# IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING FUNDAMENTAL COMPETENCIES OF DIRECT AND INTERACTIVE MARKETING

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## ABSTRACT

*A paradigm shift has occurred in marketing, fueled by the growth of Internet and database technologies. The purpose of this study is to (1) identify the fundamental competencies needed by those entering the changing field of marketing, and (2) develop a standardized examination to measure these competencies. This work discusses the results of a comprehensive examination administered to 114 students at a large university with a Direct and Interactive marketing program. The data indicates that certain basic competencies can be identified and tested, including: email, ROI, retention, and CRM, but more advanced techniques of customer life value metric and opt-in/opt-out strategies were found to be pivotal.*

## INTRODUCTION

The growth of recently published pedagogical work in direct and interactive marketing suggests a rise in interest in these areas among marketing educators (e.g., Dodor and Rana 2009; Rosso et al. 2009; Teer, Teer, and Kruck 2007). The advancement of the Internet and customer relationship management technologies, the need for better accountability of marketing budgets, as well as the increasing use of multichannel marketing are just some of the areas of scrutiny (Harridge-March 2008). The domain of direct and interactive marketing is complex given the needs of today's firms. For instance, customer addressability, database management, one-to-one communication, and measurability may need to be simultaneously adjusted by the marketing department in order to reach organizational goals.

Practitioners and scholars agree a paradigm shift is underway, fueled by the growth of numerous direct and interactive marketing techniques (e.g., Malthouse and Shankar 2009; AACSB 2007; Rust and Oliver 1994). The increase of relevant literature indicates researchers acknowledge the importance of this paradigm shift and are attempting to maintain "curriculum currency" to prepare students for the challenges and issues they will confront in their careers (Demoss and Nicholson 2005). Whereas direct marketing competencies involve addressing the individual specifically, interactive competencies also involve remembering what the customer said so as to include relevant messages in the next communication or interaction with that customer (Deighton 1996).

Supporting this paradigm shift, the coverage of direct and interactive marketing concepts in textbooks supporting numerous course areas has grown substantially over the past decade. This trend is important considering in 2009, marketers spent $150 billion on direct marketing efforts (Direct Marketing Association 2009). Yet surprisingly, less than 15 percent of universities offer courses in direct or interactive marketing and less than 2 percent offer related degrees, majors, or concentrations (Scovotti and Spiller 2006). The Direct Marketing Educational Foundation (DMEF) lists 182 US-based universities and colleges that have at least one dedicated course on the topic, but only 47 that offer undergraduate and graduate degrees, certifications and specializations within related majors (DMEF 2011). While the increase of related pedagogical literature suggests a growing interest, there appears to be a disparity when it comes to actual curriculum design and delivery. Although interested in these disciplines, educators appear to struggle with which direct and interactive marketing core competencies to address in their marketing curricula.

In their work on integrating direct and interactive marketing content into introductory marketing courses, Spiller and Scovotti (2008) identified 25 topics that were classified as highly related to direct and interactive marketing. However, given Spiller and Scovotti's focus on introductory marketing courses, their review is less than comprehensive. Additionally, while these authors suggested ways to integrate related content into existing courses, no means of assessment were considered. Given the growing pressures to demonstrate the effectiveness of academic programs and curricular relevancy, consider-

ation of assessment mechanism is vital (Nicholson, Barnett, and Dascher 2005; Sampson and Betters-Reed 2008). Therefore, this study fills a much-needed gap in the literature by focusing on the fundamental competencies that are needed to teach direct marketing in today's rapidly changing marketing environment. Rather than focus on introductory marketing courses, this study focuses on curriculum designed for existing and prospective direct and interactive marketing professionals. The purpose of this study is to identify the fundamental competencies needed by direct marketing professionals as well as develop a standardized examination to measure these competencies.

Accomplishing these research objectives requires a review of literature from both marketing education and direct marketing, but also the development of a conceptual model of the direct marketing process. Results from the literature review are integrated with findings from a content analysis of direct marketing textbooks, courses, degrees, and certification programs to identify common elements of knowledge. Finally, a methodology adapted from the testing field to create a first effort at a standardized examination of direct marketing competencies is explained. This method involves using a Principal Components Analysis of common factors among questions to identify competency areas. While there are certain limitations of the study, the results are promising and indicate opportunities for future research in the areas of direct and interactive marketing competency testing.

