

Teaching Innovations in Retailing Education

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Innovating the Retail Curriculum for Future Careers in Retail

Digital technologies have spurred a rapid pace of innovation in the retail industry redefining the role retail employees and physical stores play to succeed in the hypercompetitive marketplace. Retail education plays an important role in providing of entry- and managerial-level career opportunities to marketing students. However retailing curriculum needs to be reinvented to develop strategic, analytical and methodological skills as early career employees are increasingly expected to take responsibility for tactical decisions including pricing, product assortment, store positioning to effectively compete locally instead of simply following orders from the central or corporate office. Career opportunities in retailing include positions in merchandising/buying, inventory management, store management, and several marketing-oriented careers such as advertising, public relations, e-commerce, and supply chain management.

This special issue is aimed to invigorate retail pedagogy within the community of marketing instructors. Five original articles are presented in this special issue and they provide a good overview of ongoing research in the field. The first two papers examine innovations in teaching retail environment or atmospherics from two perspectives, creating a “sense of normalcy” in serving disabled shoppers (*A Teaching Innovation on Retail Environmental Design for Consumers with Disabilities*) and the use of photographic narrative inquiry as a teaching method in differentiating diverse functions of retail atmospherics (*Pictures are Worth a Thousand Words: Utilizing Photographic Narrative Inquiry to Identify Retail Atmospherics*). These papers highlight the importance of retail students developing skills to redefining the role of a physical store in shopper journey especially for multichannel retailers that are increasingly under threat from pure-play online retailers.

The next two papers on mathematical problem-solving examine student preference for procedural (formula-driven) versus conceptual (concept-driven) approaches to solve mathematical problems (*Give Me a Formula Not the Concept! Student Preference to Mathematical Problem Solving*) and transferring knowledge of concepts like price elasticity to non-price contexts (*Price Elasticity Concept in Pricing and Non-Pricing Contexts*). Most importantly, inducing critical thinking in learning qualitative and quantitative concepts through innovative teaching techniques like journaling, the topic of the fifth paper in this issue

(*Using Journaling to Enhance Learning and Critical Thinking in a Retailing Course*) is critical for students to apply in class and later in career as students interested in a career in retail enter an industry that is fraught with disruption and uncertainty.

All the papers in this special issue provide an assessment tool that validates the results presented by the authors. The papers in this issue deals with a variety of retail concepts (e.g., pricing, visual merchandising) as well as teaching techniques (e.g., journaling, cognitive walkthroughs). We hope that the papers selected for this special issue will provide a guideline to enrich your current retail-related courses or inspire you to create new retail course. The following section provides a snapshot of the papers selected for this special issue.

A Teaching Innovation on Retail Environmental Design for Consumers with Disabilities

An underserved consumer segment in United States are those with disabilities whose needs may not be adequately addressed in a retail shopping environment. Typically, retail textbooks provide minimal information to students about the importance of this consumer segment to the retail industry. In this article, Lin, Jones, and Vijayalakshmi address the gap identified in current retailing textbooks about the needs of disabled consumers. The authors propose a class project that teaches students to not only consider the legal and profit benefits of the firm, but also the inclusion and sense of normalcy for a disabled consumer.

Pictures are Worth a Thousand Words: Utilizing Photographic Narrative Inquiry to Identify Retail Atmospherics

Store design, atmospherics, and visual merchandising are critical to the success of brick-and-mortar retailers, especially today, as there is an intense pressure for store-based retailers to provide a unique experience through visual merchandising. When taught via traditional lecturing, certain visual merchandising concepts may not be conveyed effectively to students. In this article, Lee and Sergueeva propose a novel experiential concept to teach retail atmospherics and visual merchandising that requires students to visit a retail store, take notes, pictures, and synthesize information into a short essay while using the

concepts/theories related to retail atmospherics. The authors' assessment of student evaluations concludes that students had a favorable impression toward this assignment and they felt that the exercise met the learning objectives.

Give Me a Formula, Not the Concept! Student Preference to Mathematical Problem Solving

Quantitative and analytical skills are sought after by future employers and is especially important for marketing students seeking employment within the retail industry as a buyer and/or an analyst. With a heightened demand, marketing instructors are constantly seeking new methodologies to effectively teach mathematical concepts to students. In their article, Mann and Enderson propose an experimental design to evaluate the difference in student performance between formula-driven versus concept-driven approaches to solve mathematical problems in a retail course. Their experiment provides guidance to marketing educators to effectively teach mathematics using both procedural and conceptual approach.

Price Elasticity Concept in Pricing and Non-Pricing Contexts: Learning Activity

Pricing strategy is an integral part of any retail organization and are developed based on consumer's

price sensitivity. In Makienko's article, the author describes a pricing activity that transform students into active learners by soliciting their ideas about the application of the elasticity concept in a variety of non-pricing contexts. The author presents an empirical assessment that validates the activity to be useful in deepening students' understanding of the price elasticity concept and increases their confidence in applying this concept in a variety of non-pricing contexts.

Using Journaling to Enhance Learning and Critical Thinking in a Retailing Course

The business environment today is saturated with information and data from multiple sources. It is especially important for marketing educators to disseminate critical thinking skills to students so that they can effectively navigate this information overload. Journaling has been addressed as a way to enhance critical thinking in marketing and management courses but this article by Stanton and Stanton incorporates the use of learning journals in a retail course. The authors describe the journaling process assigned to the students, the challenges faced by the students, and the success of the journaling process as evidenced by exam grades.