



## *Analytics in the Classroom*

# **2022 Annual Fall Educators' Conference Proceedings**

### **Editors**

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*Marketing Management Association*

*27th Annual Marketing Management Association Fall Educators' Conference  
September 20-23, 2022, San Antonio, Texas*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Marketing Management Association is proud to present the 27<sup>th</sup> Fall Educators' conference! We are excited to be back in person for the Fall Educators' Conference. Like many, I cannot wait to see all my colleagues and find rejuvenation in the social and academic discussions that go into the evenings. As in previous years, we find that the submissions to the conference were quite inspiring! The range and depth of the analysis that was conducted in submitting refereed and position papers, as well as panel sessions, were beyond our expectations and we know the conference will be the talk of marketing educators for weeks to come.

In many cases, the impact of COVID left many students at a disadvantage for rigor in their learning. As faculty, we did our best to ensure that all courses remained at the top of industry standards, but not having the opportunities to communicate best practices among marketing educators has been a challenge. By examining "Analytics in the Classroom" at this year's conference, we will all continue to maintain the high academic standards necessary to create successful marketers for the future. As the Marketing Management Association, we want to help support analytics in classrooms and share our combined knowledge to ensure that the marketing discipline continues to lead during this time of accountability.

We are very thankful to all the scholars who submitted position papers and refereed papers as well as volunteered for special sessions and panels. We are ever so grateful to **Zina Taran**, who helped evaluate all the position papers that were submitted; as well as to all the reviewers of the refereed papers (reviewers are listed later in the proceedings). Special thanks go to **Hannah Walters** for her assistance in leading refereed paper submissions and assigning faculty to the various review articles. In addition, we could not have the conference without the session chairs, listed separately in this publication, who help with the smooth coordination of panels and presentations. Special thanks to **Becky Hochradel**, Proceedings Editor, for assembling all the material into these conference proceedings, and to **Holly Syrdal** (outgoing) and **Leila Samii** (incoming), MMA Communications Director, for placing them on the website for ease of access for all interested.

We are also quite proud to kick-off the conference with two pre-conference sessions. Thank you to our leads **J. Steve Kelly**, **Jessica Sanborn** and **Masoud Moradi**, for all their efforts in putting together a couple of great sessions. To all those who participated in those workshops, thank you for allowing us to learn from you!

Three teaching competitions were held this year with finalists being selected before the conference. Thank you to **Marketplace Simulations** for sponsoring the Teaching Innovation competition, with **Eric Rhiney** leading the effort as the competition coordinator along with her great panel of judges. Special thanks to **Adam Mills** for managing the Outstanding Teacher-Scholar Doctoral Student competition; we thank him for all the work in running an excellent competition. The Master Teacher Award competition coordinator role was taken on by **Don Roy**, who worked his magic in coordinating the judges and selecting a great slate of finalists. We also would like to thank **Interpretive Simulations** who sponsored this year's Master Teacher Awards Competition. To all our sponsors, your continued support is invaluable to the Marketing Management Association, and we look forward to a long relationship to come. All judges and finalists are listed later in these Proceedings. Thank you for all you did to make this another successful year for the Fall Marketing Educators' Conference.

The Best Refereed Paper Award went to **Mary Martin and Michael J. Martin**, Fort Hays State University, for their paper entitled *“The Incorporation of Social Media, Web and Content Marketing Analytics in a Social Media Course.”* The winning paper was selected prior to the conference and the authors are listed in these Proceedings. Finally, special thanks to our sponsor **StratX Simulations** for sponsoring this year’s annual Awards Luncheon. We also thank all the other exhibitors noted below who offer us great ideas, tools, and training to improve our effectiveness in the classroom. Without you we could not put on this conference and so we thank you for your participation and welcome you again next year!

And, speaking of next year: the 2023 MMA Fall Educators' Conference will be in person format and will be held September 27-29, 2023, at the Drury Plaza Hotel in Orlando-Disney Springs, FL! The 2023 MMA Spring Conference will be in virtual format on March 9-10, 2023.

Many thanks to everyone involved with the conference! We hope you enjoyed lots of stimulating conversation, learned a few new ideas to take back to the classroom, and met some fellow scholars who share your passion for improving the lives of our students!!

Takisha S. Toler, Conference Program Chair  
Gail Zank, Conference Chair

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Debika Sihi, Southwestern University

**Brian Vander Schee, Indiana University & Rebecca VanMeter, Ball State University**

Coordinator:

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Judges:

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Jeannine Morber, Stevenson Univ. (Preliminary Reviewer Only)

## 2022 Outstanding Teacher-Scholar Doctoral Student Competition

Finalists:

**Ashley Hass, Texas Tech University**

Tyler Milfeld, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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Coordinator:

Adam Mills, Loyola University New Orleans

Judges:

Dana Harrison, East Tennessee State University

Holly Syrdal, Texas State University

Renée Gravois, Sam Houston State University

## Interpretive Simulations MMA 2022 Master Teacher Award Competition

Finalists:

**Scott Cowley, Western Michigan University**

Michael Levin, Otterbein University

Takisha Toler, Stevenson University

Coordinator:

Don Roy, Middle Tennessee State University

Judges:

Dawn Edmiston, College of William & Mary

Michael Messina, Gannon University

## 2022 MMA Fall Educators' Conference Best Refereed Paper Award Winners

*The Incorporation of Social Media, Web, and Content Marketing Analytics in a Social Media Marketing Course*

Mary Martin, Fort Hays State University and Michael J. Martin, Fort Hays State University

## 2022 Fellow of the Marketing Management Association Award Winner

Jeanetta D. Sims - The University of Central Oklahoma

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# GENERATION Z AND SIMULATION STRESS

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Michelle Rego, Johnson & Wales University*

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Generation Z may be a digital native but stress and technology continue to persist when it's time to try out new technologies in the classroom. Two sections of a marketing foundations class were compared using the simulation, GoVenture CEO over the academic year 2021-2022. A one way ANOVA was conducted. The total sample (N=43) consisted of two classes of MRKT1001 Foundations of Marketing from different majors in the College of Business. The fall class (n=22) labeled the Control and the spring class (n=21) is the Experiment. The project grade for the spring class were significantly higher (Mean=92.45) than the fall grades (Mean=86.74),  $F(1, 41) = 5.340, p < .05$ . Recommendations include making changes over the next year and compare classes in both the online and on ground classes using a new simulation that are in mini-modules.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Generation Z's post pandemic stress continues to be an issue in the classroom and technology adds to that anxiety. Defined as the Generation after the millennials, they have now been on the college campus for a few years and want to use their devices in the classroom (Gose, 2017). Specifically, a simulation could encourage students to use their device in the classroom and encourage more connection to the classroom. In the Foundations of Marketing class, The Go Venture CEO simulation served as both individual and group game play as the final project for the course. There is a winner of the overall simulation that's heavily weighted on the student's overall grade (25%). This paper will examine two different assessments methods over the course of the academic year 2021-2022.

## **A BRIEF CONTEXT FOR THE SITUATION**

In the Marketing foundations course, over the academic year 2021-2022, two sections were compared using the Media Spark simulation, Go Venture CEO. In the fall semester, an advanced simulation where each person acts as the CEO of a Smartphone Manufacturing company selling in USA, Canada, and Mexico. The overall goal is net profit. Decisions include screen size, speed, battery life, and camera. Market size is \$50-\$90 million on average per company per year. Budget is \$35-million per year + 5% of the previous period's profit. The modules turned ON: manufacturing, product Expiry, carrying costs, marketing (up to 3 Territories), advertising mix, HR, ethics, and loans. Modules turned OFF: Stocks. The spring semester some facets of the game changed to change from an advanced to basic simulation. Market Size is \$7-million on average per company per year. Budget is \$5-million per year. Modules turned ON: Manufacturing, R&D, Marketing, Advertising Mix, Ethics. Modules are OFF: Carrying Costs, Expiry, HR, Loans, and Stocks. All reports cost \$0. The grading increased the total weight of students remembering to make their decisions each week known in the rubric as saves and to eliminate a final paper. Instead of a final paper, a zoom presentation highlighted the major decisions and insights to the students' strategy was presented.

## **RESULTS**

A series of one-way ANOVA tests were conducted using IBM SPSS 28 statistical processing software to compare the effectiveness of the simulation and student course grade. The total sample (N=43) consisted of two classes of MRKT1001 Foundations of Marketing. The fall class (n=22) labeled the Control and the spring class (n=21) is the Experiment. For the spring class, the paper requirements were removed simplify the project for freshmen to reduce the stress and complications of the advanced simulation and change in the project structure to improve learning of the

main course objectives.

The project grade for the spring class were significantly higher (Mean=92.45) than the fall grades (Mean=86.74),  $F(1, 41) = 5.340, p < .05$ "

## RECOMMENDATION

There was a significant finding for the second column of data (called Final Strategy Go Venture in one class and Paper/presentation in the other). There was not a significant finding for the first column, final round or the overall grade for the course. Therefore, moving forward to the next academic year based on the data collected students, more emphasis will be placed on submitting a video presentation for the final paper instead of doing both a paper and traditional PowerPoint presentation along with the option of doing the simulation as an individual and reducing the complexities of the simulation using the "basic" version.

## ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Over the summer of 2022, a re-design of the marketing fundamentals online course is underway. The instructional designers and faculty have examined the many varieties of simulations in the marketplace. We are proposing to sample two different classes; between the online and on ground students taking into perspective that Generation Z students want "instant feedback, working in smaller teams, and challenges found in video games (Engaging, 2022), smaller simulations and mini role plays will be tested over the academic year and reported in the next year. The challenges will be to examine the results of both groups keeping in mind; the online student tends to be more independent and older than the on ground traditional student taking the marketing foundations course. One of the biggest limitations is the number of students in the study over the academic year. There was only roughly <50 students in total.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH OR EXPLORATION NEEDED

To reduce the stress in the classroom with Generation Z, suggestions include finding teaching methods that enhance their learning outside of traditional methods (Enhancing Generation, 2022). Be open to giving them a choice where possible for individual or teams and reducing the emphasis on a single winner of a game, using more graphics and easy to navigate platforms online and most importantly allowing them to have practice rounds where one can fail but it will not negatively impact their grades. It is recommended to do allow ample time to do a series of practice rounds before moving into a graded game play. Emphasize the areas of opportunity and deliver material in smaller chunks.

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# REFLECTION ON THE PANDEMIC AND COVID-19: PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF MBA STUDENTS AND THEIR EXPERIENCE

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## ABSTRACT

*Using a phenomenological lens, MBA students in a southern Minnesota metro area were interviewed regarding their experiences during the heart of the pandemic. Transcription of results was done for eight participants and then themes emerged from each detailed response were recorded and analyzed to get at the lived experience of each individual participating. Discussion of maintaining health, feeling valued, connecting at home with family and friends, making new starts, living life to the fullest and the uncertainty of whether we will emerge with less fear, and how to make positive changes - were major themes that emerged from coding responses.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is undeniable. The sociocultural changes are so profound that the virus created a “new normal”. This paper underscores this and its impact on graduate students. It is not an attempt to profoundly change our structures of education delivery, but to understand what students value and where they are headed in future offerings for MBA students.

The additional hope is to make recommendations to MBA programs to better meet the needs of remote students of the future, now that we have experienced the favorable and unfavorable aspects of remote learning. Hopefully, this will create additional discussion for practical implications in future offerings for business marketing and management students.

## METHODOLOGY

### Transcendental Phenomenology

For the purpose of this study, a transcendental phenomenological approach was used. Phenomenological inquiry was chosen as the aim is to understand the experience and perceptions of participants, seeking to understand the underlying structure of the experience. Transcendental phenomenology studies the lived experience of participants, allowing for development of perspectives including external, physical, and isolatable stimuli. In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher brackets out his or her understanding or pre-conceived ideas, as the purpose is to move beyond everyday experience to a state where everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994).

Transcendental phenomenology clarifies the assumptions in which human understanding is grounded and investigates the ways in which knowledge comes into being. The process for transcendental phenomenology include bracketing out one's experience, collecting data from several people who have experienced the phenomenon, and analyzing the data by reducing it to significant statements or quotes in order to combine these statements into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher then develops a textural description—what the participants experienced, and a structural description—how they experienced it in terms of conditions, situations, or context.

The methodology of transcendental phenomenology includes the epoche', transcendental-phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation. The epoche' means to refrain from judgment or our everyday way of viewing things. In transcendental-phenomenological reduction, each experience is considered in and of itself. The experience is perceived and described in totality, with assumptions suspended (Moustakas, 1994). This process allows for the researcher to derive a textural description of the meanings and essence of the phenomenon. Imaginative variation allows for the researcher to come to a structural differentiation among all of the collections of actual and possible perceptions and thoughts that relate to the object in question and create a unifying synthesis or essence of the experience.

Transcendental phenomenology studies the lived experience of participants, allowing for development of perspectives including external, physical, and isolatable stimuli. Moustakas (1994) states that the purpose is to move beyond everyday experience to a state where everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time. Additionally, in transcendental phenomenology, the researcher brackets out his/her understanding or pre-conceived ideas. Conversely,

in hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher becomes integral to the process, and pre-conceived understandings and knowledge become the “fore-structure” for interpretation. For the purpose of this study, the researcher seeks to understand the true essence of participant’s lived experiences, and in doing so, to view the participant’s experience without bias or prior interpretation, as one would with hermeneutic phenomenology.

Husserl introduced the concepts of noema and noesis in transcendental phenomenology. Noema refers to the object of experience or action—reflecting the perceptions, feelings, thoughts, memories, and judgments of the object (Lavery, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Noema is that which is experienced; the “what” of experience (Moustakas, 1994). In contrast, the noesis is the act of experience; perceiving, remembering, thinking. Meanings must be recognized and drawn out. Noesis can be thought of as the way in which the “what” is experienced, or, the act of experiencing. For example, Moustakas (1994) discussed a situation where he received medical advice—the noema, for a health condition, and received the advice as critical disbelief and distrust—the noematic meaning. Moustakas (1994) recognized the source of his noematic meaning as stemming from a prior experience in which healthcare decisions had a tragic impact upon a sibling.

Husserl (1931) introduced the concepts of noema and noesis in transcendental phenomenology. Noema is the “what” of experience, and in contrast, the noesis is the act of experiencing; perceiving, remembering, and thinking (Lavery, 2003; Moustakas, 1994).

**Questions Examined:** How effectively are you adjusting in this pandemic? How are you coping? Is it worse than you expected?

**Population:** The population studied are adult, male and female MBA students living in a southern Minnesota community during a period of their studies in a program delivered in the Midwest. These individuals are working to complete their degree and transition into new workforce and enhance career mobility.

**Sample:** The sample being studied are eight adult, MBA Students of men and women living in southern Minnesota community during a period of their studies in a program delivered in the Midwest. These individuals are working to complete their degree and transition into new workforce opportunities and enhance career mobility. None were coerced to participate, and their responses have been documented for us to learn from their own “fresh” lived experience.

**Limitations:** This course was originally offered as an on-ground experience, but due to increases of COVID related cases, the course and interviews were moved to a virtual synchronous and asynchronous based modality of delivery. Interviews took place via Zoom, email follow-ups and by phone using the same questions for each participant.

## RESULTS

### Interview Results from Transcription

#### *Participant 1:*

I recall when the news broke about it spreading through China. I thought to myself wouldn't it be cool to live through something like this if it actually spread.

For years the media hypes up bird flu, swine flu, Ebola, Zika virus and other things that have the potential to be disastrous but they tend to lose steam before reaching their nefarious potential.

As it progressed I pushed to work from home which was shot down immediately as my company is very old school -- a few weeks after that we were given the green light to work from home. I followed all of the CDC guidance as it evolved and really didn't do much for 9 months. Since I have older parents I disassociated with my friends, missed countless adventures, social gatherings and even Thanksgiving(pending COVID test).

Working from home was fun for a while and I even got to witness an attempted coup at the Capital. As the days grew on and on with more bad news, living alone with no pets, no interactions with anyone aside from my parents were weighing heavy on my sanity. Luckily the vaccination development and rollouts were historically swift and effective when it was my turn I got mine and soon after went back into work. There was an adjustment period getting used to people coughing and sneezing but that went away with time. My mood, work performance and social aspects of my life improved drastically for the better.

The pandemic was an interesting experience and thankfully nobody in my family got seriously ill though many families were not as fortunate. If we had a normal president in office when COVID broke out the public likely would have followed CDC guidance and taken it more seriously. This virus will keep chugging along as new variants pop up here and there just like a bad flu season -- at some point we need get back to life as it was.



*Participant 2:*

Oh man, this one hits home. I would say it is both worse and not as bad as I was expecting. In March of 2020, I was working in the toxicology laboratory and had just made my first house payment, I thought I was being an adult. Quickly, rumors swirled of layoffs and furloughs and I got nervous knowing I had a new house to pay for. I scrambled to work in the COVID testing lab. My thought process was if the pandemic isn't that bad I will quickly be back to toxicology, but if it is and furloughs do happen I am sure there would be work for me testing COVID. A 3-month redeployment almost instantly went to 6 and that's when I was unsure what the future would hold. What is surprising to me is the fallout, this is also much worse than I could ever imagine. It has negatively affected how I view people and even family members. Before all the vaccine chatter much of the testing was under scrutiny.

I understand why it was a new virus thus meaning new tests were developed and mass-produced. There are bound to be errors, but what I would read on social media from loved ones about how poor of a job people in my position were doing affected me. I never thought I would have a job that is so front and centered in the media, I found out I never want one again. As soon as something hits the media it seems nowadays it must be associated with politics. I am not a very political person so seeing so much of the health care field lobbed back and forth between parties was insane to me. I feel like I dealt with it well for a long time. I worked long hours In November and December of 2021 and never got burnt out, I thought I was doing the right thing. But as we continue to see cases and lose people close to us for now what is no reason it gets harder and harder. Should this be taken seriously I guess depends on the level of seriousness one has. Is it going to end the human population? That looks unlikely at this point. Could it take more people from us that refuse to believe what science has shown us to be an effective vaccine? Absolutely.

*Participant 3:*

The pandemic is something that could be talked about for days, I feel. I think it is definitely worse than I expected when this all started at the beginning of 2020 in the US. It hit home quick as we were learning about layoffs and furloughs and the impacts of that. My supervisor was gone the day the news came out about furloughing staff at Mayo and being the assistant supervisor I had to share the news with our work unit that we would have furloughs as well. There is no training or planning that can prepare you to share that type of news as it was impacting myself as well. One blessing, and it has become a curse now, but the pandemic revitalized the idea of going outside to parks or national parks and taking in the sights that our world has. I enjoy those types of trips or activities and just being outside but now trying to go to any national park there seems to be more people there which is taking away from certain activities since there are still staffing shortages or capacity limits for certain areas. Unfortunately, the pandemic has taken on a political feeling here in the US which seems to make it worse while other countries understand the science behind it and are willing to follow what the science is saying.

One example is island nations, such as New Zealand. Yes, they are smaller and have less population than the US but their government is working with the citizens to ensure safe testing and quarantine measures are followed to be considerate of the entire population. They are an island so they can control their borders or ports more efficiently but they have taken the pandemic seriously from the beginning which has allowed them to function fairly normal after the first large spike that went around the world. My ways of coping have been focus on school since I started the program right before the pandemic start and we have been lucky to have classes continue to be available. So being productive with school and bettering myself through the pandemic is one way of coping. Another way is to find ways to still see friends or family, golfing has become a hobby that I do much more now and skiing or just outdoor activities in general. We all want the pandemic to be over but with how it has been handled to this point, I find it hard to see that happening anytime soon. It has changed significantly from where COVID-19 first began to where we are now. I truly believed the virus was going to wipe us out. Not necessarily from the virus itself but the impact it made on our mental and emotional well-being and how we see and interact with one another. My feelings towards the pandemic go in waves. One minute I am persevering. The next minute I feel like I am drowning. The biggest eye-opener has been the resiliency of our school-aged children. Their lives have forever changed, and I am curious to see the research to come, years down the road.