Although exploratory in nature, this study serves both practitioners and scholars in several ways. For the practitioner, the identification of specific competencies and the creation of a standardized examination could provide credence and credibility to those working in the field. Standardized competency tests have long served to measure the knowledge, values, and skill base of individuals interested in pursuing careers in medicine, law, accounting, engineering, and other professions (Smith 2004). These tests help to insure an acceptable level of professionalism is maintained and the public is protected from imposters, con artists, and incompetents (Chonko 2004).

For employers who need to fill positions requiring direct and interactive marketing knowledge and skills, a competency examination provides a way to increase confidence in applicant proficiency. A competency examination would allow those pursuing careers in direct and interactive marketing to understand the scope of the field and how the elements interact. For the scholar, a standardized examination would serve as a guide for future course, program and textbook content and also guide research efforts. Given the increased attention on assessment, having a standardized mechanism to measure student learning would benefit educational institution accreditation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

### Identifying Core Direct and Interactive Marketing Competencies

Determining competencies required within any discipline is a highly interactive and iterative process. Perry (1982) defined competencies as the skills, abilities, and knowledge a person needs to be an effective worker. Bradley (1987) suggested that input from both practitioners and scholars are required to determine which items are critical for ones success in a job function and which are peripheral.

A logical starting point to identify competencies is the definition of key terminology. Direct and interactive marketing is defined as ". . . a data-driven, interactive process of directly communicating with targeted customers or prospects using any medium to obtain a measurable response or transaction via one or multiple channels" (Scovotti and Spiller 2006, p.199). This definition suggests the key competencies of a direct marketing professional include an understanding of database technology; principles of Customer Relationship Management (CRM); a media component; a channel component; importance of targeting and segmentation; use of metrics; the creative aspects of bi-directional communication; and creation of offer.

As would be expected, a review of textbooks, course and program syllabi indicate there are even a broader variety of topics beyond those mentioned in the definition that the direct marketer must know. Table 1 identifies the major topics found in a content analysis of direct marketing textbooks.

Also included in Table 1 is a list of terms discovered through curriculum offerings from two professional organizations. The Institute for Direct Marketing offers a certificate program in direct and interactive marketing (IDM 2011), while the Chicago Association of Direct Marketing has provided a basic direct marketing course curriculum for years (CADM 2005). In addition, the curriculum and glossary from a certificate program from a private university was used to determine if there were any unidentified competencies. The results from these multiple sources provided us with a basis on which to identify core direct marketing competencies.

### Creating the Conceptual Model of Direct and Interactive Marketing

The preceding discussion illustrates the scope of activities encompassed in direct and interactive marketing from the scholarly, teaching and practitioner perspectives. While scope is important, so too is the depth of understanding within each area of competency. Figure 1

**TABLE 1**
**SOURCES OF DIRECT MARKETING EXPERTISE**

| | Analysis/Math | Back-End Marketing | Basics of Direct Marketing | Broadcast Media | B-to-B Marketing | Catalogs | Co-ops | Copywriting | Creative | CRM | Databases | Direct Mail | E-Mail | Fulfillment | International Direct Marketing | Internet | Mailing Lists | Modeling | Offer | Planning/Strategy | Print Media | Regulatory Environment/Legal | Research | Telemarketing | Testing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hatch & Jackson 1998 | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| CADM 2005 | X | | | X | | | | | X | | X | X | | | | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | |
| Spiller & Baier 2004 | | X | X | X | X | | | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | | X | X | X | X | |
| Thomas & Matthew 2002 | X | | X | X | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | X | X | | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| Nash 2000 | X | X | X | X | X | | | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| Geller 2002 | X | | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Duncan 2001 | | | | | | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | | | X | X | X | X | | | | | X | |
| Stone & Jacobs 2001 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Bly 2002 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X |
| IDM 2005 | X | | X | X | X | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Definition 2006 | X | | | X | | X | | X | X | X | X | | X | X | | X | | | X | | X | | X | X | X |

provides a conceptual model of direct and interactive marketing, incorporating the sequence of functions to perform within the fundamental competencies. The exterior box of the figure indicates the environmental factors that specifically impact direct marketing campaigns. These include (but are not limited to) legislative and regulatory issues like data privacy, do not call registries, CAN SPAM legislation, etc., (e.g., Cain 2005); technological issues like developments in electronic media, databases, telecommunications technology, etc. (e.g., Coviello, Milley, and Marcolin 2001); competitive issues like the influx of international players, changes as a result of the Internet, etc. (e.g., Chen and Iyers 2002); societal concerns like junk mail, anthrax scares, threat of identity loss, etc. (e.g.,

Fadairo 2006); and the impact of the economy on direct marketing effectiveness (e.g., Dipasquale 2002).

