doing later in life-possibly for my own business. We collected data, analyzed data, made recommendations, and presented results to the sponsor" (Granitz 2001, p. 30). Thus, in addition to the suggestions that PMAs increase learning, the integration of PMAs appear more meaningful to students.

Malhotra, Tashchian, and Jain (1989) cross-summarize the many skills that marketing students should possess upon completion of their degree, with the teaching methods that best foster and enhance these skills. In this summary, the PMA was found to provide numerous benefits. Specifically, the experiential project approach is highly effective in developing communication, problem solving, critical thinking, analytical, ethical, interpersonal, and real-world skills. Because of the superior nature of this approach in honing the skills of marketing students, many educators incorporate it into their curriculum. In fact, in a recent study with 107 of the most well regarded marketing educators, it was stated that research papers were being replaced with experiential learning projects in marketing curriculum (Smart, Kelley, and Conant 1999).

Simulations

Simulated experiences are beneficial to student learning. In the aforementioned cross summary of teaching

techniques and student skills, Malhotra, Tashchian, and Jain (1989) suggest that simulations increase student confidence in problem solving and decision-making skills, and are exceptional in honing computer skills when the simulations are computer-based. Students can experience a simulated marketing problem with hypothetical data sets, cases, and computer-based games. For example, computer simulations such as McGraw Hill's *Marketing Game!* (Mason and Perreault 1995) provide a simulated experience for marketing students and have been found to be very effective in learning. Moreover, these computer-based simulations have advanced with technology. While early computer simulations were hand scored and operated on mainframe computers, current simulations are run on personal computers which allow for higher speeds, greater storage, and dynamic and exciting features (Fritzsche and Burns 2001).

In addition to computer-based simulations, other simulated research experiences (SRE) can be achieved by role-playing using hypothetical clients. This experiential approach requires students to become active learners while pretending to solve the hypothetical client's marketing problems through strategic recommendations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Marketing students have reported greater personal relevance when participating in active learning projects in marketing classes. Specifically, this relevance is created in three ways: (1) students actively perform what they will be doing in future careers, (2) by exchanging opinions with other team members, students develop frames of reference to compare and contrast their views on business issues, and (3) by participating in team work, students improve their social interaction skills – an integral part of their future careers (Granitz 2001). Granitz (2001) also reports that these benefits are further reinforced if students are participating in an active learning project with moral content or implications to society. While this research has illustrated that there is greater meaning associated with active learning projects, it is unclear whether students prefer marketing projects that employ actual, live-case clients or projects that employ simulated, hypothetical situations and clients. Thus, the following research questions are presented:

1. Is there a difference in students' project perceptions when there is integration of an actual, client-based (i.e., real-life) project versus a hypothetical client?
2. Is there a difference in students' project ratings when there is integration of an actual, client-based (i.e., real-life) project versus a hypothetical client?
3. Is there a difference in students' perceptions of learning when there is integration of an actual, client-based (i.e., real-life) project versus a hypothetical client?

THE MARKETING RESEARCH COURSE

Two sections of an undergraduate marketing research course were used to investigate the research questions. The same professor instructed each section; each was identical in classroom location, number and hours of class meetings, concept delivery (i.e., lecture and discussion), and course expectations with regard to grading and assignments. On the first day of class, marketing research students in both sections were asked to form groups of five or six for the purpose of a project that would encompass the entire semester. Team size was kept as equal as possible due to the known effect of team size on student performance in simulations (Cosse, Ashworth, and Weisenberger 1999). A total of 15 teams were involved. Of those 15 teams, six teams were involved in a project that was sponsored by a real client (i.e., PMA approach), while nine teams participated in a project with a hypothetical client (SRE approach). The teams involved with the real client were personally *challenged* by the client early in the semester to investigate a marketing problem facing the company. The instructor, posing as a hypothetical client with a marketing research problem, challenged the non-sponsored class. All teams were told that they would be conducting research for their client throughout the semester.