I was skeptical at first about the virus and I ended up catching it in April of 2021. My symptoms were not as severe as I thought they would be. I had a slight cough, shortness of breath, and lost my smell and taste. Within five days, it had passed. The worst has been the aftermath. I used to be the type of person who could work 12+ hours a day without a problem. Now, I have trouble focusing for longer than 6-8 hours. My brain gets tired and needs breaks more often. I believe we should take COVID seriously, but to what extent is your discretion. There are so many different perspectives and beliefs that people (myself included) believe in and don't. I respect each other's thoughts and opinions and will continue to do my part. I wear a mask while working with 90+ kids each day and when necessary in public places. As far as coping, today I am okay. What brings me joy is traveling. Being out of my comfort zone and exploring the world around. I haven't been on a plane since June (and it's killing me!) to reduce my risk of exposure.

#### *Participant 4*

Ahh the COVID-19 Pandemic. From when I first started hearing about COVID-19 when it was still isolated in China to now, it has been much worse than I expected. I had no idea it would be two years later and the virus would still be rampant and a part of our everyday lives. It is very surprising to me how much it has changed the business and working world. Working at home used to be something for entrepreneurs and a few select people, but now it is quite common. I have mixed feelings about how we as a society are dealing with this. I think some people handle it better than others and a lot of that probably has to do with personal experience. I think the news media has an agenda and they are out to scare people and at times they blow things out of proportion. I think it is important to take it seriously, but within reason. When I see people in their vehicles alone wearing a mask or posting on social media that sometimes they wear a mask in their house, that is just someone screaming for attention. To be honest I am not really sure the masking works that well. I do think the time to take it seriously is if you are symptomatic or exposed, to make sure you get a test and then quarantine if necessary. Outside of that I think people still have to go out and do things and live their lives. Bars and restaurants and businesses should be open and able to operate as they wish. I have been coping just fine personally. Besides maybe not socializing with some family and friends as much, the pandemic has not had a negative impact on my life at all. Since the beginning of 2020 I bought a truck, got a promotion at work and bought a house. Financially and personal growth wise it has probably been the best couple years of my life. I also have been very fortunate to have not lost any family members or friends due to the virus, which of course makes a huge difference in my outlook. Hopefully this Omicron is the last wave and we can get back to getting everyone healthy and moving forward!

#### *Participant 5*

The COVID-19 pandemic has been tragic in many ways. It has also been eye-opening in many ways. At the beginning of the pandemic, it was worse than I expected, seeing hospitals overrun in Italy and across the world was heartbreaking. Since the initial wave, with a majority of Americans now vaccinated and less-lethal variants of COVID-19 circulating, I believe we are in a much better spot. Throughout the first 10 months, it was difficult dealing with the pandemic. My father is 67 years old and immunocompromised. I took every precaution possible to not spread the virus to my father. Two weeks ago, my mother tested positive for COVID-19. Both her and my father are vaccinated and boosted.

Thankfully, my father never had symptoms. As vaccines and treatments have been rolled out, I was shocked at the politicization of our health care system in the United States. When Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson and Johnson fought tooth and nail to protect their patents by not sharing the formulas, I quickly suspected this was all about money and not the health of humans across the globe. These vaccines were mostly funded by the NIH and taxpayer dollars, but the patents are owned by private companies (Lalani, 2021). I also realized the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is heavily funded by fees companies pay when they apply for approval of a medical device or drug (White, 2021). So, the FDA is funded, approximately 45% of its budget, by the companies it regulates (White, 2021). This is a clear conflict of interest. Throughout my career, I have been an investigator. I began my career investigating fraud and money laundering at financial institutions, and now I investigate a variety of fraud and employee and patient issues throughout the business. Being able to gather all the facts by listening to every side of the story has really helped me open my eyes to our political and health care environment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I encourage everyone to listen to different viewpoints and be skeptical of everything you hear whether you agree or disagree. In my opinion, that is the best way to gather all the facts and have informed conversations about various issues.

#### *Participant 6*

Thank you for asking this question as a discussion topic. As divisive as the pandemic/Covid-19 is, I feel passionate that as leaders our best path forward is to have healthy conversations about it and provide people some grace if we are ever going to fully get on the other side of it. Stances around vaccines, politics, masks, media and etc. have only made this situation more toxic. I hate how much those things divide us, but I know I don't have all the answers, so I am going to focus more on my personal experience as it pertains to Covid. I'll never forget that feeling of being sent home to work remote as the pandemic started. So many questions, so much uncertainty, thoughts racing and emotions running high. I was a traveling sales rep for our organization at the time and my heart was thankful to have been pulled off the road and able to hunker down with my family but my mind worried about what the future looked like for my job. However, in March of 2020 we had our largest sales month ever as retailers panic purchased and consumers stocked up for the lockdowns.

Organizationally, despite enormous price increases of ingredients and materials, as well as uncontrollable supply chain issues, we have been fortunate to have thrived during the pandemic. Which has undoubtedly alleviated a massive stressor for my family that many others have had to face. However, life at home was still a major shock to the system

and a new normal had to be created. My wife went from being full time on Mayo campus to full time telework and our children's designated playroom became a shared permanent office. While I worked from a card table in our bedroom and we attempted to help navigate a 1st grader through distance learning. Then in January of 2021 my wife, two young girls and I all got Covid around the same time. As scary as it was at that time, prior to the vaccine and when quarantine times were significantly different, it ultimately was a blessing for all of us to go through it at one time together. I watched as my kids had roughly 24 hour fevers and then were perfectly fine, while my wife and I had more severe symptoms and lingering longer effects of fatigue, lost taste and smell. During our quarantine we decided we were going to take our natural immunity and run with it. We rebooked two cancelled vacations for February and March and tried to escape for a while; which was so good for our souls! Then later that Spring came back to in class learning, vaccines, and a return to the office for me. We tried our best to live a relatively normal summer and I was blessed to receive a promotion at work, that has turned into my opportunity to further my education by pursuing my MBA. We have had a lot of blessings as a family, despite the hardships and I think it is important to be mindful of that. That leads me to now, the Omicron variant and the callus of Covid fatigue I have built up. As I type this, we literally have just come out of quarantine this week, as my wife tested positive and my pre-schooler was a close contact at school. My now 2nd grader is finishing up her final days of the 2 week distance learning Rochester public schools shifted to during this time of heightened exposure.

My wife's symptoms were incredibly mild this go around, which has been consistent amongst everyone we know during this variant. My only real solidified thoughts are this: Covid does not appear to be something that is going away completely anytime soon and we as individuals and as a society need to learn how to deal with it. I have expressed that as a family we are going to live with Covid and not let Covid live us. The ripple effects the pandemic has had on both mental and physical health won't be fully realized for years to come. We have to accept that most people's minds on their stance have been made up and forcing people to do things is only going to lead to more division. We have to live and let live, but we won't ever fully begin to heal until we move out of Covid's shadow.

#### *Participant 7*

I would say the COVID-19 pandemic is worse than I had expected for multiple reasons. The first reason is that I remember stories on the news at the very beginning when we still called it the Wuhan virus. I remember seeing there was an epidemic of an unknown virus going through the city, but I didn't think it would be a big deal as I didn't think it would evolve into a pandemic. The second reason is that once COVID-19 did become a pandemic, I didn't realize how long it was going to stick around. If somebody told me in March 2020 we would still be in the middle of the pandemic almost 2 years later, I would have been shocked. I think we are dealing with it as effectively as we can. I am very biased on my stance related to COVID-19. Coming from a science-based education and working in healthcare, I do understand the seriousness of the situation and I think I give it the respect it deserves.

I don't fear COVID-19, but I also don't want to spread it to others so I do what I can to slow the spread. There are people who understand the severity and they do what they can through things like masking and social distancing, and there are people who doubt the severity and go about life as normal. We are to a point where I think everybody knows how they feel, and we won't be able to change their mind. This is why I think we have reached peak effectiveness. Everybody has made their decision and now we have to go forward through the pandemic and fight it as best we can. It often feels like a fight with a lot of resistance, but at this point is the best that we can do. I have never been shy about sharing my COVID-19 pandemic opinions, and the biggest thing this pandemic has taught me is there are a lot more knuckleheads in the world than I had thought.

I understand not everybody can get the vaccine, and early on I understand why some people might be hesitant to get a new and rushed vaccine, but the people that think the vaccine is being used to force sterility or to wipe out our immune systems give me headaches. The political spin on everything also got crazy and still blows my mind. As much as I would love for the pandemic to end and life to get back to normal, a silver lining of the situation is the pandemic led to a lot of positives in my life. Thus far, I have been very fortunate and have not been COVID-19 positive, nor have any of my immediate family members. I took a new job to help perform COVID testing at the start of the pandemic and it resulted in me accepting a promotion so my career advanced a bit quicker than I had expected. I also had some tuition to pay and a furnace to replace, so the extra hours came at a very convenient time. I've made many connections while working through the pandemic, and it taught me a lot more about who I was. I was exposed to many more stressful and fast-moving environments and I think it has better prepared me for future career advancement post-pandemic. I hope the world will take the pandemic more seriously, but as I said above I think we are reaching the point of "this is the best that we can do."

Coping with the pandemic hasn't been too hard for me. I've never been one to attend large social gatherings or go out a lot, I tend to hang out at home watching Netflix or playing video games with my friends (Nick and Justen). When I do go out it is generally just the small-town bars near my house so it is easy for us to social distance

when there are only 4 or 5 people at the bar, including the bartender. Other than wearing a mask, my life didn't change a ton.

*Participant 8*

Coming from a science background I always thought that a super virus would kill off humankind unless there was a natural disaster, or it was self-inflicted by nuclear war or something similar. That being said I never thought COVID-19 was a super virus but it was worse than I expected. I think the reason why it was worse than I expected was that I was naive. I thought people would have rallied together and we could have controlled this much better than we did. I think having the science background really helped me understand how viruses work and why CDC was trying to do things in certain ways. The biggest hindrance during the pandemic has been social media. The amount of incorrect information that gets floated around by politicians, celebrities, and athletes needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Also, keyboard warriors have helped divide people and they say things knowing that they will never have a repercussion.

I would say we haven't effectively dealt with the pandemic but we have done a good job of adjusting on the fly. To effectively deal with a pandemic like this everyone would need to be on the same page. At this point in time, I don't think we need to take COVID that seriously. There are vaccines available and between the number of people vaccinated and the number of people that have had the virus we should have pretty good herd immunity and it should only get better. I imagine that possibly starting as early as Fall 2022 there will be a COVID/FLU shot every year. They will make the COVID vaccine similar to how they make the FLU vaccine where they take the five most common strains and create a vaccine for them. I'm optimistic that this summer things will almost return to normal, but I thought that before. I do think that Mayo Clinic will permanently have a mask mandate at least at patient locations but possibly everywhere. I have been coping fine throughout the pandemic. I have job security and working for Mayo gave me early access to the vaccine. For mental health, I have had my wife and two kids to help and I never had to isolate myself alone.

**Coding Process**

A search of words most frequently used was created using NVIVO software, and then checked by another colleague to see if we were in agreement with the frequent terms that emerged in the interviews. When we were not in agreement, adjustments were made to insure we included terms that one or both of us did not see on the first pass-through. Frequency of responses were recorded for the eight participants in Table 1 shown below.

**KEYWORD RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS**

In addition to the initial transcribed responses, keywords were tallied by frequency and doubled checked by another coder to ensure consistency of analysis. Dialogue among participants ensued but was not included in this document for confidentiality and anonymity reasons.

**Table 1. Results and Themes that Emerged From the Data Collected**

<b>Number of Responses:</b>	<b>Keywords:</b>
43	COVID
39	Pandemic
35	Work
30	People
25	Now
24	Think
19	Vaccine/vaccination, Test/testing, Virus
17	Healing, Every
16	Health
15	Feeling, Thoughts
14	Home
13	Start, Life, Live
12	Worse, Years
11	Serious, Days
10	Social, Family, Okay, Furlough

9	Politics, Fear, Expect, Need, Old
8	Mask, Know, Coping, Change, Best, Better, Normal, Well-being, School, Mental, News, Deal
7	Good, Begin, House, Effective, Understand, Care, World, Fun, House, War, Situation
6	Reason, Long, Science, Thankful, Believe, Myself, Agree, Fortunate, Everyone
5	Supervisor, Promotion, Quarantine, Experience, Marketing, Interest, Positive, Open, Quick, Flu, Spread, Friends, Hard, Spread, Bad, Symptoms, Nation
4	Social media, Focusing, Alone, Business, Differences, Future, Viewpoint, Immune, Isolate, Variant, Learning, Joy, Impact, Stress, Gather, Countries, Bar, Lost
3	Everything, Blessing, Lead, CDC, Play, Trying, Parents, Question, Divide, National, Human, Forward, Toxic, Lucky, Rally, Shock, Potential, Population, Love, Outside, Go out, Approval, Pet, Opinion, Distance learning, Kids, Fight, Public, Emotion, Another, Eye opener, Children, Significant, Money
1-2	There were myriad choices of words to describe their experiences

## DISCUSSION

In addition to words like pandemic and COVID which topped the list, discussion of work, dealing with people, “What do we do now?”, and thinking differently - living among “a continuous vaccine testing for virus world” was present. Talk of healing emotionally and physically, regaining health and preserving it, while balancing feelings and thoughts of altered home lives was discussed. Others mentioned in great detail how this pandemic brought on a new start to live a new life. Some complained that our existing culture could get worse and serious, but optimism was evident.

Social structures with families changed, politics surfaced, and furloughs and layoffs became a reality for many participants. Fear, expectations and the need to care for loved ones more frequently was stated often.

Understanding one another, coping, changing for the better, maintaining well-being and balance to find goodness was elaborated on frequently. Refer to the Table 1 provided for a list of common responses that emerged from the interviews.

Peer reviewers have asked what could be accomplished using this methodology? The hope is that we gain a better understanding of the adjustment phase we all went through - but from an MBA student perspective. Although we cannot generalize this to all populations, it does reveal the strains and benefits experienced by typical students expecting an on-ground delivery and adjusting to an online delivery.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Finding the contribution to the marketing and management education literature is limited here, but there are implications for the marketing educator. Relevance of these findings may be applicable to marketing management education conference participants and other settings.

## CONCLUSIONS

Isolation, the impact of social media, focusing, being alone, understanding our differences and viewpoints, while trying to find and maintain joy were common responses among these eight MBA participants during the pandemic. The desire to gather in common forums was desired and discussion of where we are headed left uncertainty, while still others saw hope and opportunity for better work life balance as a result of this quarantine time.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The question is asked by astute readers of this study: Would you like to make recommendations to MBA programs to better meet the needs of remote students? Yes! But, this is not an attempt to create a historical record, but to capture the lived experiences of individuals who were in the vortex of this paradigmatic framework shift and condensed snapshot of time - which altered all of our lives.

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# THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: RESPONDING TO THE DIGITAL, SOCIAL, & MOBILE SKILLS GAP

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper performs a content analysis of digital marketing course offerings in 19 AACSB colleges of business. Information was obtained from college catalogs, websites, and course search engines to ascertain the number and content of course offerings. Additionally, a separate content analysis is performed of 100 entry-level digital marketing LinkedIn job advertisements. The results & conclusions add to research on digital marketing education by offering a comparison of marketing department course curriculum, offering insight into potential curriculum topics; this project also adds insight into the requisite skills for entry-level digital marketing positions, as advertised by employers on LinkedIn.*

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## INTRODUCTION

A skills gap exists in the marketplace for digital, social, and mobile marketing professionals; these jobs outnumber the amount of people that have the skills and ability to fill them, a situation that has been exacerbated post-pandemic (Langen, et. al., 2019; *Pandemic Exposes*, 2021; Tesserias, 2021). As Hemann & Burbary (2013) argued: “The continuous and rapid introduction of new platforms, tools, data sources, and media consumption devices such as mobile devices and tablets” has created an environment where understanding today’s digital media landscape is a necessity” (p.1). The global pandemic drove millions of white-collar workers into home offices, both increasing the dependence upon these digital communication tools and increasing the need for marketing professionals who can bring products and services to the people who need them in our newly transformed digital, social, and mobile culture. In Hubspot’s 2021 “Not Another State of Marketing Report,” a comprehensive survey of 1500 marketing & advertising professionals, results show that paid advertising, content creation, and software purchases were the top three planned expenditures for marketing departments in 2021. As the report details: “Marketers are investing in content marketing more than they ever have before. 82% report actively using content marketing, up from 70% last year” (p. 9). According to the Digital Customer Experience report, which surveyed 400 marketing executives, a digital customer experience is critical, as 80% of respondents testify: “Most organizations have said the pandemic is an accelerant for trends that were already happening, forcing the switch from face-to-face to interaction across digital channels” (p. 3). In an effort to help marketing departments fill the digital skills gap, this study offers a comprehensive analysis of the number and the subjects that are taught in digital, social, and mobile marketing courses at the undergraduate level of select AACSB colleges. In addition to The University of Texas at Arlington, the author’s former home institution, three sets of AACSB accredited colleges of business were included in this study: its peer, competitive, and aspirant institutions, according to the most recent AACSB review from 2021. (See Appendix for the list of institutions and colleges included.) This project also conducts a content analysis of digital marketing job advertisements on LinkedIn and lists the skills requested of new undergraduates.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Universities have been steadily revising their marketing curriculum as a direct result of the recent and rapid cultural shift to digital, social, and mobile communication. In 2018, Rohm, Stefl, & Saint Clair argue that a survey of 150 advertising industry hiring decision makers in Los Angeles—the second largest advertising market in the United States—revealed that only 17% of respondents were excited about the current intern and entry-level applicant pool, citing that candidates consistently fell short of the required experience and understanding of the industry (p. 48). Edoardo Magnotta contends in *Digital Disruption in Marketing and Communications* (2019) that: “To prepare the talent needed for the digital economy, education must adapt as fast as the demand for IT skills is growing and evolving” (p. 114). In 2011, Wymbs postulated that a new digital marketing major rapidly approached, and argued that marketing curriculum would have to shift based on new “internet” technologies (p. 96). (In this review the term “internet marketing” or “internet technology” occurs in earlier sources until the terms “digital,” “social media,” and “mobile”

technology begin to be used. All of these terms are part of the same societal shift toward digital communication, while the nomenclature may vary.)

Wymbs further maintained that this digital disruption would fundamentally change the business of marketing, asking: “Has the marketing curriculum of our universities kept up with the relevance and vigor associated with the ambiguous, uncertain, rapidly changing marketplace faced by marketing executives?” (p. 96).

In a related study of marketing technology, Schlee & Harich (2010) share results of a content analysis of US jobs indicating that marketing technology skills were in high demand, and the authors conclude by recommending an increase in technical education in marketing curriculum (p. 350). Similarly, the research of Roberts, Reins, & Perry (2012) outlined the impact that digital communication would have upon business curriculum, specifically pinpointing marketing as the business school discipline most impacted because of digital communication technology’s effect on the marketing mix (p. 489). Finch, Nadeau, and O’Reilly (2012) examined skills in demand for marketing majors and concluded that where marketing education fails to adequately train its graduates in necessary workforce skills, other types of majors will fill those gaps (p. 65).