As indicated in Figure 1, with the direct approach, the channel generally consists of two players: the organization and the customer. The top series of boxes represents the stages of customer lifecycle that occur over time from prospect to new customer to established customer. The organization varies its interaction with the customer depending on the type and point in time of the relationship. The gray arrows represent the flow of communication and events between customer and organization. As Figure 1 illustrates, campaigns that emanate from the organization touch the customer. The customer's response (or lack thereof) returns to the organization. This measurable

**FIGURE 1**
**CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE DIRECT MARKETING PROCESS**
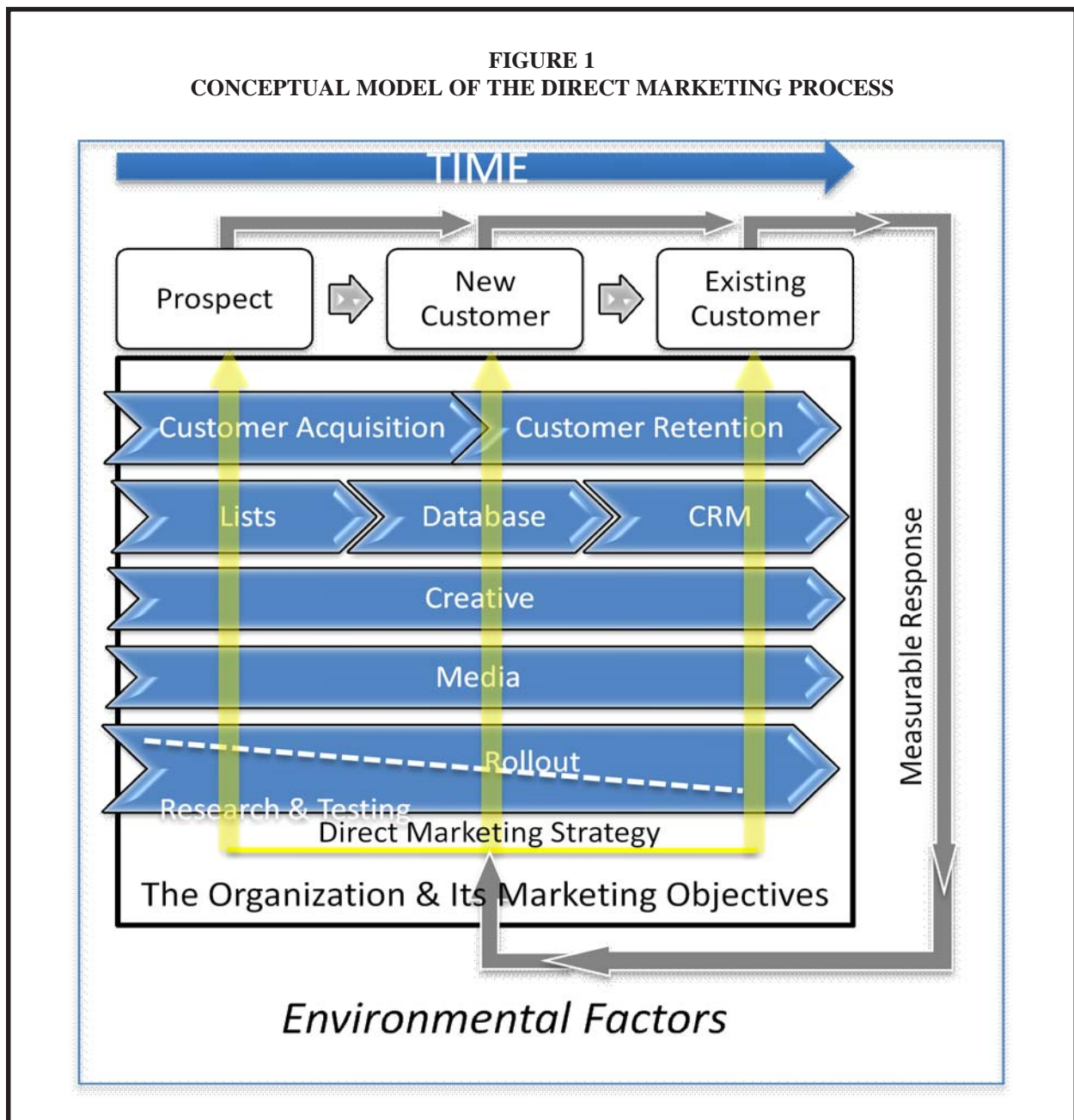
response, which generally occurs quite quickly, is the feedback used by the organization to base future marketing decisions. Higher order strategic decisions are listed toward the top of the boxes, with Customer Acquisition, Retention, Lists, Database, and CRM being considered the most critical direct marketing decisions.