PMA Class

Malhotra, Tashchian, and Jain (1989) discuss operational issues to consider when using a project method approach in a marketing research course. All of these aspects were taken into consideration when developing the project. Specifically, during the summer months prior to the beginning of the semester, the instructor solicited potential clients from area businesses. After this process, the instructor chose a client. The client was asked to provide a problem statement and a 'request for proposal' for the research. Each team of students was presented with the RFP during the first class meeting. As recommended by Malhotra, Tashchian, and Jain (1989), the professional client visited the class and "challenged" students to study consumers' attitudes toward a radically new packaging concept for an existing consumer product (i.e., olive oil in a box) during the second-class meeting. The client made it very clear to the students that the students' research would be instrumental in the company's decision to change its package design. In addition, the client provided a historical perspective of the company, the company's strategic direction, a brief review of the product category, and information regarding the marketing research "challenge."

SRE Class

Similar to the sponsored class, the teams in this section of marketing research were hired by the hypothetical client (i.e., the instructor) to investigate consumers' attitudes toward a new packaging concept for a consumer product entering the market at that time (i.e., bagged tuna fish). Secondary data for this product category was provided to all teams.

Marketing Research Process

As the semester progressed, students in both sections worked in their designated groups through the various phases of the marketing research process. This process followed a typical undergraduate marketing research text. First, each group conducted exploratory research to help better define their marketing research problem. They become familiar with the use of secondary data and qualitative research in this process. The course content provided them with information on potential research designs. In designing their research, all groups used survey methodology. This was deemed appropriate for both projects as each involved conducting descriptive research. They collected data from appropriate convenience samples. The groups involved in the PMA used adult consumers (e.g., parents, aunts, uncles) as requested by the client, while the samples for the SRE projects were drawn from a student population. All groups were required to conduct data processing and analysis with SPSS for Windows software. Students attended optional labs conducted by the instructor for SPSS tutorial instruction. After analyzing their data, they were responsible for drawing conclusions and analyzing the marketing implications from their data. In the PMA section, the project concluded with formal presentations to fellow classmates, the instructor, and the client; for the simulated research experience, presentations were made to classmates and the instructor, only.

METHODOLOGY

Dependent Variables

Survey methodology was used to examine students' project perceptions, project ratings, and perceptions of learning. Fourteen measures (see Table 1) were examined to provide answers to the research questions. Similar to previous studies regarding students' perceptions and ratings of projects (Chapman and Van Auken 2001), five of the fourteen measures were seven-point bi-polar items measuring students' perceptions of the projects (e.g., realistic = 7; nonrealistic = 1) while another five were seven-point bi-polar adjectives measuring students' ratings of the project (e.g., good = 7; bad = 1). These ratings measures are also commonly used and reported in Bruner

and Hensel (1992). The remaining four items were Likert statements measuring students' perceptions of learning (anchored by 5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree). These were adapted and modified from those used by Bobbitt et al. (2000). Likert items 2 and 3 of the learning measures relate specifically to learning from the project itself. Students were asked for their level of agreement with the statements, "I learned a lot from this project," and "I learned more in this class than in other classes because of the project." Likert items 1 and 4 of the learning measures examined the relationship between the project and learning relative to the entire course. Students were asked for their level of agreement with the statements, "The project was useful in learning marketing research concepts," and "The project helped me to perform better on exams." These measures were appropriate as they are simple statements that relate specifically to learning from the project and how learning in the course was enhanced by the project. In addition, several demographic questions were included.

Sample

The participants in the study consisted of students enrolled in two sections of undergraduate marketing research at a northeastern university. Each sample had the same instructor so teaching style as a moderating variable is controlled. Thirty-one students in the client-sponsored project section completed surveys, while 45 surveys were completed in the SRE group for a total of 76 student participants. This sample size is quite similar to other pedagogical studies examining approaches to class projects (e.g., Adrian and Palmer 1999; Bridges 1999; Cosse, Ashworth, and Weisenberger 1999).