As further evidence of the digital marketing skills gap, Royle & Laing’s 2014 study revealed that even though the graduates they onboarded were increasingly tech-savvy, marketing executives said their companies still lacked: “employees with the strategic business knowledge of digital marketing, who were then able to integrate that strategic knowledge with existing ‘traditional’ marketing and communication approaches, while also having a working overview of digital technology” (p. 69). Significantly, the authors also asserted that technical skills alone do not substitute for the depth and breadth of marketing knowledge. Royle & Laing concluded: “The current research has identified challenges inherent to digital technologies (familiarity with mobile applications; SEO; developing best practice in metrics...) as gaps within the marketing skillset” (p. 70). Continuing this quest to discover the marketing skills most in demand, Schlee & Karns (2017) conducted a content search of job listings to see what skills were necessary for entry level marketing positions. Their findings also support the necessity of technology skills for new marketing graduates (p. 75). Muñoz (2015) offered more insight as to how the changing nature of technology affects university digital marketing courses, arguing that Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others are constantly changing algorithms, strategy, and other components of the platforms themselves making it hard to keep course content updated (p. 96). Considering technology’s rapid pace of dynamic change, common sense dictates and research confirms that marketing students will always need updated curriculum to meet the dynamic needs of the current digital, social, and mobile era.

To that end, marketing education research has published a number of articles emphasizing the importance of and encouraging an increase in the use of technology in marketing curriculum (Tuten & Marks, 2012; Clarke, 2014; Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015; Kerr & Kelly, 2017; Wilson, et. al., 2018). Other notable studies on this topic include Brocato, et. al. (2015) who performs a content analysis of social media marketing syllabi to outline the learning objectives taught (p. 80). Langen, Cowley, & Nguyen (2019) have compiled a comprehensive list of AACSB digital, social, and mobile marketing course offerings. These recent studies concluded that digital marketing course offerings show little consensus on the content and learning objectives across a variety of college campuses in either course title or learning objectives.

Tech companies have responded to the need for more digital skills by creating certificate programs. Spiller and Tuten (2015) concluded that Google Analytics offered the most comprehensive training program of those researched. Staton in 2016 found that Web analytics, e-mail marketing, inbound marketing, and social media marketing are the main digital marketing skills that are needed and that are driving the impetus for these certificate programs. Goldring argues in 2017 that incorporating available certificates from tech companies into university marketing curriculum is one of the most efficient ways for professors to keep up with the changing algorithms of SEO and social (p. 36). Laverie (2020) studied certifications as used in marketing courses and discovered that: “Involvement in the certifications had a positive influence on learning experience and perceived task mastery [...] the perceived benefits of the certifications are positively related to the perceived effectiveness of the certification as an instructional tool” (p. 72). Cowley, et. al. (2021) outlined the most popular certificate programs that marketing professors are incorporating into their course, including Google Analytics, Hubspot, Hootsuite, Facebook, and Brandwatch. Some companies are offering a digital skills education that directly compete with university programs. For example, technology startups like Pathstream, Hacker U, and Multiverse have begun to offer digital marketing certifications independent of universities, recruiting marketing professors away from academia to work for the private sector ([www.Pathstream.com](http://www.Pathstream.com), [www.hackeru.com](http://www.hackeru.com)).

## **RESEARCH DESIGN & ANALYSIS**

Question 1: How many digital marketing courses are The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) and its 18



AACSB peer, competitive, and aspirant universities offering? Following the research design set by studies that looked at university marketing course offerings (Brocato, White, Bartkus, & Brocato, 2015; Langen, Cowley, & Nguyen, 2019), a content analysis of AACSB college of business websites and course search engines was performed to discover the number of undergraduate courses in digital marketing and the content of the courses as listed in the course descriptions and in the course catalogs. The offering was counted as a digital marketing course if the title and the course catalog description both indicated that digital marketing was a focus of the course.

### Undergraduate Digital Marketing Course Frequency

The total number of undergraduate digital marketing courses across all 19 AACSB schools in every category (Peer, Competitive, Aspirant) is 35 courses in digital marketing. The course had to be in the AY 21-22 course catalog and also available in the course search function to be considered “offered.”

**Table 1: Number of Digital Marketing Courses**

Number of Digital Marketing Courses	Number of Schools	Percentage
1 course	9	47%
2 courses	5	26%
3 courses	4	22%
4 courses	1	5%

As the content analysis shows, nearly half of the schools are offering 1 course in digital marketing through the marketing department. Nearly one-third of the schools in this study are offering 3-4 courses. The mean number of courses offered is 1.83; the median number of courses offered is 1.5. The standard deviation is 1.0. How many courses should be offered at the undergraduate level for marketing students to have mastered the necessary digital marketing concepts? Is more always better? There is no consensus within marketing education on these questions.

### Undergraduate Course Content

When analyzing the content of these courses, we see that the titles of the courses vary in each institution; there is little overlap in titles. The most frequent course titles are *Social Media Marketing* and *Digital Marketing*. When content is extracted from the course description and coded for comparison, there was very little overlap between courses on what is being taught based on the words used in the course catalogs. In terms of prerequisites, there is not significant course progression noted; generally, the digital marketing courses were offered independent of one another. As the following chart shows, Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing are the only duplicate topics across all 35 courses. The remaining courses titles were all offered one time.

**Table 2: Digital Marketing Course Titles**

Digital Marketing Course Titles	Number of Times Offered
Digital Marketing	5
Social Media Marketing	5
Digital & Social Media Marketing	2
Other Courses Offered	1 of each of the following titles: Content Marketing, Digital & Internet Marketing, Digital Marketing & Electronic Commerce, Digital Marketing Analytics, Digital Marketing Fundamentals, Digital Marketing Strategy, Digital Marketing Tools, Digital Media Marketing, Digital Prospecting, Digital Sports Strategy, E-Commerce Marketing Tools and Applications, E-Marketing, E-Retailing, Internet Marketing, Internet Marketing Concepts & Strategy, Introduction to Digital Marketing, Marketing Channels and E-Commerce, Principles of Social Media Marketing, Search Engine Marketing, Social Media & Content Marketing, Social Media Communication Strategies, Social Media Internship, & Social Media Marketing Strategy.

This wide variation in course title and content is consistent with Langen, Cowley, & Nguyen’s research (2019). Each college of business website was also analyzed for potential digital marketing tracks: certificates (offered through the college of business), minors, and majors. Among all 19 schools, one social media marketing minor was observed—a social media minor at the University of Memphis. No other tracks were offered as of the date of this study.

Question 2: What digital marketing skills does industry demand of new marketing major undergraduates? To answer this question, a content analysis of LinkedIn’s job postings in October and November 2021 was conducted based on the research methodology modeled in Schlee & Harich (2010), and Schlee & Karns (2017). Search terms used were: “digital marketing” and “entry-level.” Subsequently, 100 digital marketing positions were analyzed for the digital marketing skills that employers required for entry-level digital marketing jobs that posted on LinkedIn during that timeframe. All digital marketing job skills listed for the position were entered into the database. Only jobs that require a 4-year bachelor’s degree were included and the jobs all specified a marketing degree as one of the majors the job posters were interested in. The other two majors listed with marketing were Communication, and English, stressing the importance of written communication in the new digital space. No jobs that required a master’s degree were included; similarly, any job titles using the word “manager” were not included in this list, as that conveys a skill level beyond “entry-level,” and this research question looks only at undergraduates who are applying for “entry-level” coded positions on LinkedIn. Any job in the United States and in any industry was included in the search. At least one job from every state in the US was represented. Skills were listed in the order of occurrence in the job advertisement to create a hierarchy in the data. Column one listed the first skill listed in the job description. This implied that that skill was more important than the skills that followed. Column two listed the second, and so on. Six columns of data were collected for 100 job advertisements to show 490 skills that these jobs were looking for in digital marketing. The following table shows the digital skills listed in the job ads in order of occurrence (only skills that occurred 5x or greater are listed).

**Table 3: List of Digital Marketing Skills & Frequency in LinkedIn Job Ads**

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Content Creation	31
SM Marketing	28
Analytics	25
Email Marketing	25
KPI tracking	24
SEO	20
Google Analytics	13
Content Marketing	12
CRM	12
Campaign Creation	11
SEM	11
Website Optimization	10
Digital Marketing Strategy	10
Branding	8
Paid Search	8
A/B testing	7
Marketing Campaign Creation	6
Brand Management	5
Google Ads	5
Website Analytics	5
Website Management	5

### CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was multiple. One aim was to see how many and what type of digital marketing courses are now being offered in schools that are listed by AACSB in relation to UTA, the author’s former home institution. Another aim was to see what digital marketing skills marketing majors need and to prioritize teaching those skills in our digital marketing courses.

1. *Marketing Analytics* and *Marketing Content Creation* are two skills that approximately 30% of companies expect from undergraduate marketing majors. Furthermore, according to these results, understanding social media analytics, website analytics, and other types of digital marketing analytics is an integral skill that companies need of entry-level marketing majors. However, only 1 undergraduate course for each of these topics (2 total courses) is offered in all 19 schools. Are undergraduate students getting enough training in marketing analytics to meet industry demands? This content analysis suggests no; they are not. These results dictate that Marketing Analytics and Digital Content Creation are two courses that should be taught in the marketing department as required undergraduate courses. It also suggests that analytics should be added to every subject taught in digital marketing courses. For example, when teaching Digital Marketing, Digital Marketing Analytics should be a skill mastered in that course, and so on with social media marketing, content creation, etc.
2. Digital marketing skills need to be married with marketing principles. As the literature review argues and this content analysis confirms, other majors are increasingly listed in the advertisements for digital marketing entry-level positions (English and Communication). Colleges of communication with advertising and electronic media departments are now including digital content creation and analytics in their coursework. But, as Royle & Laing's 2014 study attests and as marketing executives agree, content creation must be combined with an understanding of traditional marketing. At the very least, offering interdisciplinary courses between departments is an option to accomplish this goal.
3. There is room for improvement in the number of digital marketing tracks offered in all the universities in this study. Of all universities, only one minor in social media marketing exists. No other universities in this study offered a digital marketing major or certificate; tech companies are filling this void with certificate programs.
4. Marketing professors should integrate popular digital marketing certificates and/or badges into their courses. Along these lines, universities need to partner with some of these tech companies (Google, Amazon, and Facebook, to name a few) to offer the digital marketing certificates that are becoming popular in the marketplace. There is a threat that these certificates will supplant traditional degree programs.
5. Digital marketing courses offered at the undergraduate level should be designed to cover the following course topics to ensure that the skills that more than 10% of employers are requesting are being taught: 1) Digital Content Creation & Marketing; 2) Social Media Marketing Campaigns & Analytics; 3) Email Marketing Campaigns & Analytics; 4) SEO and SEM & Analytics; 5) CRM Management & Analytics; 6) Website Marketing, Optimization, & Google Analytics; 7) Digital Marketing Strategy & Advertising; 8) KPIs and A/B Testing; 9) Digital Marketing Campaign Creation. Curriculum needs to be reviewed to ensure it meets dynamic workforce standards.
6. AACSB colleges of business need to come to a consensus on what should be taught in an undergraduate digital marketing course. Compared to foundational courses like Principles of Marketing or Integrated Marketing Communications, the digital marketing course offerings in terms of number and title vary widely and may not be teaching the same information. AACSB colleges of business need to come to a consensus on what should be taught in an undergraduate digital marketing course. Compared to foundational courses like Principles of Marketing or Integrated Marketing Communications, the digital marketing course offerings in terms of number and title vary widely and may not be teaching the same information. An organization like the American Marketing Association could create a task force to make recommendations.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This study does not assign any significance to the geographic locations of the marketing jobs as they appear on LinkedIn. It does not look at any industry information—all industries were included. Some of the terms listed in job ads were indistinguishable from one another; for example, Analytics, Google Analytics, and Website Analytics were listed as three different skills in job ads. The author used independent judgement as to how to interpret the job ads in those instances. Also, beyond the scope of this study are the classes offered outside of marketing departments that some students may take as electives. Limitations also exist in any content analysis of websites and publicly available information; this content changes over time and may have changed since this data was collected. This study also does

not consider future majors and courses that have not been introduced in the course catalog or offered yet as of the date of this study. This study also includes a selection of universities related to the author's former home institution and may not necessarily be a representative selection for all schools.

## APPENDIX

### List of Institutions and Colleges of Business Included in Content Analysis

AACSB Peer Institutions of the University of Texas at Arlington		Abbreviation
The University of Memphis	Fogelman College of Business and Economics	UM
Georgia State University	J. Mack Robinson College of Business	GSU
University of Central Florida	College of Business Administration	UCF
University of Cincinnati	Carl H. Lindner College of Business	Cincinnati
University of Illinois at Chicago	College of Business Administration	UI Chicago
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	Sheldon B. Lubar College of Business	UW Milwaukee
AACSB Competitive Institutions		
The University of Texas at Dallas	Naveen Jindal School of Management	UTD
The University of Texas at San Antonio	College of Business	UTSA
University of North Texas	College of Business	UNT
University of Houston	C.T. Bauer College of Business	UH
Texas Tech	Rawls College of Business Administration	Tech
Texas Christian University	Neeley School of Business	TCU
AACSB Aspirant Institutions		
The University of Nebraska-Lincoln	College of Business	Nebraska
The University of Arkansas	Sam W. Walton College of Business	Arkansas
The University of Georgia	Terry College of Business	Georgia
University of Colorado at Boulder	Leeds School of Business	UC Boulder
University of Missouri	Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. School of Business	Mizzou
Arizona State University	W.P. Carey School of Business	ASU

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# ONLINE GROUP PROJECTS: INSTRUCTOR PATH TO CREATING STUDENT OWNERSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper presents a strategy for managing online group projects to promote the outcome of students taking ownership of their work. Our goal is to provide instructors with a strategic approach for group projects, including coordination, communication, collaboration, and conflict management techniques. The method presented considers what instructors need to create and maintain a positive learning environment crucial to completing group projects that prepare students to succeed in marketing. The strategy will consider the requirements of instructor facilitation in an online learning environment for managing group projects effectively so that students take ownership and not just credit. The data collected from student performance on a group project in an online capstone business course were analyzed. The data analysis is the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of a strategic approach to motivate student ownership of the work within student group projects.*

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## INTRODUCTION

When students achieve their academic goals, marketing organizations expect graduates to work in groups effectively, contributing to customer service and organizational sustainability. Much of the work in marketing consists of group work, such as management tasks, service, and project work (Schruijer, 2016). Upon employment, newly hired graduates will need to accomplish assigned tasks by working in diverse groups to meet stringent deadlines and organizational goals (Shaw, 2004). By understanding the dynamics of working in groups and taking ownership of the results, graduates will improve their success and career advancement prospects. Group projects have become critical in upper-division marketing and management courses because they bring real-world activities into the online classroom (Barr, Dixon, & Gassenheimer 2005; Goodnight 2005). However, instructors incorporating group projects into their classes will have to overcome students' resistance based on past issues. In addition, the instructor will need strong interpersonal and organizational skills and acute knowledge of current marketing practices to gain students' confidence when utilizing group projects.

## MANAGING ONLINE GROUP PROJECTS

### Higher Education and Industry Demands

In higher education, instructors should understand the skillset demanded by marketing for their graduates to succeed. Therefore, the curriculum should incorporate activities that broaden a course's scope and develop social and cultural awareness from the provided learning experiences and activities (Wilhite & Banset, 1998). Group projects are embraced by marketing instructors and leaders in the marketing industry because these activities enrich the student learning experience and enhance students' future career performance (Barr, Dixon, & Gassenheimer, 2005). Students can collaborate on group projects in the classroom and learn from their mistakes without financially impacting the organization. However, once a marketing student is employed, marketing mistakes affect the organization and the stakeholders invested in the organization's success.

### Instructional Considerations

Instructors need to take a strategic approach to encourage students to take ownership of the online marketing group project. Instructors can effectively develop, apply, and measure student ownership using a strategic facilitation process (Cohen et al., 1988; Farrell & Mudrack, 1992). The initial consideration is the instructor's expertise and skillset in facilitating the online course. Since the winter of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has created more dependence on the online delivery of course material. As a result, instructors left the comfort of the face-to-face classroom environment for the relatively hostile online environment (Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020). They found that managing and

mentoring group projects in the online environment require efficient communication, technological, and organizational skills that differ from face-to-face learning.

Additionally, the instructor must consider the number of students enrolled in the online course and the duration of the term. In an accelerated course, the facilitation strategy will require a shortened period for providing students with the group project details and group member selection. Subsequent group leader selection can be challenging for online group projects since there may be limited information on which group members have the necessary leadership and communication skills

### Student Collaboration vs Ownership

What is student ownership for the group project? Ownership can result from when group members take responsibility for who does what tasks, when, where, and why. The instructor can also encourage ownership by designing the group project so that students understand why it is important to contribute in addition as to how it will benefit learning and future career success. Each student of the group needs to be accountable for the development, completion, and outcomes of the group project.

To instill ownership in the group members of an online group project, the instructor must consider factors influencing group cohesiveness and overall performance (Deeter-Schmelz, Kennedy, and Ramsey, 2002). Instructor factors can affect the group project's dynamics, synchronization, and sustainability in the online setting. In order for collaboration to occur, the instructor should establish the learning environment early to motivate the engagement and participation of each student in the development and completion of the group project. The instructor's interactive approach to encouraging student ownership requires that students make more decisions in the group activities. In the interactive process, students apply what has been learned in the course and during the group project development. According to Wood (2003), an interactive and mentoring teaching style is essential in enhancing student learning and course activities, such as group projects.

## GROUP PROJECT DESIGN

The marketing and management capstone course used to analyze student performance and the teaching strategies for group facilitation have a group project as a core assessment. The group project prepares traditional and nontraditional students for real-life challenges. The group project's core learning objectives are 1) strategic planning that encompasses current economic and industry issues; 2) management terminology, principles, and concepts; 3) implementation strategies in an organization; 4) interrelationships and interdependencies among marketing and management function systems of a business; 5) business environments and use of resources; 6) strategic planning that incorporates economic, industry, and company factors; 7) assessment of ethical principles and social responsibility; and 8) global implications (Internal Institutional Data, 2021).

This paper aims to provide educators with a strategy for managing online group projects that will move students toward taking ownership of their work. Instructors need to align coordination, communication, collaboration, and conflict management techniques. Archival data was gathered from a non-profit Midwestern private liberal arts university. This institution provides extensive distance and online offerings to marketing degree students. The data is from the final business capstone course (two in Fall 2021 and one in Spring 2022). Each of these online courses had 18 students during the eight-week term.

The scaffolding learning process is used in the course to prepare students for taking ownership and successful completion of the group project. Student expectations of their role, task, format, and outcomes are outlined through the course material and grading rubrics. Individual case analysis is assigned each week of the term, so that students develop the expertise and skills required in the development and completion of the group project. The results in Table 1 are from the assigned individual case analysis completed midterm in the writing-intensive course. The class average for the individual case analysis indicate that students understood the performance requirements for an extensive case analysis. The results in the table show strengths in the organization of the analysis, depth, writing style, and grammar.

**Table 1**

### Individual Case Analysis: Week 5 Homework

Class/Term/Year	CLO 1 Organization	CLO 2 Depth	CLO 3 W. Style	CLO 4 Grammar	CLO 5 References
Class 1 Fall 2021 8 students	91%	97%	92%	98%	81%
Class 2 Fall 2021 18 students	87%	96%	92%	100%	92%



Class 3 Spring 2022 18 students	91%	97%	92%	98%	81%
Average	89%	96%	92%	98%	84%

Internal Institutional Data, 2021 - 2022

The findings also demonstrate that students need to expand their search efforts for supportive sources during the case analysis research process. Student performance results of the individual case analysis are relevant to the overall group project performance. Each student must develop the skills and knowledge required to fulfill their role and complete tasks within the group project.