The more heavily outlined box indicates what occurs inside the organization, namely strategy, research and testing, rollout, media, and creative decisions. Also internal to the organization is the selection of lists, the creation of databases and management of customer relationships. The organization also generally implements different applications, those designed for customer acquisition and those for customer retention. The three gray arrows that run through the all the elements decided upon by the company represent how the feedback from the prospect, new customer, or existing customer impacts strategic and tactical decisions. Thus, the communications loop is closed.

Recent trends in business have called for marketing efforts to be more accountable, with tangible metrics to track the value of customers (Gupta, Lehmann and Stuart 2004). Similarly, the foundation of direct marketing strategy rests on its measurability and the fact that direct marketing is data driven and produces measurable results (Bliwas and Greco 2005). However, several fundamental differences between direct and traditional marketing strategy have been identified. In direct marketing, the purpose of a campaign is to generate an immediately measurable response. The length of a particular campaign is generally short but part of long term relationship building with the customer. The purpose of traditional marketing is to create image and generate awareness in the hopes of triggering some future behavior. The marketer is even more separated from the customer and specific campaigns run significantly longer (Peltier, Kleimenhagen, and Naidu 1994).

The role of testing and research is to provide information and guidance to help marketers make sound decisions. Every element of a direct marketing campaign has the capability of being isolated and tested, with results able to be accurately analyzed. The literature is replete with examples of testing of lists (e.g., Berry and Rowson 2005), segmentation options (e.g., Young 2002), creative approaches for customer acquisition and customer retention (e.g., Aspinall, Nancarrow, and Stone 2001), media (e.g., Naik and Raman 2003) and ways of measuring the value of long term relationships with customers (e.g., Gupta, Lehmann, and Stuart 2004). Spiller and Baier (2005) suggest that all direct marketing activities are research-oriented as results are quickly measurable and thus, may be adapted given market conditions. The dotted diagonal line between research and testing, and rollout suggests that testing is done throughout the entire process with the most successful tests rolling out on either a longer or more wide-spread basis.

## METHOD AND RESULTS

To meet our objective to identify and test the direct marketing competencies as outlined in Figure 1 and Table 1 and to determine which competencies most distinguish knowledge of direct and interactive marketing, a multiple choice examination was developed. This evaluation, as noted above, was designed to test identified competencies and spanned a variety of tools, techniques and competencies, including lists, databases, and various forms of media (including new media).

Some of the items had been previously tested by the lead author in the classroom setting in direct marketing courses at a Midwestern University which has an area of study in Interactive Marketing. The area of study includes direct, internet, database, IMC and marketing technology as its core courses and the direct marketing course itself has a strong internet or interactive component. Some of the items were developed from glossaries and resource materials in the direct marketing area. Still other items were identified from a practitioner developed assessment used in a training program of a large database firm.

The complete 75-question test that drew from the richness of the conceptual model and the literature supporting it was developed and was comprised of 13 areas. The examination areas and representative question topics were defined as noted in Table 4.

### Sample Selection

The full 75-question exam was give to 114 undergraduate students at a large public Midwestern University in the United States. All of the students were enrolled in direct marketing classes during a recent academic year and were given the multiple choice examination at the beginning of the semester. This 75-question examination for the undergraduate sample included some of the newer, interactive components of direct marketing, such as email marketing. In addition, 109 of those same undergraduates were given the same examination at the end of the semester. The students were for the most part ages 20-21 and typical of the traditional undergraduate population.