The client-sponsored (PMA) sample of students was comprised of 12 males and 19 females. Four students reported grade point averages in the 2.0 to 2.5 range, ten students reported an average of 2.5 to 3.0, while 12 and five students reported grade point averages in the 3.0 to 3.5 and 3.5 to 4.0 ranges respectively. All of the students were marketing majors.

The sample of students who participated in the SRE project was quite similar and represented by 20 males and 25 females. Six students reported grade point averages in the 2.0 to 2.5 range, 15 students reported an average of 2.5 to 3.0, while 17 and seven students reported grade point averages in the 3.0 to 3.5 and 3.5 to 4.0 ranges respectively. All of these students were marketing majors as well.

Procedure

During the class prior to the final presentations, students were asked to complete a project evaluation survey. Students were told that they were receiving the surveys to be used by the instructor in developing the project for the next semester. They were told that their

TABLE 1
DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Project Perceptions

I thought the research project was (7-point bi-polar scale) (e.g., 1 = nonrealistic to 7 = realistic)
1. Nonrealistic/realistic
2. Not interesting/interesting
3. Not practical/ practical
4. Not enjoyable/Enjoyable
5. Not helpful/Helpful

Project Ratings

My overall rating of the project is (7-point bi-polar scale) (e.g., 1 = bad to 7 = good)
1. Bad/good
2. Unfavorable/favorable
3. Dislike/like
4. Inferior/superior
5. Unsatisfactory/satisfactory

Perceptions of Learning

Likert Items (5-point scale; 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)
1. The project was useful in learning marketing research concepts.
2. I learned a lot from this project.
3. I learned more in this class than other classes because of the project.
4. The project helped me to perform better on exams.

honest, anonymous responses would be beneficial for this purpose. The instructor was not present in the classroom while the surveys were completed; a student volunteer collected the surveys, placed them in an envelope, and delivered them to the instructor's office immediately following the class meeting.

RESULTS

In order to investigate differences between the project formats, four separate MANOVAs were conducted: one for each construct as well as one for the summated measures.

Results from Individual Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Project Perceptions. Corresponding to the first research questions, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate differences in project perceptions. Five dependent variables were used: unrealistic/realistic, not interesting/interesting, impractical/practical, not enjoyable/enjoyable, and not helpful/helpful. The independent variable was project

format. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate, and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance—covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no violations noted. There was no statistically significant difference between the two project formats on the combined dependent variables (F = 1.552, p = .185, Wilks' Lambda = .900; partial eta squared = .100). Similarly, when the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, using the Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .01, there were no significant differences. See Table 2 for the multivariate and univariate results.

Project Ratings. Relative to the second research question, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate differences in project ratings. The five dependent variables here were global evaluations of the project and included: bad/good, unfavorable/favorable, dislike/like, inferior/superior, and unsatisfactory/satisfactory. The independent variable was again project format. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted with no serious violations noted. Similar to project perceptions, there was no statistically significant difference between the two project formats on the combined dependent variables (F = 1.23, p = .304, Wilks'

Lambda = .919; partial eta squared = .081). When the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, using the Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .01, there were again no significant differences. See Table 2 for the multivariate and univariate results relative to project ratings.

Perceptions of Learning. Four dependent variables were used to measure perceptions of learning in the one-way, between-groups MANOVA. These included the following Likert statements measured as 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree: The project was useful in learning marketing research concepts, I learned a lot from this project, I learned more in this class than other classes because of the project, and the project helped me to perform better on exams. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted with no serious violations noted. There was no statistically significant difference between the two project formats on the combined dependent variables (F = 1.38, p = .250, Wilks' Lambda = .928; partial eta squared = .072). Similarly, when the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, using the Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .012, there were no significant differences. See Table 2 for the multivariate and univariate results.