Table 2 lists each Core Learning Outcome (CLOs) and the students' performance. The period examined is the Fall I 2021 course, which had four groups. The results for CLOs 4, 5, and 6 had room for improvement in the submitted group projects. However, the groups mastered the subject matter in the remaining CLOs in the project submissions. The analysis of the data indicates that the groups collaborated and worked together. The group leaders provided written communication as to how each group member contributed to the project.

**Table 2**

**Group Project: Class I Fall 2021**

	CLO 1 Industry & Econ	CLO 2 Term & Con	CLO 3 Imp Strategy	CLO 4 Interrel/ Interdep	CLO 5 Bus Environ	CLO 6 Strategy Plan	CLO 7 Ethical Social	CLO 8 Global Imp
Group A 4 students	100%	100%	100%	92%	100%	92%	100%	100%
Group B 4 students	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Group C 4 students	100%	100%	100%	88%	88%	88%	100%	100%
Group D 5 students	100%	100%	100%	92%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Average 17 students	100%	100%	100%	93%	97%	95%	100%	100%

Internal Institutional Data, 2021

Table 3 contains the Core Learning Outcomes (CLOs) for the Fall II 2021 course, with four groups. The group project results for CLOs 2, 3, 4, and 5 had room for improvement. However, the groups mastered the subject matter in the remaining CLOs in the project submission.

**Table 3**

**Group Project: Class II Fall 2021**

	CLO 1 Industry & Econ	CLO 2 Term & Con	CLO 3 Imp Strategy	CLO 4 Interrel/ Interdep	CLO 5 Bus Environ	CLO 6 Strategy Plan	CLO 7 Ethical Social	CLO 8 Global Imp
Group E 4 students	100%	100%	100%	92%	88%	100%	100%	100%
Group F 3 students	100%	100%	100%	92%	92%	100%	100%	100%
Group G 5 students	100%	100%	100%	92%	92%	98%	100%	100%
Group H 4 students	100%	80%	82%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Average 16 students	100%	95%	96%	94%	93%	99%	100%	100%

Internal Institutional Data 2021

Table 4 covers the Spring I 2022 course. The table lists the Core Learning Outcomes (CLOs) and the results for

each. The Spring I course had four groups. The results for CLOs 4 and 5 indicated room for improvement in the submitted group projects. The group mastered the subject matter in the remaining CLOs in the project submission.

**Table 4**

**Group Project: Spring I 2022**

	CLO 1 Industry & Econ	CLO 2 Term & Con	CLO 3 Imp Strategy	CLO 4 Interrel/ Interdep	CLO 5 Bus Environ	CLO 6 Strategy Plan	CLO 7 Ethical Social	CLO 8 Global Imp
Group I 5 students	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Group J 5 students	100%	100%	100%	92%	96%	100%	100%	100%
Group K 3 students	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Group L 4 students	100%	100%	100%	92%	92%	100%	100%	100%
Average 17 students	100%	100%	100%	96%	97%	100%	100%	100%

Internal Institutional Data, 2022

The individual case analysis allowed the instructor to prepare each student to take on the challenges of contributing to a diverse working group. In addition, the instructor utilized the individual case analysis to understand what areas needed improvement in the learning process. The consistency of the results for the group projects indicates that taking ownership of the project by the group members can be influenced by the instructor's interactive approach to managing and mentoring group projects. The proactive approach to managing group projects can prepare students for working in the marketing industry.

**CREATING OWNERSHIP THROUGH INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

Managing group projects in academia and the marketing industry are very similar. Managing a group project requires four steps that include coordination, clear and concise communication, collegial collaboration, and effective conflict management techniques. The steps for managing group projects are called "the Four C's." In the capstone courses listed for this study, the instructor consistently used the Four C's strategic approach to instill student ownership through the group project implementation.

**Coordination**

Instructor coordination established the groundwork for introducing, delivering, and managing the group project in the online setting. The instructor analyzed several factors concerning the project's scope by assessing the student's predicted perception and acceptance of the project experience. The factors included timetables, group size, course workload, grading rubric, peer evaluation, and the possibility of social loafing (Choi and Ro, 2012). Implementation of the individual project served to prepare students for a group case analysis. Before the term start date, the instructor formed groups of 3 – 5 students based on the enrollment for the online course. The instructor then selected the team leaders to mirror the selection process widely used by managers in the marketing field for group selection, which better prepares students for the workplace (Lane, Alshare, Nickels, Armstrong, & Rodriguez-Abitia, 2009).

**Clear and Concise Communication**

Establishing two-way communication began with the syllabus. Once the syllabus was approved and posted, course announcements detailed the group project and assessment tools. Studies have shown that students' overall attitude is positive toward group projects (Gottschall & Garcia-Bayonas, 2008). The group project requires detailed, concise information. The instructions should leave no doubts regarding what is needed and expected for each project section. Group leaders provided information to the instructor via mandatory status reports during the term to improve communication. In addition, each leader provided a status report of the group's progress via email. Additionally, a required draft of the work completed by each group was reviewed. The two status reports and the preliminary draft were a precursor to submitting the final project, allowing an opportunity for instructor feedback and intervention if needed.

### **Collegial Collaboration**

A positive learning environment begins with the engagement and encouragement of the instructor during the management and mentoring process for each group. Once the group members were selected and the team leader announced, the instructor provided a discussion forum for each team. In addition, communication of essential aspects of the required group work took place through course announcements and email. Taking a passive approach and assuming that students understand what is involved in participation in the group project could lead to confusion and frustration by group members. In the analyzed group projects, the instructor took an interactive approach, and each group met the deadline for submission. There were only two situations where a team leader asked for assistance with a group member's participation.

Research has shown that enlisting the involvement and input of group members to give them a "voice" and control over the work required for the project can promote satisfaction with the group process (Wood, 2003). The instructor not only empowered the groups in the three courses but also promoted ownership by providing more significant perceived influence and control. With a focus on submitting a quality project, group members overall demonstrated ownership in the outcome of their collaborative work.

### **Conflict Management**

Conflict can occur in group projects found in the online classroom environment and the marketing field. When trying to avert conflict, it is imperative to know that group performance and group cohesion can be affected by the personality composition of group members, individual abilities, instructor feedback, and group work principles taught in the class (Wood, 2003). The conflict did arise in at least one group from each of the three courses analyzed. In each situation, the instructor addressed a problem of social loafing from a group member who was passive in participation and contribution to the group. The conflict situations communicated to the instructor during the first status report in each course enabled the instructor to provide feedback to the group member not meeting expectations. By maintaining student participation through feedback, a sense of belonging for the student can impact retention (O'Keefe, 2013). Based on group project data from the courses analyzed, the instructor's interpersonal skills and the students' overall maturity levels in the courses analyzed impacted the extent and timing of conflict resolution.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The instructor's role in creating student ownership when working with online group projects is vital for student success in the marketing field. Generating an online classroom environment that encourages collaboration, engagement, and interaction will allow students to develop the skills necessary for working in a diverse group environment. Most importantly, open communication channels with timely feedback can differentiate between focused and struggling groups with productivity issues. Any negative experiences from previous attempts at group projects should be discussed for group projects to be successful. Once negative attitudes have been addressed, the instructor can move forward to providing students with an educational experience that will benefit them throughout their marketing careers.

Recommendations for a future study include conducting research to compare the results of student performance for the core learning objectives with student opinion surveys in the course. The purpose of this research would be to gather information of student perception and compare to actual student performance results. Another recommendation for a future study is to compare the effectiveness of the scaffolding learning process in academia to professional development activities in the marketing industry.

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# ANALYTICS IN THE CLASSROOM: NUMERACY & NOMENCLATURE THROUGHOUT MARKETING CURRICULUM

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## ABSTRACT

*Recommendations to improve student numeracy and relevant nomenclature across marketing curriculum are explored. The discussion of program level considerations includes level of targeted vs enrolled students, course sequencing, and content clarification. The authors then provide specific actions for faculty divided by student matriculation. Underclassmen should use the tool Management by the Numbers (MBTN) to begin numeracy training with metrics. Between underclassmen and upperclassmen (In the middle), students should use digital data management platforms like Google Analytics (GA) to refine their skills with metrics. Lastly, upperclassmen should swap out term papers for projects that emphasize mastery of methodological and analytical concepts.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Whether it is the students or the instructor, there is ample fear in the marketing classroom when the discussion turns to analytics, metrics, statistics, or numbers in general. Sokolowski and Ansari (2017) define math anxiety as ‘the feeling of being extremely nervous when faced with doing basic mathematics.’ This paper provides recommendations to belay students’ fear of numbers through a graduated approach across marketing curricula in programs that are not data focused. More specifically, what programmatic considerations need to be made, and specific actions faculty can use to introduce different types of numbers when the quantity of courses dedicated to the topic are limited.

## PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Analytics in the Classroom II panel’s recommendations start with programmatic concerns: clarifying your context and content. Instructors need to assess the level of the students targeted vs. enrolled in a course. Gradual introduction of numeracy and relevant nomenclature across curriculum requires going beyond the basic 100, 200, etc. level distinction courses have. Principles of marketing, a course typically targeting sophomores and juniors, should not have its enrollment dominated by seniors. Allowing introductory courses to be delayed diminishes the return on investment of faculty time and resources aimed at effectively addressing math anxiety in the classroom. Curriculum planning must outline a basic course sequence and limit concurrent enrollment in introductory classes and the ones that follow.

The issue of content is the core of our subsequent recommendations. The term analytics is often used in academia as an umbrella term for metrics, data mining, actual analytics, etc. Providing a clear split between analytics and other related concepts allows programs to decide what skills they want their graduates to have. Is your program’s goal to produce industry managers who are adjusting product portfolios, R&D workers who can assess customer satisfaction, or data miners who can build complex codes for companies like Visa?

Metrics are a more concrete type of number when compared to analytics. Unit selling price (metric) is easier to understand than a satisfaction rating (analytic). An example of the difference between metrics and analytics is Ganesh’s (2015) marketing metrics hotel case. Students are asked to compute the best mix of hotel rooms based on the profit and occupancy rate for three different rooms. They are provided the price and occupancy rates for three different rooms. With this information, they need to decide what is the optimal room mix for the hotel. This case would be different if students were provided with a data set from a satisfaction survey and told to recommend strategies for value creation. Metrics encompass, but are not limited to, the numbers a marketer would utilize from balance sheets, income statements, and cash flow statements. How many of an offering does the company have? What is the current price? How many sales need to be made to break even? These numbers differ from analytics both in how they are generated and how they are used.

Analytics is the procedure for discovering relationships, predicting unknown outcomes, interpreting data, and communicating meaningful patterns in the data (Oracle 2022; SAS 2022). It assists businesses to gain insights and meaningful data which they might not have otherwise noticed, and it is one of the tools that allows marketers to make informed decisions. Just like in the olden days when marketing research was the most prominent power tool that assisted managers to make informed decisions instead of solely relying on intuitions, modern-day marketers utilize analytics tools to refine, continuously adjust their approaches, and measure performances (Baijens et al. 2022; Davenport 2013; Gupta 2022). While in-store performance is tracked and analyzed by sales system and data, online traffic is another facet of business operation nowadays that stretches beyond the online side of businesses, as customers collect information and even verify businesses' legitimacy based on firms' online presence (Aviso 2022; Jordan 2021).

Based on this division of metrics and analytics, our recommendations have been broken down by student progress: underclassmen, in the middle, and upperclassmen.

### **UNDERCLASSMEN**

As much as possible, students need to be introduced to numeracy and relevant nomenclature in their first and second year at university. Bloom's taxonomy (Armstrong, 2010) suggests creating a learning space for students that requires increasing levels of intellectual effort. The initial levels for underclassman are 1) remembering and 2) understanding. If students are introduced to omnibus tests, confidence intervals, and breakeven analyses in their final semester, then it is unrealistic to expect them to apply (level three) and assess (level four) constructs that they are still trying to remember and define.

It is therefore the recommendation of the authors that introductory courses or courses aimed at underclassmen focus on metrics rather than analytics. This recommendation is supported by the discipline's introductory textbooks, such as those written by Kotler and Armstrong, including appendices dedicated to metrics. One tool in particular streamlines the introduction of metrics in the college classroom: MBTN Academy (formerly Management By the Numbers). MBTN has over fifty modules on a range of topics including advertising metrics, breakeven analysis, pricing, and forecasting.

What makes this tool so effective in addressing math fears is 1) students are allowed (and encouraged) to work together through the structure of the problems, 2) they have unlimited attempts to understand how to compute a desired metric, and 3) the support resources. MBTN provides each student with different numerical values for the same problem. The change in the number does not affect the formula, so they can talk with their peers. When they get stuck or anxious about their ability to successfully complete their assignment, they can turn to their peers for validation, reassurance, and encouragement. Their peers cannot provide an answer to copy, but they can explain which relationship are used in the formula to find the answer. This shifts the focus from 'math' to the relationships between the business constructs being discussed. Once students understand why cost per thousand includes the media buy, audience size, and a multiplier, then the answer to a specific problem becomes an afterthought. Students have two attempts to solve a problem with a specific set of numbers before being shown how to compute the answer. After that, they are given a new set of number to work with until they successfully complete the set of problems. Each module is setup with PDFs and narrated slides that walk the learner through the concept being tested. MBTN is setup so that instructors select the most appropriate set of modules for their students, check on their students, and receive a summary report of how their students did. This tool has been designed to be easy for students to use and for faculty to incorporate into their courses.

### **IN THE MIDDLE**

Beyond advertisement and transactional performances, marketers have utilized experimentations and randomized trials, which are one of the primary approaches of marketing research methods. Such approaches strive to determine whether potential improvements of an alternative version (e.g., ecommerce product pages, promotional materials, product information, etc.) generate better reactions from customers (Singh et al. 2022). Combining online operation with the concept of A/B testing—a way of comparing two versions of subjects to determine which performs better (Hair et al. 2022; Gallo 2017)—marketers can experiment with the approaches that work better than others, in the most customized way, with their analytical platforms given their target market. A/B testing will assist them to compare and figure out more suitable combinations of their marketing mixes. In addition, search engine optimization (SEO hereafter)—the practice of increasing both the quality and quantity of online traffic and exposure via non-paid (a.k.a., organic) search engine results (Jami 2022; Muller et al. 2022)—will help marketers to be more closely attuned to customers. It will allow marketers to understand their customers' expressions, interests, and hangouts more intimately, eventually enabling them to match customers wants and needs with their offerings.

There is a plethora of web analytics platforms from well-established companies, such as Adobe, IBM, HubSpot, and other providers that offer both free—Open Web Analytics, Clicky, Amplitude, and Hotjar—and paid analytics platforms—Kissmetrics, Matomo, SEMruch, Mixpanel, Mamoto, and Charbeat (not ranked in any particular order) (Bigby 2021; Davidow 2022; Djuraskovic 2022). Among them, Google Analytics stands out due to its status as the universal platform of modern-day web analytics platform and free-of-charge service. Universal Google Analytics (UGA hereafter) is an analytics tool that collects, reports, and analyzes data generated by users' website visits and interactions. Its latest version—Google Analytics 4 (GA4 hereafter)—now tracks and monitors web and app data (Fitzgerald 2022; Bigby 2021; Frost 2022; Google 2022a). UGA's measurements, including pages, events, e-commerce and social interaction hits, are embedded in GA4 with some enhanced measurements, such as users' page scroll and video engagement (Google 2022b; Fox 2022).

### **Gaining customer Insights**

Google Analytics (GA hereafter) in general provides businesses with insights that inform their digital whereabouts. For example, GA can show marketers if there are specific webpages, products, or digital content on their websites that are suddenly gaining traction. It tells marketers how many users had visited over a specified period and how many of the visitors (both new and repeated ones) had viewed certain webpages, thereby leading to various interpretations that suggest surging trends, popular content, and/or products in demand. (Fox 2022; Bigby 2021). As GA offers visitor information in terms of demographics, geography, and technologies (e.g., used web browsers and devices information—operating system, brands of devices, version of devices, etc.), segmentation tools and/or comparing a group of visitors can be applied to create more targeted approaches to the intended audience. Marketers can identify the rate of customer churn—i.e., the rate of customer defection for a given period (Frankenfield et al. 2022)—and visitor changes, which allows them to make informed resource allocation decisions to retain customers and/or change their offerings. With the capabilities of GA4 that include website, app, and other channel data, such as YouTube Videos (Machado 2021), these sorts of insights can assist marketers to create more informed systematic marketing strategies, digital tactics, and other business plans.

### **Understanding consumers better**

GA can assist marketers to make educated guesses, which provide a more customer-centric approach to measurement, as user IDs that aid customer behavior tracking were added to GA4. As visitors are assigned unique user IDs, marketers can track their behavior individually from the acquisition state to engagement, monetization, and retention. Given the collected data, customers' life cycle in terms of interactions with marketers' web presences can be provided, breaking down user activity at each stage of the customer journey (Fox 2022; Google 2022c). In addition, concerning how applicable customers find marketers' online presence, it is imperative that marketers lay out digital breadcrumbs. They lead customers to their web presences and provide strategically constructed digital campaigns that are significantly grounded in SEO, which allow them to identify content and topics that perform better with their audience (Fitzgerald 2022). As backlinks—links created when one website links to another, also known as “inbound links” or “incoming links” (Lyons 2022), are one of the most significant indicators of content quality that search engines, like Google or Bing, use to determine search engine result pages, when combined with GA and SEO tools, marketers can use them to understand and monitor how potential customers find their digital presence. Since earning and utilizing authoritative backlinks is one of the most influential signals that Google considers for ranking content upon a user's online search, the insights provided by GA can be extremely valuable.

### **Teaching Google Analytics**

GA is a great tool that college faculty can use as a conduit for teaching analytics. Google Analytics academy currently provides training for Data Studio—an online tool that converts data into informative reports and dashboard data using the same data that are available in GA custom reports (Google 2022d)—and Google Tag Manager—a tag management system that allows users to update measurement and related website codes for GA tracking (Google 2022e)—along with UGA training. Although Google announced that it will phase out UGA in 2023, stopping data processing on July 1, 2023 (Google 2022f), official GA4 training is being gradually released on Google SkillShop—a little more than 4 hours of training as of August 2022—with various paid and free training available. With officially created Google content, rapidly increasing other training content, and demo accounts, faculty members may doubt their role in teaching analytics with GA. However, one of the inherent criticisms of GA has been its usability, with many complaining that it is too difficult to use and lacks integration of functions (Montti 2021; Spilka 2021). In other words, despite its abundant capabilities, GA comes with too many buttons and is an overwhelming tool unless users clearly understand the platforms. Therefore, it is often challenging to learn GA without clear guidance, case-based practices, and systematic training to make sense of GA metrics. In addition, a free GA account accompanies access to

a demo account, which is a fully functional Google Analytics account, thus allowing users to see both the Google Merchandise store and Flood-It! Game properties. They are designed to provide real business data and allow learners to experiment with GA4 features (Google 2022g), which makes them work as an effective pedagogical tool that connects technical concepts and business practices. In practice, unless marketers applied A/B testing methods to compare multiple versions of website and content, GA generated metrics are meaningless, while they may not even have meaningful comparisons without employing articulated SEO strategies. Therefore, adopting GA in college classrooms requires the role of faculty more than ever as new learners see GA as full of goggles and jumbles without guided training to interpret metrics and being trained to generate holistic understanding of business issues.