The two groups of students who took the pretest, a total of 114 from the Spring and Fall semesters, were not significantly different in their overall scores or individual item scores, so the data could be pooled for analysis. Interestingly, the students who took the pretest and the post-test did significantly improve their scores and the difference was statistically significant. The average pretest score for all students was twenty percent lower than the average score for those taking the post-test.

### Analysis of the Undergraduate Sample

Test scores for the undergraduate tests were recoded to the unity value if the correct answer was given so that

**TABLE 4**
**INITIAL COMPETENCY CATEGORIES FOR EXAM**

| | Competency | Elements |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Copy writing/Creative | Attributes vs. Benefits, 'Lift Letter,' 'Buck Slip,' BRE |
| 2 | **CRM Principles** | **Not all segments are equal, retain customers, CRM continuum (research, branding, etc.), Up Sell, Cross Sell, 80/20 rule (Pareto Principle), Attract, Acquire, Retain** |
| 3 | Direct vs. Mass Marketing | Addressable vs. Mass, Increasing market segmentation, Affinity marketing |
| 4 | Database | Interrelated, Multiple applications, Internal, External, Modeled, Database Development, Claritas.com, Data append, Database marketing |
| 5 | **Email** | **Delivery rates, Open rates, Conversion rates, Hard bound, Undeliverable, Soft bounce, Click thru rate, Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003 (CAN SPAM)** |
| 6 | Internet | Landing page, Impressions |
| 7 | Lists | House lists, Compiled, Response, List owners, Managers, Brokers, Users, CPM, Decoy, Nixie |
| 8 | **Metrics** | **Lifetime value, Identify key prospects, Simple break even, Gross response rate, Net response rate, Scoring models, Conversion rate, 'Lift'** |
| 9 | Marketing Research | Primary vs. Secondary, Focus groups |
| 10 | Segmentation | Geographic, Demographic, Lifestyle, Clustering |
| 11 | SIC vs. NAICs Codes | Number of digits |
| 12 | Testing | Control (typical mistake), Why do we test? (accurate picture of customer behavior) |
| 13 | Telemarketing | Call center, Inbound vs. Outbound |

the scores could be analyzed and compared (McDonald 1999). A Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was conducted to determine if the posited categories for direct marketing competencies could be supported empirically. Several different rotations were examined. A Quartimax Rotation, an orthogonal rotational criterion which maximizes the variance of the rows of a factor matrix, thus creating a result where each variable has a high loading on one factor and near zero loadings on the remaining factors, worked best for these data (Sharma 1996).

The cutoff for inclusion in the analysis was .4 for individual item factor loadings as this was exploratory data (Hair 1979, pp. 231-239; Nunnally 1978, pp. 245–246) and 1 for factor Eigenvalues. This exploratory factor analysis reported here demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity at the item and construct level. The constructs each load on separate factors, with each factor explaining more than 5.0 percent of the variance in the data. The majority of the scales met the scale reliability criteria of Cronbach's a > .6 for exploratory research (Hair 1979, pp. 231–239; Nunnally 1967, p. 226, 1978, pp. 245–246).

When the complete examination was analyzed through the PCA, several different categories of competency emerged and more categories than we had thought going in to the study. Preliminary results validated the prevailing view from the review of academic, teaching and practitioner sources that the direct marketing competency area was extremely complex. Because of the ratio of test items to subjects in the sample was low (< 2), we eliminated a number of questions with small Eigenvalues and contribution to explaining variance and sought to identify a small number of test items that might determine what distinguishes a person knowledgeable in direct marketing from one who is less knowledgeable. Table 2 illustrates the eight factors as a result of performing a PCA on the