Results from the Summated Scales Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Finally, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate differences in the summated scales for Project Perceptions (α = .79), Project Ratings (α =.94), and Perceptions of Learning (α = .68). Cronbach alpha values are quite sensitive to the number of items in a scale. Scales with less than ten items often have low Cronbach values, however in the case of these scales, the reported reliabilities are acceptable (Pallant 2001).

These three dependent variables and the independent variable of project format were used in the MANOVA. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted with no serious violations noted. Results produced no significant difference (F = 2.638, p = .056, Wilks' Lambda = .901; partial eta squared = .099). Similarly, when the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, using the Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .017, there were no significant differences. See Table 2 for the multivariate and univariate results.

Individual descriptive analyses for each item, as well as the summated scales, are found in Table 3.

Outcome Measures

While not proposed as research questions, the students' grades and course evaluations were examined in order to provide possible validation for the above findings. Using the same grading scale in both classes, the average grade in the client-sponsored class was 3.34, in the A- to B+ range; the average grade in the project class was 3.54, also in the A- to B+ range. Thus, earned grades were quite similar between the two project formats. Similarly, course evaluations, conducted by an outside agency contracted by the university, were similar between the two classes. Students in the client-sponsored class (i.e., PMA) reported an average of 4.48 on the question "I would rate this course as a whole" (5 = excellent; 1 = poor). In the simulated-project class (i.e., SRE), students reported an average of 4.41 on the same question. On the Likert question, "The course increased my knowledge and understanding of the subject" (i.e., marketing research) (anchored by 1 = strongly agree and 4 = strongly disagree), students again reported similar average scores. In the client-sponsored class, an average score of 1.72 was recorded as compared to a 1.88 in the simulated project class. These outcome measures provide validation to the above findings that there appears to be very little difference in students' perceptions and ratings of courses where there is the incorporation of a live case project versus a simulated project.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to investigate differences in students' perceptions pertaining to two experiential project formats – real client format versus a simulated client format. Differences in students' project perceptions, project ratings, and perceptions of learning were investigated. Results of this study suggest that students' perceptions regarding the practical or realistic nature of the project do not differ when a real client is incorporated versus a hypothetical client. It would seem that a real client with a real marketing problem might lead students to feel that the project is more practical, as well as realistic; however, this was not the case. The findings suggested that students did not perceive there to be a significant difference in reality between projects employing simulated clients and those employing actual clients. It is possible that the real-life characteristics of the simulated project influenced students' perceptions of the project, resulting in favorable evaluations. Similar to the live-case approach, the simulated project had marketing issues and implications that were real to any consumer packaged-goods company. Further, there were no statistically significant differences between students' evaluations of the projects, suggesting that students similarly "like" each project format. The realistic/simulated nature of the project does not impact student ratings.

Live case research projects are often used in marketing courses to provide students with the opportunity to use or experience learned concepts; which ultimately enhances the overall learning process. The findings of this study add to the body of evidence that students believe they

TABLE 2
MANOVA RESULTS
COMPARISON OF PROJECT PERCEPTIONS, RATINGS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING BY PROJECT FORMAT

	Univariate F-Ratio	df	p
Project Perceptions			
Nonrealistic/realistic	.410	1	.524
Not interesting/interesting	.103	1	.749
Not practical/ practical	1.05	1	.309
Not enjoyable/Enjoyable	3.66	1	.060
Not helpful/Helpful	.216	1	.643
(F = 1.552, p = .185, Wilks' Lambda = .900; partial eta squared = .100)			
Project Ratings			
Bad/good	4.27	1	.042
Unfavorable/favorable	4.82	1	.031
Dislike/like	4.56	1	.036
Inferior/superior	5.16	1	.026
Unsatisfactory/satisfactory	2.86	1	.095
(F = 1.23, p = .304, Wilks' Lambda = .919; partial eta squared = .081)			
Perceptions of Learning			
I learned a lot …	4.69	1	.034
I learned more…	3.00	1	.087
The project was useful…	.795	1	.376
The project helped me…	1.23	1	.271
(F = 1.38, p = .250, Wilks' Lambda = .928; partial eta squared = .072)			
Summated Measures			
Project Perceptions	.629	1	.430
Project Ratings	5.38	1	.023
Perceptions of Learning	4.56	1	.036
(F = 2.64, p = .056, Wilks' Lambda = .901; partial eta squared = .099)			