## UPPERCLASSMEN

Digital data management platforms are powerful tools that come with one major weakness. You don't get to access your raw data. This limits what analyses can be conducted. After exploring the aforementioned data management platforms students should be ready to pull back the curtain to see how those numbers are generated and what else they can do with them. There is one caveat to taking off the training wheels. As mentioned in the underclassmen section, new knowledge needs to be assessed differently than refined knowledge. The research methodology portion of a course should be designed keeping in mind that most of the content is new and should be assessed as level one learning from Bloom's taxonomy. An example of this is an operational definition. The type of definition is level one, but the assessment of the numbers generated from the item should be higher. The expectation is students will struggle with defining how they will measure satisfaction, but not expect them to struggle with generating an average for that construct. The analytics portion of the course can be assessed at the higher levels of the pyramid (apply, analyze, evaluate, & create). Building on previous exposures to numerical constructs lets this course function as the capstone of numeracy in undergraduate marketing curriculum.

To balance these conflicting levels of assessment, a fill-in-the-blank style project that takes the place of a traditional research paper was developed. This moves the focus from writing a compelling narrative to explicitly demonstrating comprehension of selected content. Case in point, rather than stating how amazing a company is or is not, students pull their company's 10-K, find their quarterly profits over the last three years, and populate a table with that information. Students can now get a real sense in dollars of how their company is doing and what patterns may exist within their consumer base.

In developing this assignment, instructors need to consider what curriculum has already been covered in passing and in depth. For new knowledge, highly structured questions keep students from going left of field. 'Tell me about your company' as a prompt allows too many chances for student to miss key information needed to develop a research project. Instead, students are given a list: Company name, headquarter location, founding date, ticker, current stock price, stock price at the end of the semester, and a company history. The process is repeated to produce a problem statement, list of items, survey, data collection plan, analysis, and recommendation sheet. The instructor provides as much or as little guidance as they deem appropriate for their program and students. After six years of refining the template, the first author has found that the students do not struggle with collecting, analyzing, or reporting data. Their struggle is with methodology, which is to be expected as it is new content.

## CONCLUSION

These recommendations and their tools are summarized as gradual- or staged- introduction to numeracy across marketing curriculum to build confidence and reduce fear among students. The recommendations also take into account that faculty have a finite amount of time and resources. MBTN is \$15 a semester per student. The company provides free accounts for faculty to review their offering. MBTN offers certifications that students can include on their resumes demonstrating their mastery of metrics. GA and other platforms enable students to build their own website and monitor their space over the course of the semester. They can also collaborate with local companies to help them meet simple goals like increasing foot traffic and click through rates. The final recommendation, replacing a term paper with a guided project, is the most time intensive for faculty starting from scratch. To help implement this recommendation, the template is being offered upon request as a starting point for others to modify to suit their needs. Our goal is to set students up for success through thoughtfully planned curriculum and manageable adjustments for faculty.



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# IMPACT OF COVID19 OUTBREAK ON TWITTER SENTIMENT OF FAST-FOOD INDUSTRY

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## *EXTENDED ABSTRACT*

Consumers have long resorted to creating online user-generated content (UGC) to share their consumption experiences and any other thoughts or feelings they may have about a company or a brand. Amongst the myriad of platforms where a consumer can post their content the most popular seems to be social media. One very popular social media platform used by both consumers and companies is Twitter, which provides an excellent environment where consumers and companies can communicate, engage, discuss, research, and provide feedback in real-time.

Consumer sentiment of a particular company should remain relatively stable if everything remains the same. However, a company's decision to act or react to some external environmental changes may positively or negatively impact its consumers' sentiment towards that company. One such external environmental change that forced everyone in the world, including businesses, to act was the COVID-19 (Covid) pandemic. COVID-19 was first identified in the Wuhan province of China in December of 2019. This spread throughout the world and the World Health Organization labeled it a pandemic in March of 2020. The US government and the Center for Disease Control subsequently created several regulations to curtail the spread of Covid. As the Covid pandemic progressed many companies were forced to react to the changing environment that included changing consumer habits as well as numerous novel government regulations.

This paper aims to analyze the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on consumers' sentiment with a focus on the fast-food industry. Given the polarization and politicization of the Covid Pandemic and the response to it, it would not be surprising to surmise that public opinion of a company's response will also generate a polarized public response. The paper analyzes tweets from 13 fast-food restaurants (Burger King, Chipotle, Dominos, Dunkin Donuts, KFC, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Popeyes Chicken, Sonic Drive-in, Starbucks, Taco Bell, Tim Hortons, & Wendy's). Twitter data was collected for those fast-food restaurants beginning May 2018 till May 2021. While the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid19 as a pandemic in March of 2020, Twitter mentions of the pandemic had already begun in early 2020. The tweets were collected, processed, and then used for text mining and sentiment analysis.

A total of 102 million tweets were collected out of which 42 million were original tweets and the remaining were retweets. Starbucks had the highest tweet volume at 32.12 million tweets followed by McDonald's at 26.47 million tweets while Sonic Drive-in had the lowest tweet volume at 0.73 million tweets over the data collection period. Amongst all the tweets 43.77% were positive, 34.21% were neutral, and 22.02% were negative. As hypothesized, the percentage of neutral tweets decreased significantly during the pandemic for 9 out of the 13 restaurants with an average decrease of 3.8%. 3 restaurants had a significant increase with an average increase of 0.5% neutral tweets. The negative tweets during the pandemic increased by around 2.35% for 9 restaurants while it decreased by 1.3% for 3 restaurants. Similarly, the percentage of positive tweets increased for 8 restaurants by around 2.3% but decreased for 4 restaurants with an average decrease of 1.8%.

Further analysis comparing tweets related to Covid with tweets unrelated to Covid provides evidence for consumer sentiment polarization. The percentage of Covid-related tweets that were neutral was 13.53% compared to non-Covid-related tweets at 33.06%. This drop in neutral tweets corresponds to an increase in negative and positive tweets. The percentage of negative Covid-related tweets was 39.28% compared to 22.46% for non-Covid-related tweets. 44.48% of non-Covid-related tweets were positive compared to 47.18% of Covid-related tweets. Analyzing the 8 emotions - anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, and trust provide further support. All 8 emotional sentiments expressed in Covid-related tweets were significantly higher than non-Covid-related tweets. Consumers used about 14% more emotional words in Covid tweets compared to non-Covid tweets.

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# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND STUDENT OUTCOMES: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY EXPLORING HOW EQ INTERVENTIONS IMPACT PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, AND COURSE SATISFACTION

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## **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

This paper and presentation summarize the results of a longitudinal study exploring the relationship between emotional intelligence (EQ) interventions in the classroom with academic performance, course satisfaction, and personal and professional development outcomes. The incorporation of EQ content was originally designed to address multiple concerns. First, an exploration of the concept of EQ revealed that students often possessed low levels across the five elements as defined by Daniel Goleman, which include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. To further explore this, an assessment utilizing EQ was incorporated into an introductory marketing course. Results from this assessment supported initial findings and highlighted specific areas where students most struggled with EQ. Second, data from a separate study revealed that students struggled in applying the concept of EQ to marketing. Specifically, students found it difficult to connect individual factors associated with EQ to how those factors could influence how consumers view themselves and others, how this perception could play out with respect to how a consumer engages with/perceives elements of the marketing mix, and how a manipulation of marketing mix factors could speak to differences across consumers possessing varying levels of EQ.

Given the above results, the importance of EQ in professional and personal settings, and the behavioral, academic, and emotional challenges for students (often connected to both EQ and the experience of emerging adulthood), EQ components were incorporated into an introductory marketing course. To measure the effectiveness of this intervention, a longitudinal study was developed to explore differences/similarities across three distinct groups:

- Group A – No intervention. Emotional intelligence was not incorporated into the curriculum. Total EQ class time – 0 hours.
- Group B – Intervention with assessment. Students completed an assessment, while a class session was dedicated to exploring EQ in general and how EQ concepts could be tied into an understanding of consumers. Total EQ class time – 1.5 hours.
- Group C – Intervention with assessment and follow-up content. Students completed an assessment, with an initial class session dedicated to exploring EQ in general and how EQ concepts could be tied into an understanding of consumers (session mirrored the session for Group B). In addition, regular discussion exploring EQ in general and how EQ could be utilized to understand consumers was integrated into the course. Total EQ class time – 9 hours.

All data was collected from an introductory marketing course comprised of both majors and non-majors. To minimize differences in enrollment patterns between sections, semesters, and course times, classes were randomly selected, and group categorization then randomly assigned. (To further minimize differences in enrollment patterns, difference scores, when feasible, were utilized. See below.) Total sample size is 560, broken down into the following:  $N_{\text{GroupA}}=207$ ,  $N_{\text{GroupB}}=192$ , and  $N_{\text{GroupC}}=161$ .

Results demonstrate that across multiple markers, with respect to EQ outcomes, course satisfaction outcomes, and academic performance outcomes, that EQ interventions lead to statistically significant improvements. While space constraints limit the results that can be presented here, some statistically significant results include the following. For EQ outcomes, students saw improvement in actual EQ scores (measured pre/post, in aggregate). They also perceived themselves to be better prepared to utilize EQ skills, reflect on EQ areas needing attention, and to utilize EQ areas

where they demonstrate strength. With respect to course satisfaction, students were more highly satisfied with the course and saw the course as offering more benefit to their future academic and professional success. Finally, students demonstrated improved academic outcomes on exams and projects and demonstrated a deeper understanding of how to tie EQ to the discipline.

	<b>Group A: No Intervention</b>	<b>Group B: Intervention w/ Assessment</b>	<b>Group C: Intervention w/ Assessment and Follow-Up</b>
<b><i>EQ Outcomes</i></b>			
EQ Aggregate Diff. (Pre/Post)	1.2	4.8	5.6
EQ Aggregate Perception Diff. (5-Point Scale)	.25	1.05	1.76
<b><i>Course Satisfaction Outcomes</i></b>			
Course Satisfaction (5-Point Scale)	4.24	4.78	4.86
Professional Benefit (5-Point Scale)	4.27	4.88	4.91
Academic Benefit (5-Point Scale)	4.32	4.82	4.92
<b><i>Academic Performance Outcomes</i></b>			
Content Difference – Exams (Pre/Post)	6.53	11.21	14.32
Content Difference – Project (Pre/Post)	5.31	13.42	14.89
EQ Insight Score (100-point scale)	82.64	89.41	93.21

Overall, the results demonstrate the benefits and promise of incorporating EQ into an academic curriculum. Moving forward, the goal is to expand analysis to further account for student differences and incorporate additional data from a broader set of courses, both to compare results and to ascertain how multiple interventions (across courses) could impact student outcomes.

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# BRAND PERSONALITY, INTEREST, AND MAJOR SELECTION: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Some business majors have experienced decline in student enrollment numbers across universities and this has been a critical concern for academic degree programs. Many studies have tried to identify the factors that influence the student's choice of major. These studies have examined different groups of choice factors including personal characteristics, social influences, job and job-market characteristics, and program characteristics.

Few studies have investigated the effect of personality on major selection (e.g., Gilbert et al, 2010; Lakhal et al., 2012; Pringle et al., 2010). The anecdotal evidence suggests that business majors can be distinguished with respect to their brand personalities. Pringle et al. (2010) argued that students hold stereotypes of particular occupations. Brand personality of a major can be formed on the basis of stereotypes of occupations representing specific majors, characteristics of majors learned via formal education, associations students have about majors, advertising and entertainment programs such as movies and TV shows depicting occupations in certain ways, the image of the company that hires specific majors, the image of people specializing in a particular major, and so on. There is evidence suggesting that people seek work environments congruent with their needs or predispositions (Barnowe et al., 1979).

The purpose of this study is to explore whether the congruity between the student's personality and brand personality of the academic major influences the student's interest in the major and leads to his/her choice of academic major. More specifically, this study investigates the applicability of the brand personality concept to academic majors and the effects of the self-brand personality congruity on interest in the major and related potential academic outcomes through a theoretical framework. The potential implications of the suggested theoretical framework were discussed.

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# SATISFACTION AS REASONS: DRIVERS OF PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION BRAND LOYALTY

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role satisfaction plays in professional club participation using the Behavioral Reasoning Theory (BRT) framework. BRT extends intentions models (such as the Theories of Planned Behavior and Reasoned Action—TPB and TRA respectively) by incorporating Beliefs, Reasons, Global Motives, Intentions, and Behavior. In addition, Behavior in BRT reinforces Reasons through a feedback loop. By including the Reasons construct, additional variance is explained when predicting Behavioral Intentions. In this study, Reasons are operationalized as Satisfaction (Tan, Abd Aziz, & Ngah, 2021).

Intentions approximate Behavior in BRT consistent with other behavioral intention models such as the TPB and TRA (Westaby, 2005). Attitudes are well-established antecedents of Behavioral Intentions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Westaby (2005) showed that Reasons lead to Global Motives and that Attitudes constitute a Global Motive construct in BRT. Thus, as Briggs et al. (2010) reported, Attitudes are shaped and predicted by Reasons. This study operationalizes the construct of Global Motives as Attitudes Toward Professional Organizations (APO) (Schimmel, Nicholls & Nicastro, 2022). This study investigates the relationship between APO and Behavioral Intentions (Brand Loyalty) of participating (in) and recommending (to others) participation in the professional organization. The interplay of these constructs lead to the following three hypotheses

*H1: APO is positively related to Brand Loyalty*

*H2: Satisfaction is positively related to APO.*

*H3: Satisfaction is positively related to Brand Loyalty.*

*H4: APO will mediate the relationship between Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty.*

PLS-SEM 3 is used for several reasons. Research indicates that Satisfaction is not normally distributed (Hurley & Estelami, 1998), making it a candidate for PLS-SEM. PLS-SEM is a component-based least squares alternative and is more robust than CB-SEM especially for small samples (Goodhue, Lewis, & Thompson, 2012; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). The use of the satisfaction construct and small sample size were the primary reasons PLS-SEM was chosen.

The questionnaire was designed using commercially available survey software (Qualtrics). The survey included features to improve visual clarity and attractiveness, simplify the layout, and ease of navigation. In addition, a progress bar indicated progress toward completion. All these features reduced the potential for measurement error and increased likelihood of completion (Hair et al., 2010). The survey was technically pretested to ensure it worked as expected on a variety of platforms and there were not any technical deficiencies. The survey itself was estimated to take seven to 15 minutes. On average, the survey took 11 minutes. The survey was broken into sections (screens). After the data were collected in Qualtrics, it was exported into Excel, then Smart PLS.

The Reasons construct, operationalized by Satisfaction, predicted both Behavioral Intentions (Brand Loyalty) and Attitudes (APO). The Attitudes construct (APO) was also a predictor of Behavioral Intentions (Brand Loyalty). The path for Satisfaction → Brand Loyalty and the path for Satisfaction → APO → Brand Loyalty were positive and significant and supports the theoretical mediated relationship between Reasons and Attitude. Further research should test whether other Reasons constructs and Attitude constructs have similar mediated relationships in BRT.

The results discussed above support BRT. From a practical perspective, this research indicates that Satisfaction as a member of a professional organization is a significant predictor of Brand Loyalty or staying with the professional organization and telling others about the organization (word of mouth). The research also revealed that APO both predicts Brand Loyalty and mediates the relationship between Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty. As such, a recommendation to professional organizations is that they identify and monitor what is important to their members



(adds value) and offer the things that add this value. If they do not offer what is identified as valuable, they may lose continued participation and the ability to recruit members through word of mouth.

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# IS SOCIAL CAPITAL ALWAYS "CAPITAL"?: MEASURING AND LEVERAGING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ONLINE USER COMMUNITIES FOR IN-GROUP DIFFUSION

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

An online user community (OUC) is a network of people with shared enthusiasm and knowledge about a specific topic (Kozinets 1999) such as music (e.g., Last.fm, Pandora, Spotify), games (e.g., Raptr, Gamerjibe), movies (e.g., Letterboxd.com, Movie4cast.com), etc. OUCs include various kinds of sub-communities hosted on online platforms (e.g., a British rock community on Last.fm) or websites (e.g., a sports team's fan forum).

Researchers have studied and identified social capital, an intangible asset to community members based on reciprocal goodwill and trust, as an essential "capital" that facilitates in-group diffusion within OUCs (Chiu, Hsu, and Wang 2006; Lu and Yang 2011). For example, Lu and Yang (2011) state that interaction frequency, a source of social capital, in an online community facilitates the diffusion of information in the community. Cheng (2017) also argues that network density, another source of social capital defined as a ratio of the number of ties to the number of possible ties in a network (Rowley 1997), increases the diffusion of creative articles, which increases the probability of that information being disseminated in online blogs. The rationales behind the claim are intuitive; social capital enables an effective transfer of information and strengthens solidarity in communities, thereby promoting in-group diffusion

Our research addresses these limitations by examining the nuanced role of social capital and providing a holistic view of the roles that all three social capital dimensions play in in-group diffusion. Specifically, we claim that all dimensions of social capital act as a double-edged sword for in-group diffusion depending on how compatible the product is with the group's identity; group identity refers to "a shared focus on an interest, need, information, service or support, that provides a reason for individual members to belong to the community" (Preece 2011, p.349).

We consistently find the following results across the different social capital dimensions. For new songs compatible with the group identity of OUCs, the diffusion rate is greater in communities with higher social capital than in communities with lower social capital; thus, social capital promotes the diffusion of new products compatible with group identity.

Our study also offers important managerial implications. First, our findings provide insights for managers who manage their own OUCs (e.g., brand communities). To design a community in which members can actively communicate about new products consistent with the group identity, managers should increase social capital within the community. Conversely, to design a community in which members can freely interact about a variety of new products, which may include products that are not consistent with the group identity, managers should not bolster social capital within the community.

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# THE ROLE OF CUSTOMER AGILITY AND COMMUNICATION STYLES ON SELLER-BUYER RELATIONSHIP

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A seller-buyer relationship is not a straightforward process and has proven challenging to unveil fully. As an alternative approach, our model, rooted in communication theory, shows that salespeople's customer agility, in conjunction with communication styles, provides further understanding of the buyer-seller relationship.

Salespeople's customer agility is the extent of salespeople's ability to sense, respond, and cooperate with a buyer in exploring and exploiting opportunities for innovation and competitive actions (Roberts & Grover, 2012). These authors suggest that the concept of customer agility is characterized by two crucial capability factors – customer sensing and customer responding. Customer sensing capability refers to salespeople's awareness of their buyers and ability to detect any changes that occur to them (Roberts & Grover, 2012). The ability of salespeople to sense this situation and adjust their communication style by adopting a relaxed and open communication style to communicate may find better results than those who are unable to sense and adapt. Consequently, it is argued that high level of customer sensing may lead to better communication with their buyer. Haghghinasab et al. (2018) define salespeople's customer responding capability as the degree of salespeople's ability to timely and adequately respond to their buyer changes. Jayachandran et al. (2004) argue that two important and inseparable dimensions determine the degree of salespeople's customer responding capability; this includes customer response expertise and customer response speed. Customer response expertise refers to how effective salespeople fulfill buyer needs, and customer response speed reflects how fast salespeople accommodate these needs. The ability to address buyer needs effectively and promptly tends to improve buyer satisfaction, and accordingly, it improves relationships (Nam et al. 2019). Thus, we hypothesize:

- P1: The degree of salespeople's customer sensing capacity positively influences (a) salespeople's customer responding and (b) salespeople communication style.  
P2: The degree of salespeople's customer responding capacity positively relates to seller-buyer relationship.

Communication quality is regarded as a tool to maintain and improve relationship quality (Emmers-Sommer, 2004). The degree of such relationship quality is determined by the quantity and quality of such communication (Herjanto et al., 2021) and the communication style (Darawong et al., 2016). Theoretically, communication style is classified into nine important communication style constructs, and each construct has different characteristics and functions (Kang & Hyun, 2012). These constructs are animated, attentive, contentious, dominant, friendly, dramatic, memory-based, open and relax communication style (Norton, 1978). Norton (1978) suggest that when salespeople correctly select and appropriately use their communication style, they will be able to improve their relationships with their buyer. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

- P3: Salespeople communication style affects seller-buyer relationship differently.