**TABLE 2**
**UNDERGRAD PRE-TEST, N=114, ITEMS=22**

| Test item | Email | ROI | Measure | CLV | CRM | Email response | CTR | Retention |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| q66cpm | | 0.58 | | | | | | |
| q42grossresponse | | 0.78 | | | | | | |
| q43netresponse | | 0.77 | | | | | | |
| q49profitsupcross | | 0.49 | | | | | | |
| q16optout | | | | | | | | 0.69 |
| q28customervalue | | | | | | | | 0.67 |
| q2emailformats | | | | | | | | 0.42 |
| q17optin | 0.56 | | | | | | | |
| q45resell | 0.64 | | | | | | | |
| q70Retentionstrat | 0.81 | | | | | | | |
| q15pageviews | | | 0.61 | | | | | |
| q10sharemarket | | | 0.75 | | | | | |
| q11sharwallet | | | 0.71 | | | | | |
| q67crossselldef | | | | 0.69 | | | | |
| q69CLV | | | | 0.41 | | | | |
| q33touchpoint | | | | 0.70 | | | | |
| q54paretoprinc | | | | | 0.56 | | | |
| q41profitfixedcost | | | | | 0.71 | | | |
| q48lifetimevalue | | | | | 0.67 | | | |
| q3emailresponse | | | | | | 0.76 | | |
| q5emailspam | | | | | | 0.83 | | |
| q61Click-Through | | | | | | | 0.75 | |
| **Eigenvalues > 1.05** | 3.01 | 2.04 | 1.71 | 1.66 | 1.47 | 1.30 | 1.22 | 1.14 |
| **Percent of Variance Explained** | 13.70 | 9.29 | 7.79 | 7.57 | 6.70 | 5.90 | 5.53 | 5.18 |
| **Cumulative Total Variance** | 13.70 | 22.99 | 30.78 | 38.34 | 45.04 | 50.95 | 56.48 | 61.66 |
| **Coefficient alpha (reliability)** | **.60** | **0.62** | **0.60** | **.60** | **0.43** | **.60** | **n/a** | **0.33** |
| **Inter-item correlations, 2 item factors** | | | | | | **0.40** | | |

pre-test data from 114 undergraduates. These factors were knowledge of Email Marketing, ROI, Measurement, Customer Lifetime Value, CRM, Email Response Rate, Click-Thru Rate and Retention strategies. Twenty-two items were sufficient to determine a direct marketing competency in this sample; these items are noted in Table 2 with the question number indicated first and then a brief description of the item. For example, q33touchpoint indicates that question 33 was about understanding the use of customer touch points. Coefficient alphas for these items were somewhat low, even for test data standards, which perhaps explain why the factors were not completely validated in the post-test analysis.

In the post-test sample of 109 undergraduates (Table 3), six factors were identified using the same selection criteria as the sample of 114 students. Selection criteria for items were again .4 or above, Eigenvalues were greater than 1 and the percent of variance in the data explained was at least 5 percent. While many of the factors loaded together as before, on this sample of the same

students who had taken a semester-long course in direct marketing, six factors comprised of 21 questions sufficed to distinguish those who demonstrated competency. Email, ROI, Retention and CRM were consistent categories from the pre-test to the post-test. Knowledge of Opt-In/Opt-Out strategies and specific Customer Lifetime Value metrics relating to response rate. Up-sell and cross-sell categories emerged from the analysis.

## DISCUSSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this research indicate that, as suspected, direct marketing is a complex field that covers many competency areas. In spite of this complexity, progress can be made in testing for certain areas in the academic and industry setting and the results of standardized testing appear promising. For years the Direct Marketing Association has made efforts to train professors to teach in the area and help colleges and universities develop