learn a lot from live projects. Interestingly, however, is that student perceptions of learning in the live case condition do not significantly differ from perceptions of learning in the simulated condition. Students in both conditions – live case and simulated – perceived the experiential projects to be effective in helping them to learn about marketing research and to perform better on exams. As compared to other courses, students in both conditions also deemed the project to be more helpful in their learning. That no significant differences were found between the simulated and live case conditions is meaningful. It points to the parity of both types of experiential project

formats and is a testament to the effectiveness of experiential projects – whether real or simulated – in student perceptions of learning.

Future Research

The findings from this research raise several questions to be further addressed. We limit our discussion to two important areas – the need to further investigate the effect of project format using other dependent variables and the need for replication.

One area beneficial to further explore, is the effect of

TABLE 3
DEPENDENT VARIABLE MEANS: PROJECT PERCEPTIONS, RATINGS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING BY PROJECT FORMAT

	Client Sponsored		Simulation	
	Mean Deviation	Standard	Mean Deviation	Standard
Project Perceptions				
Nonrealistic/realistic	5.90	1.27	5.69	1.54
Not interesting/interesting	5.61	1.54	5.71	1.12
Not practical/ practical	5.65	1.25	5.31	1.49
Not enjoyable/Enjoyable	5.10	1.40	4.44	1.50
Not helpful/Helpful	6.10	1.58	6.24	1.19
Project Ratings				
Bad/good	6.32	.791	5.84	1.11
Unfavorable/favorable	5.97	.795	5.42	1.22
Dislike/like	5.97	1.02	5.36	1.35
Inferior/superior	5.81	1.05	5.24	1.07
Unsatisfactory/satisfactory	6.03	1.08	5.58	1.20
Perceptions of Learning				
I learned a lot …	4.71	.461	4.31	.949
I learned more…	4.16	.934	3.76	1.05
The project was useful…	4.74	.445	4.64	.484
The project helped me…	3.84	.860	3.60	.963
Summated Measures				
Project Perceptions	28.35	5.02	27.40	5.25
Project Ratings	30.10	4.13	27.44	5.36
Perceptions of Learning	17.45	2.08	16.31	2.42

different project formats on students' skill development. That is, does one experiential project format serve to more fully develop certain important skills over the other? For example, instructors may believe that when students interact with an actual client and work to solve or provide recommendations on an actual marketing problem, students build important business skills (e.g., interpersonal, communication, problem-solving) and by addressing real-life issues, other considerations become more tangible (e.g., ethical considerations). Certainly, understanding the impact of project format on student skill development would be a worthwhile avenue warranting further investigation.

There is also a need to replicate this study. The results reported here, while important, are limited by the relatively small size of the sample. As noted earlier, data in the present study were drawn from two classes; while common in marketing education research, the sample is small, nonetheless. Setting up an experiment similar to the one reported in which the researchers were able to control many external variables does present a methodological challenge. However, additional research into this area would help to further knowledge of this important question and help to further enhance student learning. It would thus be beneficial for this study to be replicated.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

Many marketing educators incorporate experiential marketing projects in their undergraduate marketing classes because they believe these projects are beneficial. However, the degree and impact of the experiential project's reality have not been previously investigated. The present study extends the experiential learning stream of research touting the value of experiential projects by suggesting that the *perception of reality* of the project is something that can be achieved by a real client or with a simulated approach. Both techniques are effective in providing students with a perceived feeling of reality, favorable evaluations, and enhanced perceptions of learning.