The model of this conceptual study predicts that salespeople's customer sensing capacity indirectly influences the seller-buyer relationship through two indirect routes, including the salespeople's customer responding ability and the selected communication style. In contrast, salespeople's customer responding capacity is directly responsible for seller-buyer relationships. Finally, our model also predicts that different communication styles may directly impact the seller-buyer relationship.

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# THE INCORPORATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB, AND CONTENT MARKETING ANALYTICS IN A SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING COURSE

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The need for marketing graduates with data analytic skills and hands-on experience has been high in recent years and will continue to grow, particularly in the areas of digital and social media marketing. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the employment of market research analysts is projected to grow 22 percent from 2020 to 2030, much faster than the average for all occupations (Market Research Analysts, n.d.). “The role of marketing has become increasingly technical and data-driven. While traditional marketing skills with a focus on positioning, communications and creativity still remain relevant, employers are increasingly looking for professionals who can code, understand analytics and know how to use technology. The marketing skillset that is in demand is a combination of qualitative, quantitative and technical skills” (Yokoi, n.d.). As a result, marketing educators have addressed ways to integrate analytics into marketing curricula and exercises to help students develop knowledge and skills in big data and marketing analytics. These efforts come at a crucial time as students perceive marketing as a qualitative or “soft skills” discipline and have a lack of enthusiasm for enrolling in quantitative courses (He et al., 2022).

This paper describes the development and implementation of The Social Media Marketing University (The SMMU), a hands-on, experiential learning experience for marketing students used in a Social Media Marketing Content and Analytics course. The SMMU allows students to develop knowledge and skills and demonstrate their work in social media marketing, content marketing, and analytics. The SMMU is “a blog built by students, for students” targeting college students and professionals wanting to learn more about social media marketing and to start or advance their careers in social media marketing.

Students publish three blog posts throughout the semester and then promote each through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Students are granted access to publish and view analytics on Wix, the host for The SMMU website, and to publish and access insights in Meta Business Suite and Twitter Analytics. Specific metrics are used by students to assist them in post-campaign evaluation and to guide content creation.

We also present areas for improving and expanding The SMMU experiential learning experience, including incorporating Google Analytics (GA) and data visualization tools such as Tableau, expanding the scope of the types of content students create for The SMMU to include video and podcasts, incorporating the use of TikTok, YouTube, and LinkedIn, and including paid advertising on search engines and social media platforms.

Finally, we believe developing a curriculum focused on experiential learning will provide the most meaningful and relevant experiences for our marketing majors. Edmondson & Matthews (2021) propose developing a curriculum where most upper-level marketing courses use projects that involve real businesses, self-reflection, and ePortfolios so graduates are better prepared for the workforce and can effectively communicate what they have learned and accomplished. The SMMU is a start but expanding beyond the two courses and incorporating requirements for students to self-reflect and prepare an ePortfolio will deliver that curriculum focused on experiential learning.

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# CONFERENCING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION: WHAT DO MARKETING DOCTORAL STUDENTS EXPECT FROM ACADEMIC CONFERENCES?

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Based on the concepts developed by Hansen et al. (2020), we define marketing academic conferences as consecutive multi-day events planned in advance with attendees from various institutions of higher education to exchange research findings or pedagogically-based marketing scholarship. Research is needed to better understand the impact of academic conferences given the high level of resources and time invested in their preparation and execution, both from a conference planner and participant perspective, especially doctoral students (Hansen & Pedersen, 2018). Marketing doctoral students are sensitive to the time and financial resource obligation. However, no studies have investigated their expectations regarding academic conferences.

For many students, conference attendance is a mandatory part of the doctoral program (Fakunle et al., 2019). Advantages of academic conference paper presentation and participation include timeliness, informal collaboration, and reputation building. One can gain exposure to new research in the academic conference setting for studies that are delayed by lengthy peer reviews and production schedules for journal publication. Access to early developments in new studies may influence the direction of methods used or research conducted by doctoral students (Storme et al., 2017). At the same time, doctoral students can present their findings to date at an academic conference for expedited peer review. Regarding informal collaboration, spontaneous information surfaces that may be instrumental in future endeavors including vacant jobs, tenure requirements, and new research group formation to new a few.

The content for survey construction began with reaching out to a convenience sample of 19 marketing educators asking them open-ended questions about their conference format preference and motivation to attend academic conferences. The survey was then administered to a convenience sample of eight marketing educators who provided feedback regarding the face validity of the instrument. Survey items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Measures for past conference attendance and future conference attendance intentions were noted by individual survey items. Individual survey items also addressed demographic, institutional, and funding data. Finally, the survey collected information on conference attendance motivation and perceived value.

Responses to the online survey highlight a focus on scholarship and socialization. Priorities include hearing advancements in the discipline, peer feedback, networking opportunities, maintaining friendships, and social enjoyment are highly valued elements. Suggested conference initiatives to address important factors include having a first-time attendee session, online discussion groups, and pre-arranged seating for meals to address on-site scholarship and socialization.

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# ANALYTICS IN MARKETING MBA CLASS

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## *POSITION PAPER*

This study explores how to use analytics in marketing MBA class in response to the increasing demand of “analytics” as one of the essential learning goals. In marketing MBA class, one of the learning goals is the “Analytics.” So, how to use the “analytics” and data to make informed decision is the key issues in marketing MBA class for the mid-level managers. In marketing, consumer-based marketing research is very commonly used as a training for marketing analytics. But, in MBA class, focus and practice on consumer-based data collection and analysis using software package is perceived as too much research focused class which is not appropriate for the practitioners who do not really need to collect and analyze the consumer data.

Thus, the following analytics tools were used in marketing MBA class: big data analysis simulation, media planning and effectiveness analysis, price elasticity of demand analysis, global pricing decision – purchasing power parity (PPP), exchange rate, inflation etc. One of the challenges is to get some real-world data to simulate the several situations where students will face in the real world. So, case -based big data simulation project was very helpful. In some cases (e.g., global pricing decisions), scenario was developed based on instructor’s experience to give some practice to students of how to use past data.

Beyond the above-mentioned projects, how to apply big data in informed marketing decisions should be explored further by marketing educators. More research in product development decision (e.g., form design), distribution (e.g., direct vs. indirect) and brand elements (e.g., naming, logo, brand change etc.) are expected.

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# TEACHING MARKETING ANALYTICS: FOSTERING A “PRODUCTIVE MINDSET” VIA A COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING (CSL) PROJECT

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## POSITION PAPER

As professors of business at a mid-sized, public university in Pennsylvania, we have experienced both the trepidation and angst that many of our students and advisees have when it comes to taking the required math and statistics courses that are part of the business/marketing curriculum. According to Perry (2004) and Wilkerson (2001), we are not alone. Perry (2004) states that math anxiety is an extremely common phenomenon observed in many of today's college and university students particularly those majoring in non-stem related fields. In highlighting causes of this anxiety, he points to experienced-based, (versus genetic), factors that he believes are responsible. These include poor pre-college math preparation, difficulty coping with the frustration that comes from mastering a new skill, and/or previous failures in mathematical problem-solving or test-taking (Perry 2004; Andrew and Brown 2015). Coming from a slightly different, but equally intriguing perspective, Wilkerson (2001) argues that coupled with efficacy factors, many students dread quantitative courses because they do not see the value or relevance of them with respect to application in their daily lives or within their discipline of study. Wilkerson (2001) points out that a critical component in math proficiency is a term he coins “productive disposition/productive mindset.” “Productive disposition” refers to the mindset that learning how to do math and statistics is “worthwhile, useful, and sensible.”

As the discipline of Marketing has entered the digital age, it is apparent that how market research has typically been taught and how it is practiced has seen dramatic changes over the course of the past decade. According to Nunan (2018), advancements in digital marketing coupled with the ability to source data collection from third-party providers, or directly from consumers, have altered traditional market research practices. While primary research was once centered on garnering consumer insights via quantitative or qualitative field-based techniques, advances in technology, especially data mining and marketing analytics, have become critical skills. Today's marketers need to understand the “whole” picture of the consumer along with the various avenues that consumers take in interacting with the brand (i.e., touchpoints). The application of marketing analytics requires that researchers know how to mine, analyze, and interpret data in ways that yield meaningful intelligence for making strategic marketing decisions. As stated by both Hauser (2007) and Liu and Levin (2018), the necessity of including courses in the marketing curricula that teach these skills is critical for ensuring the marketability of students upon graduation.

Based on that presented above, we find ourselves in a quandary as marketing professors. How do we infuse the teaching of analytics into our market research courses while simultaneously creating an agreeable “productive mindset” in our students? Our solution draws upon the insight provided by Bellanca (2010) who argues that in order to keep up with our ever-evolving, technology-based society, people/consumers must have the requisite skills of critical thinking and problem-solving that can “only be acquired through engagement with the society as it is now.” Extending this line of thinking into our pedagogy as to how to incentivize and excite our students to not only feel more comfortable with quantitative tools and analysis, but also to allow them to see the direct relevance and application of these skills in a business environment, we turn to service learning (CSL) as a potential tool in helping us to achieve this goal.

According to Henrich and Lee (2011), what makes service learning such a powerful pedagogical tool is that there are several discrete components that contribute to student learning including academic house, student voice, community partnerships, community “felt” need, guided self-reflection, and meaningful evaluation. Participation in CSL projects has also led several other researchers to conclude that students experience enhanced cognitive development, improved academic performance and refined competencies in reflection, critical thinking, problem analysis, personal development, interpersonal skills, and cultural understanding (Eyler et al. 2001; Lemieux and Allen

2007; Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki 2011; Trott et al. 2021). Thus, it seems intuitive that a CSL approach, through an immersive, real-life, business-based experience involving marketing analytics, has the ability to make students feel more at ease with numbers, data, statistics, and analysis. To Wilkerson's (2001) point about "productive mindset," it is our contention that CSL has the potential to create an environment where students can see and experience "first-hand" the value of data and data analytics in real-world decision-making. Furthermore, if we can pinpoint CSL opportunities/projects that are meaningful and important to students, we believe learning will be more impactful if they can see real action being taken as a result of their analysis and strategic insights.

One of the CSL projects that we are exploring for our marketing students involves our student veterans. Veterans are an important, yet unique, population on our college campuses. Many colleges and universities across the country tout that they are "veteran-friendly" schools based on the tailored services and amenities that are extended to veteran students. Our University is no exception! However, is this really the perception of our veteran students? To address this real-life research question, a CSL project is under construction in our Marketing Research course. One of the primary learning objectives is to immerse students in all things data and data analytics. They will build a database of all of the veteran services and programs, including student groups and presidential commissions, that are offered at each of the fourteen state schools in Pennsylvania. Included in this database will also be any awards and national/regional recognitions/designations that highlight a university's initiatives on this front. Students will also consider the various "touch points" that these universities have with their veteran students. To this end, students will employ analytic tools to mine university websites as well as university-based social media platforms to determine the breadth, quantity and quality of interactions that universities have with both their current and prospective veteran students. Finally, students will also engage in more traditional market research by designing and administering a survey to capture the authentic perceptions and thoughts of these students. Database construction, data visualization and statistical analysis will be the focus of this comprehensive CSL project. It is our expectation that upon completion of this project, students will not only have an enhanced analytics skill-set, but will gain confidence in their ability to employ these skills going forward.

Unlike student learning activities that rely on book-based cases and contrived datasets, CSL projects require a considerable time commitment on the part of the faculty member. In addition to teaching course content, the faculty member is also the acting project manager. Deliverables to the community partner and student learning objectives must be realized. This time commitment may be a tall-challenge for a non-tenured faculty member who is working toward tenure. Additionally, to make a CSL project meaningful for both students and community partners alike, measures of assessment should be incorporated into the project. The development of standardized metrics to assess students' "productive mindset" as well as their aptitude for understanding and applying analytic tools should be considered.

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# AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF FEATURED SNIPPET WEBSITES FOR SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION: A FIRST STEPS APPROACH TO MARKETING ANALYTICS

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## *POSITION PAPER*

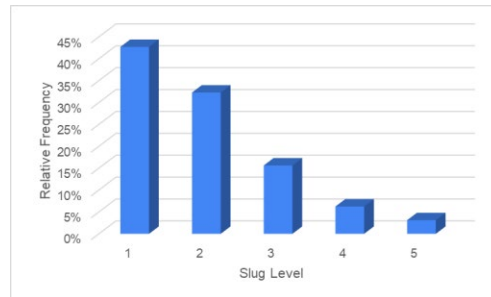
What is the best approach to teaching Marketing Analytics? Past recommendations include those from Lui and Burns (2018) who proposed an undergraduate Marketing Analytics course starting with higher-level topics of Big Data, Social Media Analytics, Marketing Metrics, and CRM. Alternatively, Weathers and Aragon (2019) proposed six critical competencies for teaching Marketing Analytics, starting with lower-level topics of “assessing data quality” (i.e., data accuracy and relevancy as well as format and readability; p. 269) and “understanding measurement” (i.e., data validity, reliability, and levels of measurement; pp. 270–271), before moving into higher-level statistics. In an earlier study, Cavazos, Schuster, and Smith (2014) recommended using Excel compared to other more sophisticated statistical software (e.g., SPSS) and a case-based approach to teach Marketing Analytics.

Another issue with teaching Marketing Analytics is student’s fear of statistics, most likely due to their lack of understanding or lack of confidence in their previous training. Thus, we propose that the best way to teach Marketing Analytics is to first help students overcome the fear associated with statistics. In order to alleviate this fear and give students the best possible experience and education, we propose starting the Marketing Analytics course with an exploratory statistical analysis of real-life marketing data in which the students perform various data cleaning tasks, descriptive statistics, visualizations, and interpretation of results—all lower-level statistics. The purpose is to help students understand the data and become familiar with relationships and trends among the variables as well as to determine which variables are the most important to analyze later at a higher-level of statistics. Once students become more confident with their data, they will be ready to move into the higher-level statistical analyses associated with Marketing Analytics (e.g., regression, cluster and factor analyses, and Machine Learning).

We illustrate this approach with a real-life case study in which a consulting firm collected and provided data from 100 webpages receiving featured snippets in Google based on the inclusion of the keyword “carpet”. The goal was to determine which variables influenced these inserts. When students are given textbook data files, they are typically clean and ready to be analyzed. However, real-world problems do not come to us as nice, neat data sets. Thus, by using real-world data, a natural starting point for students is to explore and clean the data. Starting with an Excel file of 100 records and 26 variables (referred to as “snippet data”), students were first asked to clean the data by looking for duplicate records, inconsistencies in spelling and letter case, missing values, and unusual symbols (e.g., “-” for “none”). In addition, they were asked to remove unnecessary units of measure (e.g., change “5sec” to “5”), split variables where two measures were recorded together (e.g., “Test Speed/Test Size” to two separate variables “Test Speed” and “Test Size”), and to create several new variables based on original variables (e.g., Slug Characters = count of the number of characters in the Slug). As a result, students became intimate with the snippet data, determining the type of variable and analysis best suited for each variable. The final cleaned snippet data file held 96 records and 59 variables.

Students next created various visualizations and calculated means, frequencies, and correlations for each variable’s potential influence on SEO (Search Engine Optimization). For example, a simple visualization of the number of Slug Levels revealed the distribution of levels from one to five, as shown in Figure 1. Note that the Slug Level is a count of the number of “/” separations in the Slug portion of the webpage URL after the top-level domain (i.e., the portion of the URL that appears after the “.com”). For example, the URL <https://www.realthomes.com/advice/how-to-choose-carpet> has two slug levels, while the URL <https://www.homedepot.com/c/ah/how-to-install-carpet/9ba683603be9fa5395fab90cd3b5a74> has four Slug Levels).

**Figure 1.**  
*Frequency of Slug Levels in data.*



This simple yet effective visualization confirmed common knowledge that fewer Slug Levels are preferred when Google’s software chooses a webpage to feature as a snippet. This was one of 10 important findings which were uncovered in this exploratory analysis and which will be used to direct the students and faculty as they move on to higher level statistics in the Marketing Analytics course. Students were very happy with the findings and seemed to enjoy the challenge of cleaning and creating new variables as well as performing basic statistics and data visualization. They gained confidence in their abilities and were willing to try new software such as Power BI and Tableau. However, since our findings regarding student satisfaction were simply observational, next steps would be to perform a satisfaction survey for verification and potential improvement in teaching methods.

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# QUANTITATIVE REASONING AND ITS PREVALENCE IN A MARKET MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS BUSINESS COURSE

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## *POSITION PAPER*

“I can’t stand numbers.” “I can’t do calculations.” “I hate math.” These three comments are some of the most frustrating an educator can hear, especially one that is responsible for teaching quantitative material. Increased adoption of technology-based products, such as calculators, cash registers, banking and financial apps, software such as Excel and SPSS, and even social media have replaced the need to calculate a variety of everyday metrics. The aforementioned examples merely scrape the surface of the most basic quantitative challenges faced by our students and yet the cognitive output is fairly non-existent. More challenging, still, is the proven decline of math skills between elementary and high school causing students to enter college at a weakened position to employ computational fluency and quantitative reasoning.<sup>1</sup> Teachers at the undergraduate level are faced with the difficult challenge of overcoming these barriers in order to successfully teach quantitative material in the classroom.

Over the last century, the definition of math has expanded from the study of number and space to the science dealing with numbers and the measurement, properties, and relationships of quantities.<sup>2</sup> Today, math is a confluence of methods, including algebra [the study of numbers], geometry [the study of space], calculus [the study of rates of change], and statistics [making inferences and conclusions of quantitative data]. Based on a student’s field of study, both the definition of math and the technology to support quantitative fluency vary significantly. In business, for example, quantitative fluency could be considered the process of improving how students navigate business challenges using numbers, while quantitative reasoning refers to their ability to analyze numerical information and make decisions on which skillsets and procedures to apply to a solution.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, scientific and technological industries, such as engineering, employ higher-level math functions that require adherence to a complex calculation of numbers, the result of which is fundamental to supporting change, adaptation, or the development of something innovative and completely brand new.

In every aspect of life, business students experience a “lightness” of cognitive thought, causing a tailspin of anxiety at even the mention of metrics, statistics, or analytics. Once in the classroom, the students already start from behind because of the negativity associated with “not being successful” using numbers. The perpetuation of math anxiety in the classroom has led to an increase in scholarly research on the topic. Math anxiety has been viewed as the most prominent of educational anxieties, causing feelings of apprehension and increased physiological reactivity when students have to manipulate numbers, solve mathematical problems, or when they are exposed to an evaluative situation connected to math.<sup>3</sup> This anxiety has led to the avoidance of math coursework, which negatively impacts both the development of knowledge and math skills, as well as student attitudes and self-confidence as they relate to math.<sup>3</sup> By the time students reach college, they tend to regard themselves as less able in math and avoid enrollment not only in math courses, but also in related fields such as science, technology, and engineering.<sup>3</sup> It seems that students who have difficulty connecting the math – in any form – to their everyday life tend to disconnect from learning and perceive that they are unable to succeed at the topic. In some cases, educators may feel forced to downplay the importance of quantitative learning because of performance and outcome measures. Conversely, some may altogether avoid the incorporation of quantitative material if the content is not crucial to learning the topic (ie. advertising).

So how do we overcome this quantitative challenge? How do we as educators rekindle the relationship between math and our students? Just as an athlete trains for competition, educators need to build curricula that exercise our students’ ability to calculate, interpret, and apply quantitative data to projects, outcomes, and business solutions, no matter the course context.