### TABLE 3
### UNDERGRAD POST-TEST, N=109, ITEMS=21

| Test item | ROI-CRM | Email | Retention | CRM | Optin/out | CLV Metrics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| q66cpm2 | | | | | 0.69 | |
| q16optout2 | | | | | 0.73 | |
| q17optin2 | | | | | 0.47 | |
| **q2emailformats2** | | **0.54** | | | | |
| **q3emailresponse2** | | **0.62** | | | | |
| **q5emailspam2** | | **0.77** | | | | |
| **q28customervalue2** | | **0.51** | | | | |
| q43qnetresponse2 | | 0.55 | | | | |
| **q10sharemarket2** | **0.75** | | | | | |
| **q11sharwallet2** | **0.76** | | | | | |
| q45resell2 | 0.48 | | | | | |
| q48lifetimevalue2 | 0.65 | | | | | |
| q70Retentionstrat2 | | | 0.82 | | | |
| q69CLV2 | | | 0.84 | | | |
| q15pageviews2 | | | | | | 0.56 |
| q42grossresponse2 | | | | | | 0.46 |
| q49profitsupcross2 | | | | | | 0.79 |
| q67crossselldef2 | | | | 0.41 | | |
| **q33touchpoint2** | | | | **0.52** | | |
| **q41profitfixedcost2** | | | | **0.80** | | |
| q54paretoprinc2 | | | | 0.39 | | |
| **Eigenvalues > 1.2** | 4.22 | 2.02 | 1.78 | 1.47 | 1.25 | 1.21 |
| **Percent of Variance Explained** | 19.20 | 9.17 | 8.10 | 6.70 | 5.66 | 5.49 |
| **Cumulative Total Variance** | 19.20 | 28.37 | 36.47 | 43.17 | 48.83 | 54.32 |
| **Coefficient alpha (reliability)** | **0.70** | **0.64** | **0.80** | **0.52** | **0.60** | **0.40** |
| **Inter-item correlations, 2 item factors** | | | | **0.66** | | |
| **Bold=loaded together on pretest** | | | | | | |

Direct and Interactive programs. A general marketing degree is generally not sufficient to prepare students to excel in the direct marketing area. The industry has specific terms and practices that in many cases have been learned on the job because of the lack of classroom settings where these principles have been taught.

As we move forward to develop an idea of what constitutes competency in direct marketing, it seems the area is a broad one, spanning everything from principles of list management and segmentation to the best practices in email marketing. For the undergraduates who had completed a survey course in direct marketing with a strong interactive emphasis, an understanding of CRM principles and then ROI, retention and other metrics as related to CRM, a knowledge of email marketing, including opt-in and opt-out distinguished students who not only understood the basics of direct marketing but its most advanced applications. In the undergraduate post-test, similar to the pre-test, only 18 items from a 75-question examination explain almost fifty percent of the variance in the answers.

These results reinforce the view of direct marketing as displayed in the conceptual model in Figure 1, where CRM knowledge and a measurement orientation in terms of understanding retention and ROI are posited to be critical, higher level, competencies for direct marketing professionals. For the undergraduates, knowledge of CRM and the ability to analyze the results of campaigns are key direct and interactive marketing competencies. These results suggest that those who understand direct and interactive concepts not only understand campaign details, but also how to analyze results and assess their strategic importance.

These results also indicate that direct marketing is truly evolving as a competency and that the graduates of our direct marketing programs can, and should be, prepared to work in areas related to ongoing customer relationship management and not just one-time, transaction-oriented, traditional direct marketing. The good news for direct marketing educators is that these principles can be conveyed in the classroom setting using a variety of pedagogical techniques. The two instructors in the undergraduate direct marketing course from which the student sample was drawn each employed different techniques, using real-life consulting projects as well as classroom-based projects, cases, discussion and examination to develop a knowledge of the most advanced topics related direct marketing in their students.

It is interesting to examine the topic areas of the six questions that were identical across all the analyses in Tables 2 and 3, which were questions regarding customer touch points, fixed costs, the Pareto Principle, cost per thousand (CPM), click-through rate and resell options. The answers, although varied, represent primarily measurement techniques. Direct marketers have often said that the difference that separates direct marketing from traditional mass marketing techniques is the ability to measure. Therefore, our examination identified that students should understand measurement if they are going into the direct and interactive fields. However, measurement is still not emphasized in many direct marketing courses and needs to be made of paramount importance.

These results can be used going forward to develop competency examinations in the field of direct and interactive marketing, as well as to guide the development of training courses and academic offerings. The fact that so many of the items used did correspond to a factor which was recognizable as a specific area of knowledge or competency in direct marketing is encouraging. However, the results also reflect the challenges in trying to test for competencies in an expanding and dynamic field and suggest that there should be several different types or levels of examination depending on professional emphasis. In the future, it would be helpful to administer the same examination to both undergraduate and practitioner populations to compare results and further refine a complete list of questions in this area.

Also, this undergraduate examination, in retrospect, seemed more geared toward the interactive aspects of direct marketing than the general texts on direct marketing. Given the current emphasis in practice on CRM and Internet Marketing, the question arises whether curriculum in direct marketing should focus on the past or future of practice. The authors look forward to continuing research on the topic of what constitutes competency in direct and interactive marketing as the field continues to evolve and change.

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