The integration of *real* client-sponsored projects requires great dedication, coordination, resources, and a time-commitment on the part of the instructor and students. In addition, the potential for problems exists when students who have differing priorities and levels of responsibility leave the instructor to personally ensure the client project is sufficiently complete. The results of this research suggest that live case projects are well worth the time and money; however, this research also suggests that the same benefit can be achieved with simulated experiences as indicated by students' perceptions of the project, their liking for the project overall, and enhanced perceptions of learning.

Thus, in situations where marketing instructors cannot identify a suitable client for a sponsored class project, the use of a simulated project that deals with real life marketing issues may be just as effective in creating favorable project perceptions and ratings. Lamont and Friedman (1997) state motivating faculty to change their curriculum as the highest challenge facing undergraduate marketing education. Furthermore, Granitz (2001) states that marketing students are quite concerned about the "meaning" in their curriculum. The current research suggests that with these challenges, marketing educators have different approaches to choose from in order to provide this meaningful experience. If marketing educators have been reluctant to change their curriculum to incorporate experiential projects because they believe the project has to be "live," the results presented here suggest that the simulated approach is similarly effective. It is hoped that these results will urge instructors to move toward these experiential techniques making marketing students' education as meaningful as possible.

REFERENCES

Adrian, C. Mitchell and G. Dean Palmer (1999), "Toward a Model for Understanding and Improving Educational Quality in the Principles of Marketing Course," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 21 (April), 25–33.

Bobbitt, L. Michelle, Scott A. Inks, Katie J. Kemp, and Donna T. Mayo (2000), "Integrating Marketing Courses to Enhance Team-Based Experiential Learning," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 22 (April), 15–24.

Bridges, Eileen (1999), "Experiential Learning and Customer Needs in the Undergraduate Marketing Research Course," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 21 (April), 51–59.

Bruner, Gordon C. II and Paul J. Hensel (1992), *Marketing Scales Handbook: A Compilation of Multi-Item Measures.* Chicago: American Marketing Association.

Chapman, Kennith J. and Stuart Van Auken (2001), "Creating Positive Group Project Experiences: An Examination of the Role of the Instructor on Students' Perceptions of Group Projects," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 23 (August), 117–27.

Cosse, Thomas J., D. Neil Ashworth, and Terry M. Weisenberger (1999), "The Effects of Team Size in a Marketing Simulation," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice,* (Summer), 98–106.

Dabbour, Katherine Strobes (1997), "Applying Active Learning Methods to the Design of Library Instruction for a Freshman Seminar," *College and Research Libraries,* 58 (July), 299–308.

Dean, Michael L (1982), "Conducting a Business College Image Study through a Marketing Research Class Project," *Journal of Marketing Education,* (Spring), 42–46.

De los Santos, Gilberto and Thomas D. Jensen (1985), "Client-Sponsored Projects: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice," *Journal of Marketing Education,* (Summer), 42–46.

Dommeyer, Curt J. (1986), "A Comparison of the Individual Proposal and the Team Project in the Marketing Research Course," *Journal of Marketing Education,* (Spring), 30–38.

Drafke, Michael W., Denise D. Schoenbachler, and Geoffrey L. Gordon (1996), "Active and Passive Teaching Methodologies: Student Outcomes Over a Semester Course," *Marketing Education Review,* 6 (Spring), 9–17.

Fritzsche, David J. and Alvin C. Burns (2001), "The Role of ASBEL in the Development of Marketing Simulations in Collegiate Education," *Simulation and Gaming,* 32 (March), 85–96.

Goretsky, Edward M. (1984), "Class Projects as a Form of Instruction," *Journal of Marketing Education,* (Fall), 33–37.

Graeff, Timothy R. (1997), "Bringing Reflective Learning to the Marketing Research Course: A Cooperative Learning Project Using Intergroup Critique," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 19 (Spring), 53–64.