After taking over a sophomore-level business class – Market Measurement & Analysis (MKT 210) – in spring 2022, the disconnect between students and their ability to work with numbers became very apparent. It was challenging to watch them struggle through some of the most basic calculations, such as weights, percentages, and



averages. In addition, students struggled to connect *what* they were learning to *why* it was important. To address the gap in knowledge, additional instruction and background on each topic was provided. Unfortunately, the selected textbook more aptly served a professional in the field who did not require much context about the topic versus a young student in the classroom. As the semester progressed, students started to show more confidence in their abilities and realized that frequently their approach to the solution was often more difficult than the problem itself.

Future semesters of MKT 210 require two things: an improved curriculum that supports building skills around quantitative fluency and a custom workbook containing the necessary content and practice problems. Fundamentally, the proposed framework that will be applied to the fall 2023 section is as follows: function, logic [quantitative reasoning], interpretation, and technology. Below is an abstract of each step in the framework:

1. Function – refresh student knowledge about basic calculations used in business, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentages, weighting, simple algebra, and performance measures.
2. Logic [Quantitative Reasoning] – create a contextual background of the purpose or application of each metric and then focus on the steps required to calculate the measurement, including the function (math) and the variables necessary to solve.
3. Interpretation – develop the students’ ability to look at data, comprehend its meaning, and draw sensible conclusions from what is shown, while teaching them to recognize that interpretation is not black and white – it can be subjective based on a variety of factors including the industry, customer base, or business goals and challenges.
4. Technology – teach students how to evaluate and select the right tools to most efficiently and accurately collect, analyze, and report pertinent business data, while also applying mathematical thought and programming to technology, such as Excel, for formulas.

Building the MKT 210 curriculum around the proposed framework should negate some of the previous student complaints, such as “I didn’t learn anything” and “I had no clue what was learned in the class”. Focusing on step 1 – Function – at the start of the semester has a few proposed outcomes: 1) it allows students to build confidence in their math skills before trying to apply calculations to a measurement scenario, 2) it provides a foundation from which each student can build upon their quantitative knowledge, and 3) it helps to identify students that might struggle in the class before the drop/add period concludes.

There are several challenges to improving a student’s quantitative fluency; however, the three most important relative to teaching MKT 210 are: 1) the level of math knowledge with which a student enters the classroom, 2) the level of fear [anxiety] associated with math, 3) a student’s attitude about the usefulness of math, and 4) work efficiency – math without some knowledge of technology, especially Excel, can make measurement problems seem daunting due to the myriad of calculations performed across multiple variables.

The proposed framework aims to address these challenges. Function [developing math skills] not only attempts to level-up the math knowledge for all students in the classroom, but also allows students to build confidence thereby reducing math anxiety. Improved reasoning and interpretation – steps 2 and 3 – will give students the freedom to apply judgement and define how they would approach a solution based on the industry, business, or goals to attain. Learning to apply technology – step 4 – will make students more effective and efficient in their future careers, thereby making them better employees and managers.

The goal for future semesters of MKT 210 is to focus on teaching the process and purpose of measurement versus solely focusing on the math. While repetition and practice of calculations are of great importance, student performance will be greatly improved when quantitative reasoning and interpretation skills are increased. Math anxiety will be reduced when students realize that not all math is created equal and the complexity of the math varies by industry segment. In marketing, for example, Muniz, Geng, and Ganesh (2021), suggest that to be successful students should be able to: describe the metrics for marketing decision-making, recognize the data requirements for each marketing metric, compute each marketing metric correctly, interpret each marketing metric in a managerial context, and explain how such interpretation would inform and influence marketing decisions.<sup>4</sup> The proposed framework aims to provide a logical sequence for learning and will help students connect with the material in a way that helps them to realize that math is not optional – it is a way of life.

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# WHAT ARE BRANDED DIGITAL MARKETING CERTIFICATIONS WORTH TO EMPLOYERS?

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## *POSITION PAPER*

In the burgeoning field of digital marketing, it is imperative that marketers stay abreast of emerging trends and learn pertinent skills. The same is true of college students as they prepare to enter the job market. One means through which students can attempt to sharpen their skills, boost their credibility, and potentially gain an edge over other job candidates as they pursue marketing careers after graduation is by earning branded digital marketing certifications. Developed by third-party companies and organizations, these certification programs provide free or low-cost training of a branded platform, service, or technology (Spiller & Tuten, 2019). A wide variety of certification programs are available but they differ substantially in monetary cost, required time and effort, and topic. Some offerings concentrate on platform-specific knowledge and skills (e.g., Facebook Blueprint), while others cover topics applicable across multiple platforms (e.g., HubSpot Inbound Marketing).

Marketing educators are increasingly incorporating digital marketing certifications into their courses (e.g., Laverie et al., 2020) and the benefits of obtaining them are frequently touted in the popular press (e.g., Brandastic, 2022). However, educators wrestle with the question of which certifications are most important to incorporate as part of course curriculum (Spiller & Tuten, 2019). One factor that should be considered in addressing this question is the value digital marketing certifications hold for students when they enter the job market. Certifications that help students stand out in a crowded applicant pool and aid them in negotiating higher starting salaries by signaling their knowledge of in-demand topics are the obvious choices. However, there is scant research available indicating exactly which certifications meet those criteria.

In the marketing field, in-demand skills include digital strategy, search engine optimization, analytics, project management, social media marketing, and user and customer experience design (Spiller & Tuten, 2019). Marketing instructors strive to include course content that ultimately helps students meet the requirements of entry-level jobs post-graduation (Bacon & Steward, 2006). As such, marketing educators are compelled to continuously update their course materials to attempt to align with the ever-changing needs of the job market and have added digital marketing certification programs to their curriculum to provide “turn-key” content to supplement their other materials and exercises (Spiller & Tuten, 2019).

Many students enjoy obtaining digital marketing certifications and report significant learning from such programs (Key et al., 2019). In some situations, students perceive certificates contribute more to their workplace readiness than traditional marketing assignments (Key et al., 2019). Further, extant research shows certifications are a valuable addition for career preparation as they expose students to cutting-edge marketing technologies and techniques (Kim et al., 2019). Exposure to such programs provides students with confidence as they prepare for their careers (Laverie et al., 2020). In fact, some students report that earning relevant certificates as part of their marketing coursework directly helps them obtain internships and even full-time jobs (Staton, 2016).

Recently, researchers evaluated the pedagogical worth of branded digital marketing certifications and examined implementation considerations for course design (Spiller & Tuten, 2019). The use of digital marketing certifications in the classroom has also been investigated through the lens of students’ perceived effectiveness. For example, to assess the perceived effectiveness of digital marketing certifications among students, Laverie et al. (2020) analyzed data from written reflections and survey responses of students who obtained digital marketing certifications. The findings indicate students perceive there to be a number of benefits stemming from the integration of certifications into marketing courses.

However, the question of how much value *employers* attach to digital marketing certifications has yet to be

answered by academic research. To address this research question, an online survey was conducted with 195 marketing practitioners in a variety of industries who make hiring decisions within their departments. In our presentation, we will elaborate on the findings of this study, including which digital marketing certifications are most valued and how much, on average, employers are willing to pay in terms of incremental salary to new hires who possess these certifications. The findings of this study should prove useful to marketing educators in making decisions regarding which certifications to include in course curriculum. An avenue for future research would be to take a wholistic approach to examining the value of digital marketing certifications by incorporating the perspectives of employers, students, and educators.

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# TEACHING DIGITAL MARKETING KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND APTITUDES WITH TWO COORDINATED CLASSES

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## POSITION PAPER

Teaching digital marketing to undergraduate students is a challenge. The content, best practices, technology and customer change at a rapid rate (Rohm et al., 2019). The School of Business advisory boards and employers that recruit students have expressed strong desire for marketing hires that have hands-on experience and expertise in digital marketing. Teaching digital marketing knowledge, skills and aptitudes to undergraduates is a key objective of the School of Business marketing curriculum.

During the 2021-22 academic year introductory and advanced digital marketing classes were taught subsequently in the fall and spring semesters. The professors coordinated the classes to achieve the learning outcomes and prepare students for entry level positions in the digital marketing field.

The focus areas of coordination were:

- Key subject matter areas using a concept map teaching tool
- Coordinated student learning outcomes
- Projects, case studies, simulations and hands-on learning

A high impact teaching practice is the use of simulations (Kietzmann & Pitt, 2016). Simulations enable students to make decisions and see the results of those decisions (Ganesh & Sun, 2009). Simulations can be an effective tool to improve critical thinking (Astleitner, 2002).

The fall class was BSAD 3240 E-Commerce and E-Marketing in Today's World. This class focused on the overall e-Commerce strategy applications to business. Specific digital marketing tools of content, social media, search engine marketing, website design, website marketing, analytics and mobile were taught using a concept map. Students completed client projects applying digital marketing concepts to real world situations during the semester. Students completed a detailed case study on a major digital marketer along with an individual application of digital marketing concepts to an individual small business project as capstone learning activities at the end of the semester.

The spring class BSAD 4150 e-Marketing Applications focused on applying the digital marketing tools through simulations and hands-on learning exercises. Students brought their completed concept maps and projects from the fall class to the spring class. Students started the class with a fundamental knowledge of digital marketing principles and best practices learned in the fall class. The coordination of subject matter and alignment of pedagogy was a key aspect of the coordination of the two classes.

The simulation was provided by Stukent. The Stukent simulation focused on application of digital marketing concepts in a hands-on learning environment. It is a flexible multi-turn system that simulates the digital marketing environment. A 6-turn setting was chosen and the simulation became the major in-class exercise/discussion/assignment for the second half of the semester. In each turn, students worked in teams to decide on their strategy and implement it in the simulation. Students learned from each other in the teamworking environment, not just from the instructor. Lectures advanced to the next topic after each team evaluated the previous turn's performance and completed a reflection on it. Each turn of the simulation includes a list of various tasks and students found the concept map they generated from the fall class serves as an effective framework—it helped them bridge the abstract concepts and practices.

The digital marketing environment is very challenging. Technology, best practices, customers and competition

constantly change and adapt to turbulent market. Teaching digital marketing knowledge, skills and aptitudes to undergraduates is challenging due to the high level of complexity, coordination and interaction of digital marketing concepts.

Though the simulation provides students with a hands-on experience and feedback to help them hone their strategic planning and analytical skills, it comes with its own challenges. First, the scoring mechanism in the simulation usually lacks transparency. It is unclear which decisions made by student participants cause either positive or negative impacts to their performance. Second, the students reported they had different experiences with different types of simulations and seemed to prefer a less linear structure to a strict turn-by-turn execution. Assigning the complete simulation (with multiple turns) more than one time might be able to accommodate this need. Third, the technical aspect of simulation continues to challenge both the instructor and the students. As the simulation resides on the publisher's server and it was apparent that the simulation had gone through constant updates throughout the semester. Not all of these updates were installed seamlessly, and it could disrupt the class that was planned with having the simulation as the major topic.

The effective use of simulations in digital marketing teaching is an interesting area of pedagogy that warrants further research and exploration. The hands-on nature of simulations prepares students for careers in digital marketing. Aligning simulation teaching with student learning outcomes and career preparation is an interesting area of exploration.

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# USING PHOTO EXHIBITS TO VISUALIZE ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN AESTHETIC

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## **POSITION PAPER**

Effective advertising campaigns combine aesthetic and voice to build a persuasive message. This activity invites students to see two or more curated art exhibits to compare and contrast the artistic style and aesthetic. The goals are that they see the differences between the collections and visualize ways to execute a cohesive look and feel for their creative campaign aesthetic.

Students who are new to integrated strategic marketing and advertising are inundated with the components of campaign development. They are taught to research and develop a creative brief, focusing the campaign's key insight, advertising problem, and advertising objective, selecting a target audience, researching competition, and identifying the key consumer benefit (Felton, 2013). Students are also charged with succinctly articulating their campaign idea. Initially, they may have a difficult time understanding differences between creative advertising campaign strategy and execution. Additionally, students may struggle with strategizing and articulating their campaign aesthetic. Strategy is described as the “what” of advertising campaigns. An overarching concept and plan (i.e., strategy) must guide the selling argument (Barry, 2016; Felton, 2013). The “how” of ad campaigns is the execution of the selling strategy. An advertising campaign originates with a strategy and can be visualized and executed in various ways. In addition to making decisions for a campaign's rhetorical approach and tone, creative campaigns must also have strategic visual aesthetic in art direction. The art of advertising is the embodiment of cohesive language and visuals (Barry, 2016; Felton, 2013). Effective campaigns integrate aesthetic with brand voice. Visuals are powerful. To be effective, it is imperative that advertising campaigns depict integrated creative executions that have a congruous aesthetic and tone. This activity directs students to immerse themselves in art exhibitions to experience artistic style and vision for curated collections. Having seen a collective body of work in contrast to another, students can identify common themes within an exhibit and recognize the importance of cohesive visual aesthetic.

This activity is effective for students in introductory creative strategic marketing/advertising courses. It works especially well for courses that include production of an integrated creative strategic advertising campaign. The activity invites students to see two or more curated art exhibits to compare and contrast the artists' artistic style and the aesthetic of the collection. The instructor selects two or more curated photography (or other art medium) exhibits and instructs the students to visit the exhibitions outside of class. This invites the students to take an active role in scheduling their visit to the museum and engaging with the artwork. Students are instructed to observe and compare the aesthetic, the look and feel of the artistic vision and visuals, of the two exhibitions. During their museum visit, students will take notes about differences they see between the collections, noting words that describe their perceptions. At the next class meeting, the instructor leads class discussion on their perceptions and reflections. The discussion can transition into the instructor assigning the campaign “Big Idea” aesthetic assignment which asks the students to describe in three to four sentences how they want their creative campaign to look and feel—their visual strategy for campaign creative executions. They are asked to reflect on their museum visit and visualize ways to effectively execute their creative campaign visual aesthetic.

The activity works best if the instructor selects two exhibits of the same medium. I asked students to visit the campus art museum, which was hosting two photography exhibitions, among several other exhibits. I implemented this assignment in the spring 2022 semester during an in-person introductory creative strategic advertising course. The course is the first in a sequence of creative path courses for majors who focused on creative production. The benefits stretch beyond the assignment objectives to getting students to actively engage in an in-person campus activity, a trip to the campus art museum. Campus art museums, like many other organizations, experienced facility closure during the COVID-19 pandemic and residual fallout. As scholars have recently noted, viewing art can serve as a means for improving mental health (e.g., Breed et al., 2022; Gallo et al., 2021; Lobban & Murphy, 2020; McDonald et al., 2019). The activity could also be implemented to encourage engagement with local community art museums or using virtual art exhibits. For example, the Tate Modern created a curator video tour of their 2020 Andy Warhol exhibit. Find it

online at <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/andy-warhol>. The Smithsonian has an extensive online collection, found at <https://www.si.edu/exhibitions/online>.

By asking students to visit the museum outside of class, scheduling issues may arise. In anticipation of this, I assigned the activity with more than week to complete it. Sharing the museum hours and exact location helped students plan and locate the exhibits. In addition to witnessing their reflexivity during the post-visit class discussion, in the last week of the course, I asked students to reflect on this pivotal moment in their learning of creative campaign strategy and execution. I asked students to consider their experience of the art museum assignment and how that exercise helped shape their understanding of campaign aesthetic. Below I share sample student reflections.

1. “*The photography exhibit helped me understand the campaign’s big idea aesthetic because you want the audience to feel something when interacting with the campaign. The aesthetic of the campaign not only sends a message about who the brand is, but it makes the audience feel a certain way when looking at it.*”
2. “*It helped me to see how different pieces can work together to create a cohesive look. Before I just thought that cohesion meant similar colors and fonts, but the exhibits helped me to see that it is more about the mood of what you create.*”
3. “*The collections at the Art Museum related to my understanding of a campaign big idea in the way that a group of works can be cohesive in their look and feel. Looking at a collection of photographs is interesting because each can be of different subjects yet still have similar looks and feels. Our campaign big ideas are supposed to be able to apply to an array of executions while maintaining a cohesive feel.*”
4. “*The exhibits at the Art Museum helped me think about how I would want to use color and light through the visuals in my campaign. It also had me thinking about the pro and cons of a minimal vs. cluttered aesthetic.*”

I plan to repeat this activity in this course over multiple semesters and measure students’ reflections and perceptions. Future iterations of this activity could include additional art forms and off-campus exhibition locations.

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# THE MINDFUL MARKETER: CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANALYTICS IN THE MARKETING CLASSROOM

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## **POSITION PAPER**

According to The Economist (2017) “The world’s most valuable resource is no longer oil, but data”. Key terms of “Big Data” and “Analytics” in Google Trends (2022) shows a dramatic spike from 2007 to 2015. According to a Statista (2022) study, the volume of data/information created, captured, copied and consumed worldwide was 2 zettabytes in 2010 and is predicted to rise to 181 zettabytes in 2025. A single zettabyte is equivalent to approximately 250 billion DVD’s (Kramer, M. 2013). The problem that exists is marketing analytics students need to understand not just how to get the data but rather must understand, at a foundational level, what data needs to be collected, why it needs to be collected, and how that pertains to the marketing efforts of the organization.

Companies are becoming more and more reliant on data for decisions. According to Stobierski (2019) “According to a survey of more than 1,000 senior executives conducted by PwC, highly data-driven organizations are three times more likely to report significant improvements in decision-making compared to those who rely less on data.” Data use has a positive influence on decisions and results, which is not uncommon to hear, yet with all the data available, effective use of such is not common amongst all companies. Roadblocks outside of being tech-savvy or being able to collect data exists that prevent data use. According to Murguia (2022) in a recent Forbes article “For the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, over 90% of executives in 2022 point to culture as the greatest impediment to becoming data driven”. Siloed departments and divisions can prevent the sharing of data and provides a limited view of customers. Good decisions can be made with data yet siloed data is a problem that prevents great decisions. Setting out on a quest to collect data, by itself, can be a problem. Gal (n.d.) writes “Possession is nine-tenths of the law, goes the adage, thus possession was valuable in and of itself. But in the realm of big data, possession means far, far less than comprehension. 40 petabytes of data are next to worthless unless you can derive valuable insights from them.” The culture of an organization needs to embrace data sharing, should embrace the democratization of such data and make it accessible for the “enabled self service analytics” as Murguia (2022) writes. The marketing analytics student should understand they will need to break through barriers to get the data they need, may have to play in the corporate politics for such and will have to be willing to give up some of their own tightly held information to others.

With the mass amounts of data accumulated, and the systems in place to generate results of said data, shouldn’t marketing be a mindless effort? Unfortunately, the answer is no. Data collection methods will change in the future as concerns for data privacy alter how we track consumers and to what degree we understand them. Chen (2021) writes, “If personal information is no longer the currency that people give for online content and services, something else must take its place.” Subscriptions and paid for data consumption are alternatives that are popping up. From an education standpoint the landscape of how to track customers and understand them will continue to change so training students on specific software is a viable solution for the near term but we have to ensure the students understand how to think for solutions rather than to know where to click. It is in this context that the need for a solid foundation of marketing principles is vital for the student’s success. The marketing analytics student will be served well to know how to access data and obviously must be able to tell a story using graphics that the audience understands. More importantly, I suggest, again, is the ability of the marketer to know what data is needed, why it is needed and what actions they would take based on results of the data. Foundational marketing concepts such as the four P’s, segmentation, targeting, and positioning should be correlated with the decisions the data is pointing to. Multiple inputs, or a triangulation of such, should be utilized in our teaching of analytics with foundational marketing concepts, data and creativity. As McKendry (2018) writes “Just like any good plan, marketing analytics requires strategic thought and consideration from the get-go...we need to identify the useful data, from the vanity or junk, and communicate that to those in charge of collecting or integrating sources. Furthermore, by clearly defining business objectives, it will be easier to map the data needed as well as communicate relevant insights later on down the line.” As such, marketing students, as well, should be ready to take a lead role in guiding data science efforts, ensuring customer privacy and data integrity, and turning insights into actions based on marketing foundations.