Granitz, Neil (2001), "Active Learning and Morality: Incorporating Greater Meaning into Marketing Education," *Marketing Education Review,* 11 (2), 25–42.

Gruca, Thomas S. (2000), "The IEM Movie Box Office Market: Integrating Marketing and Finance Using Electronic Markets," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 22 (April), 5–14.

Hamer, Lawrence O. (2000), "The Additive Effects of Semi-Structured Classroom Activities on Student Learning: An Application of Classroom-Based Experiential Learning Techniques," *Journal of Market-*

ing Education, 22 (April), 25–34.

Humphreys, Marie Adele (1981), "Client-Sponsored Projects in a Marketing Research Course," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 3 (November), 7–12.

Kolb, David (1984), *Experiential Learning.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

LaMont, Lawrence M. and Ken Friedman (1997), "Meeting the Challenges of Undergraduate Marketing Education," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 19 (Fall), 17–31.

Malhotra, Naresh K., Armen Tashchian, and Essam Mahmoud (1987), "The Integration of Microcomputers in Marketing Research and Decision-Making," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 15, 69–82.

_____, Armen Taschian, and Arun K. Jain (1989), "The Project Method Approach: An Integrated Teaching Tool in Marketing Research," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 11 (Summer), 32–40.

Mason, C.H. and William Perreault (1995), *Marketing Game.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

McCain, Gary and Douglas J. Lincoln (1982), "Choice Criteria Model for Selecting Live-Case Marketing Research Class Projects," *Journal of Marketing Education,* (Fall), 47–53.

McDaniel, Stephen W. (1984), "The Client-Sponsored Project: Its Benefit in Teaching Marketing Research," in *1984 AMA Educators' Proceedings,* Russell W. Belk et al. eds. Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association, 106–9.

Nofz, Michael P (1990), "The Classroom and the 'Real World' – Are they Worlds Apart?" *Teaching Forum,* 12 (1), 1–3.

O'Hara, Bradley S. and Terri Root Shaffer (1995), "Details and Student Perceptions of an Experiential Program for Personal Selling and Purchasing Classes," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 17 (1), 41–49.

Pallant, Julie (2001), SPSS Survival Manual: A Step By Step Guide to Data Analysis Using SPSS for Windows (Version 10). London: Open University Press

Perry, Nancy Walker, Matthew T. Huss, Bradley D. McAuliff, and Julie M. Galas (1996), "An Active-Learning Approach to Teaching the Undergraduate Psychology and Law Course," *Teaching of Psychology,* 23 (April), 76–81.

Petkus, Edward (2000), "A Theoretical and Practical Framework for Service-Learning in Marketing: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 22 (April), 64–70.

Ramocki, Stephen P. (1987), "Measured Effectiveness of Client-Sponsored Consulting Projects in the Marketing Research Course," *Journal of Marketing Education,* (Spring), 24–30.

Richardson, Neil and Sion Raveed (1980), "A Live-Case Program Form Teaching Marketing Research," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 3 (Spring), 38–42.

Schibrowsky, John A. and James W. Peltier (1995), "The Dark Side of Experiential Learning," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 17 (1), 13–24.

Smart, Denise T., Craig A. Kelley, and Jeffrey S. Conant (1999), "Marketing Education in the Year 2000: Changes Observed and Challenges Anticipated," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 21 (December), 206–16.

Specht, Pamela Hammers (1985), "Experiential Learning-Based vs. Lecture-based Discussion: The Impact of Degree of Participation and Student Characteristics on Comprehension and Retention," *Journal of Business Education,* 60 (April), 283–87.

Stern, Bruce L. and L.P. Douglas Tseng (2002), "Do Academics and Practitioners Agree on What and How to Teach the Undergraduate Marketing Research Course?" *Journal of Marketing Education,* 24 (December), 225–32.

Wynd, William R. (1989), "An Experiential Approach to Marketing Education," *Journal of Marketing Education,* 11 (Summer), 64–71.