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# INFLUENCER MARKETING AND DATA COLLECTION

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## POSITION PAPER

Consumers' interactions with brands and their influencers are rapidly growing on social media platforms. Identifying and collecting social media data on latest consumer trends and brand-influencer related interactions can be instrumental while teaching marketing analytics in fields such as sales, advertising, and consumer insights where performance of marketing activities can be assessed. However, the concerns for consumer privacy and government regulations make collecting social media data about influencer marketing a considerable challenge. In this paper, we propose a tiered web-scraping approach to collect social media data on popular brands and their influencers.

In recent years, expenditure on influencer marketing has grown exponentially on popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. Considering the demographics of social media consumers and the format of media content, Instagram and Tiktok are regarded as important channels for influencer marketing (Haenlein et. al. 2020, NetbaseQUID, 2022). Instagram is the first choice for both marketers and influencers because adolescents with disposable income gravitate towards Instagram and have strong affiliation. Instagram offers platform interoperability with Facebook which could help reach a broader audience. In addition, Instagram is the preferred choice for marketers to identify influencers (LINQA). Hence, for data collection and analyses objectives, Instagram stands out. Though, few social media, like Twitter, provide application programming interface (API) (Radford, 2019), Instagram does not avail of an API in current times. Though, it is possible to purchase influencer and brand social data from commercial entities, it can be cost prohibitive and also, may require data identification and cleansing procedures.

To collect data on influencer marketing, first, popular consumer brands on social media are observed based on social media industry reports (NetbaseQUID, 2021). Instagram's data originates with influencer's posts about the brand. Consumers can interact with influencer's posts via "Likes, Shares or Comments." The data is extracted in two tiers. The first tier is about brands and the second tier is about influencers. An interesting feature of Instagram is that it allows highly restricted number of posts for public viewing before use of 'identification' based logging in process sets in. Using python, the first tier process extracts the URLs of brand's posts. A total of 12 links can be fetched at one time and no further data collection is not permitted in the same attempt. After acquiring the first level of information on the choice set of brands, i.e., 12 links for each brand, the second tier sets a stage to capture individual information on number of likes, comments, and influencer details for each post along with post description.

Due to restricted access, several challenges arise in the data collection process. First, Instagram allows accessing data for a very short time period, which adds latency to data collection process since IP can be recognized prohibiting subsequent attempts to collect data. An alternative could be to use a VPN, which could lead to similar outcome. Options such as mobile hotspots to access data are difficult to scale. Hence, time and patience are major factors in acquiring this data. Another challenge can be missing data.

Social Media is a great resource for studying consumer engagement with the brands and their influencers. A possible source for additional data could be Twitter. As Twitter offers APIs for academic purposes that allows access to certain data elements such as consumer sentiments in a fixed time frame. Third-party organizations could be approached to get masked data on brands. The next exploration could be focused on understanding the completeness of data. Certain crucial engagement attributes might not be available for open access. Future research can investigate into scaling and efficient data retrievals.

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# TEACHING ANALYTICAL SKILLS TO MARKETING STUDENTS

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## POSITION PAPER

School of Business sales and marketing advisory boards along with feedback from internship employers have expressed a strong desire to hire students who have analytical skills including Microsoft Excel competency. This direct employer feedback is supported by research that students who possess analytical skills are desired by employers and analytical skills can be critical to success in the marketing field (Doyle, 2020). Kurtzke & Setkute, (2021) presented that a blend of knowledge, soft and technical skills is needed, and that the ability to communicate insights from data to stakeholders is critical.

The School of Business has implemented several strategies to improve the analytical abilities of marketing students for the 2021-2022 academic year. The focus areas of statistics, Microsoft Excel, digital analytics, analyzing marketing data and financial analysis have all been incorporated into marketing classes throughout the curriculum.

The first implementation strategy is basic statistics knowledge. The foundation class is Elementary Statistics. This class introduces basic statistical methods including graphing distributions, numerical summaries, linear regression, correlation, normal distribution, confidence intervals, hypothesis tests, analyzing two-way tables and analysis of variance. This class is prerequisite for higher level analytics classes.

Microsoft Excel for Business is the second implementation strategy for analytical skills. This 1 credit class was developed specifically for the School of Business with input from business professors. This course is designed to teach students basic to advanced functionality of Microsoft Excel. Topics covered include simple to advanced formatting, simple to advanced formulas using relative and absolute cell referencing and Excel functions, business charts and pivot tables, sort and filter techniques used with tabular data and importing and exporting datasets. This class is also a prerequisite for higher level analytics classes.

The third implementation strategy is the 3 credit Business Analytics class which combines business content with analytics. The class was developed utilizing Microsoft Excel to analyze data to make data-informed business decisions. The course focuses on developing the skills required to analyze data, conduct statistical hypothesis testing, and use management science techniques in business settings. Elementary Statistics and Microsoft Excel are prerequisites for this class.

The fourth implementation strategy is to incorporate Microsoft Excel, financial analysis and data analytics within the marketing courses. The introductory Digital Marketing course covers data analytics for websites, search engine marketing, email, social media and content. The advanced Digital Marketing course utilizes a simulation where analytics are featured in the decision-making process. Strategic Promotions Management focuses on using Microsoft Excel to analyze and communicate integrated marketing communication plans. The spreadsheet tracks return-on-investment, media purchases, reach, frequency and the promotion budget allocation. The Marketing Management class features a simulation with extensive use of market information and feedback to develop the student's skills to make data-informed decisions.

An assessment of the School of Business student's analytical skills is measured by employer internship evaluations with the question "exhibits good critical thinking (problem solving) skills." The average School of Business intern score was 4.55 out of 5 (strongly agree) in 2020. While 4.55 is a positive score, it was the lowest score of the 15 evaluation questions with an overall average of 4.80. There appears to be room for improvement on this assessment.

Assessment of Microsoft Excel skills was added to the 2022 employer evaluation of the intern. The question asks the employer to rate the intern's ability to use Excel to complete their work on a scale of 1-5 with 5 = strongly agree, 4 = somewhat agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree and 1 = strongly disagree.

Further implementation of Microsoft Excel and analytical skills in higher level marketing classes is needed. For example, in Marketing Management, the professor will require the student to download the Microsoft Excel files from the simulation, conduct an analysis and submit a final analysis of the marketing results in Microsoft Excel. All higher-level marketing classes should be reviewed and opportunities to add analytical skills teaching opportunities using Microsoft Excel should be implemented.

Teaching analytical skills to marketing students can be a challenge. The strategy of focused classes on statistics and Microsoft Excel help to create a foundation for students to apply the analytical skills in higher level marketing courses and their required internships. This strategy is expected to meet employer needs for students that can use Microsoft Excel and analytical skills to make data-informed marketing decisions.

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# GRADUATE STUDENT MENTORING TO IMPROVE RETENTION

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## ***POSITION PAPER***

Graduate students are dropping out at an alarming rate. The national graduate studies attrition rate across disciplines has averaged around 50 percent (Berelson, 1960; Rigler et al., 2017). Some departments' attrition rates are even higher (Nelson & Lovitts, 2001; Kang, 2004). Early post-COVID retention rates indicate that community colleges declined by nearly 5 percent due to the pandemic. In comparison, a 1.4 percent increase was found among public four-year colleges, and private nonprofit four-year institutions saw a decrease of only 1.2 percent (Howell et al., 2021).

Graduate students often face logistical challenges like tuition costs, lack of advising attention, and time management while being enrolled. They also face more cultural and social changes such as adapting to an academic culture, changes in quality of life, the rigors of research and writing, and loneliness (Howell et al., 2021). Additionally, educational institutions are often short-staffed in advising and often lack expertise in helping support students emotional needs who are trying to chart new territory. Graduate student advisors offer strategies and advice about specific academic decisions like classes and course load. However, their roles and duties are typically exclusive to academic enrollment. Learners are often left only "half-served" because not all their needs are fulfilled. Moreover, with increased online, often asynchronous enrollment, social connections can be even more difficult to cultivate for graduate students.

Graduate student mentoring is a new type of relationship explored at numerous schools. Mentoring in a professional environment includes pairing an entry-level employee with someone seasoned. The advice provided can be formal or informal, and generally, both individuals have a broader field view of the organizational environment. The same can be said in education.

Saint Leo University, located outside Tampa, Florida, has piloted a mentoring program where a doctoral candidate will enroll in an early doctoral cohort course. The experienced doctoral mentor will act almost as a teaching assistant in helping to deliver the learning materials in the course and help tutor and mentor students in introductory subject areas. Furthermore, doctoral mentors can help serve as a sounding board to hear about student challenges and struggles occurring in the outside world or impacting their studies. Additionally, post-graduate mentors might assist students during the problematic dissertation phase—acting as a coach and a motivator. These doctoral mentors serve as mentors for the term of a new doctoral student's enrollment.

Mentoring is fostered through a formalized entrepreneurial program at Bellevue University, located outside of Omaha, Nebraska. Open to both undergraduate and graduate students, business mentorship candidates go through an application and interview process to be paired with a professor whose skills and expertise are matched with their entrepreneurial needs. Professors serve as mentors for the year, meeting quarterly and often helping with projects or activities that can help take the student's new business idea to the next level.

There are challenges with graduate and post-graduate mentoring. Often students and mentors forge close relationships. These relationships are further cemented over time. The mentor can be challenging between being a friend to the student and fulfilling academic duties. Both graduate and post-graduate students and their mentors often hold down full-time jobs, making scheduling difficult. Burnout is also a concern.

The mentoring programs for both universities are new initiatives. Future research could focus on student perspectives regarding the process and effectiveness of having mentors available and suggestions for improvement. A larger-scale review of how other universities incorporate mentorship would also provide a broader perspective.

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# MARKETING ANALYTICS LEARNING MODEL (MALM): HIGH IMPACT PEDAGOGY FOR MARKETING COURSES

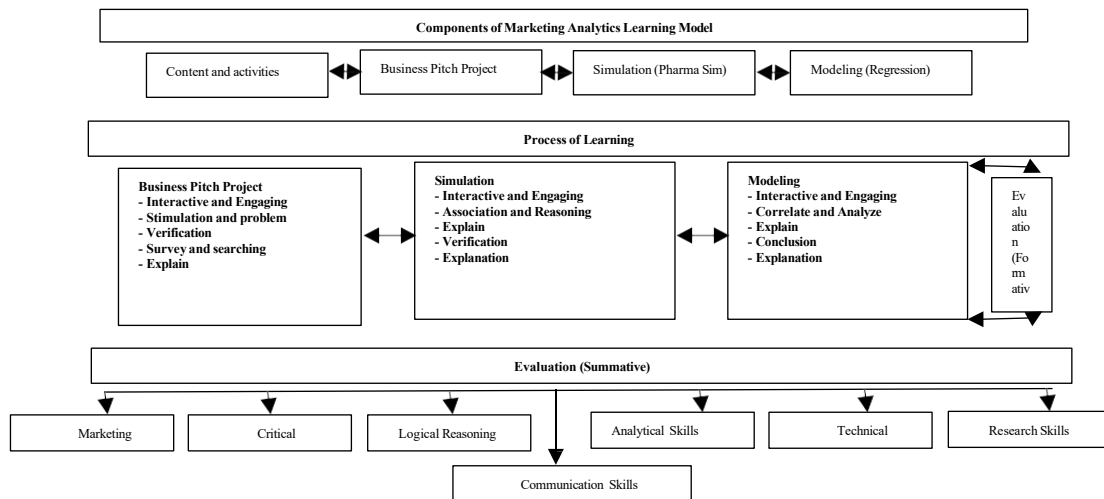
*Nripendra Singh, Pennsylvania Western University (Clarion Campus)*

## POSITION PAPER

Business programs aim to develop students' capabilities for critical thinking, analytical skills, systematic analysis, decision-making skills based on sound logic and reasoning to provide comprehensive recommendations. While traditional curricula facilitate understanding of concepts and theories, it needs to be complemented with new technological tools to prepare students to be job-ready. Rapid adoption of new technologies, big data, and advanced analytics in every industry sector require students who are prepared to use appropriate analytical tools. Some of the technological tools such as simulations have started gaining grounds in academics. While it is good news, literature reveals that modeling the simulation can make the teaching more effective, relevant, purposeful, and engaging for the students (Rego & Regine, 2022). Thus, the purpose of this project is to develop a pedagogical framework to teach marketing courses by combining marketing mix modeling and agent-based simulation (a.k.a. Marketing Analytics Learning Model).

Modeling and simulation have overlapping goal i.e. to predict the behavior of a system with data analysis. On one hand, modeling such as regression analysis may predict the influence of each determinant and their importance in a model. On the other hand, simulation may mimic the operation of an existing or proposed system, providing evidence for decision-making by being able to test different scenarios or process changes. By combining the two together, it is possible to develop smart data analysis and develop comprehensive understanding by the students about the causal relationships and its rationale (Rueden et al. 2020). Modeling has shown great successes in fields like socio-economic analysis, where causal relationships are often only sparsely given but huge amounts of data are available. Simulation on the other side, is traditionally rooted in natural sciences and engineering, where the derivation of causal relationships plays an important role. However, some applications can benefit from combining modeling and simulation. Such a hybrid approach can be useful to help students understand the relationship between the various determinants (marketing mix elements) as well the rationale behind such relationships in the dynamic marketing environment. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to develop Marketing Analytics Learning Model (MALM) by combining marketing-mix modeling and agent-based simulation. MALM is a high impact pedagogy for teaching marketing analytics or related courses effectively to enhance students learning outcomes by modeling the simulation. The components of the MALM are shown in the self-explanatory diagram below:

The list of assessment, evaluation, and skills included in this project are as per the HIP literature (e.g., Finley,



2019), it involves following techniques:

- *Formative Assessment:* Quizzes, Assignments, Self-reflections, Online Discussions, Presentations

- *Summative Assessment*: Business (Biz) Pitch Project, Overall Simulation Results, Regression Results, Final Presentation
- *Measuring skills*: Marketing Concepts, Critical Thinking, Logical Reasoning, Analytical Skills, Technical skills, Research skills, Communication Skills

MALM will add value to students' by developing technical, analytical, and research skills much required by the industry today and in future. It will enhance their overall learning experience and satisfaction with the university programs. This will also help faculty members (PASSHE universities) in their professional development. This will provide invaluable learning experience to me as a faculty member, which I will share with my students in class and colleagues in the university. There is also a service aspect attached to this project. Students equipped with technical skills will prove to be an asset for companies and even for starting their own businesses.

This project will involve students to work in small groups in the marketing course such as Marketing Decision Making (MKTG560). MKTG560 will be offered in Fall 2022 or Spring 2023 and will be used for pilot study to test MALM. As per the course requirements, students will analyze the case study on Pharma Sim to develop a successful marketing plan in their groups utilizing all the marketing-mix elements. The marketing plan (or marketing strategies) thus developed will be used to take decisions on product formulations, marketing channels, advertising and promotions, and pricing strategies in the competitive market. Results will be collected on multiple parameters such as net profit, stock price, and sales using a simulation. Finally, these simulation results will be used to develop analytical model using regression analysis to draw the relationships between different marketing-mix elements and final outcome, if any.

Finally, MALM will be an effective tool or framework to help students analyze the impact of variation of one factor on the overall outcome and their relationships with each other. Thus, by combining modeling and simulation, it is possible to develop smart data analysis and develop comprehensive understanding by the students about the causal relationships and its rationale as suggested in the literature (Rueden et al. 2020).

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# THE DREAD WORD PROBLEMS: AN APPROACH TO HELP MAKE SENSE OF INFORMATION

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## POSITION PAPER

Professors teaching quantitative classes from business math to statistics to research methods to business analytics and marketing analytics keep coming across the barrier that is some students' lack of preparedness for quantitative content (Mondy, Taran, & Riley, 2020). This problem is often exacerbated in institutions of higher learning catering to underserved populations. (Martinez, Lewis & Marquez, 2020).

Among other issues, students particularly struggle with “word problems,” which are the heart of any statistics, business research, or marketing and business analytics problem.

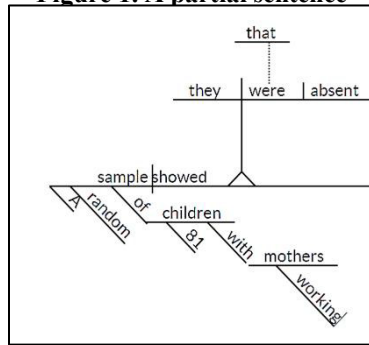
Many students enter colleges and universities lacking essential skills (Mondy et. al, 2020; Parkes, Stein, & Reading, 2015). Students often have trouble even with elementary operations such as adding and multiplying in the correct order or taking percentages. In class we have observed students making the “crocodile” sign with their hands as they whisper to themselves making sense of the inequality signs. (Apparently, the crocodile wants to eat the bigger number!) This becomes an even bigger problem in institutions serving underprivileged populations (Martinez et al, 2020).

“Word problems” stand out as particularly difficult challenges, often dread-inducing insurmountable obstacles (Taran, 2019). Unscientifically, one can observe the prevalence of such difficulties by the proliferation of social media posts, typically enthusiastically supported by many, that present word problems as whimsical nonsensical riddles. (For example, “If you have 4 pencils and 7 apples, how many pancakes will fit on the roof? Purple of course, because aliens wear hats!”) Unfortunately, any actual problem posed in market research or marketing and business analytics is, essentially, a word problem.

After years of redoubling and retripling the efforts to teach students how to *count* (and relatedly, add, multiply etc. in the correct order and apply formulas), we came to the realization that we have been misdiagnosing the problem. Yes, they may have difficulty with elementary mathematical operations, but more importantly, often they cannot read. The “word problem” problem starts with the deficiency of reading comprehension (de Blas, Gómez-Veiga, & García-Madruga, 2021). Basically, being able to tweak out who does what to whom and how many times is how one masters the word problem.

One tool for doing exactly that – making sense of who did what to whom in a sentence is *sentence diagramming* (Coats, 2012; Jennings, & Doumont, 2002). Consider a typical sentence from a word problem: “A random sample of 81 children with working mothers showed that they were absent from school an average of 6 days per term”. Sentence diagramming would systematically dismantle this sentence into its components. We see that the subject here is sample, and it did something: it showed. It was “a” sample” and it was “random.” The process is illustrated in Figure 1. Students who struggle with word problems get assigned to go through tutoring sessions on sentence diagramming and submit assignments with diagrammed word problem sentences.

**Figure 1. A partial sentence**



There are two related difficulties here: a) a typical professor of quantitative methods and analytics is not well qualified to teach reading nor sentence diagramming, and likely does not even understand how somebody could be so impaired, and b) within the context of a given class there is hardly any extra time for teaching reading skills. An ideal solution would be to have a separate remedial class or, at least, a portion of a remedial class, dedicated to this type of skill.

Future research involves fine tuning the instruments and collaboration with other schools to develop a set of specific guidelines directed at reading comprehension remediation for word problems. The authors welcome any and all conversations of collaboration.

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# TEACHING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM COMMUNITY GUIDELINES FROM A SOCIAL JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE

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## POSITION PAPER

Students at Universities in the United States have flocked to channels like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, etc., and to a lesser extent, Facebook and LinkedIn. However, despite spending hours a day on these platforms and often using them as their primary entertainment vehicle, students seem unaware of some of the broader societal implications of social media participation.

As background, liability protection was given to social media platform companies via Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996 in an effort to encourage the development of the internet. The goal was to provide social media platforms and other internet sites with effective means to protect consumers from stalking and harassment. In the United States, courts have said that first amendment freedom of speech rights do not apply to private entities or individuals that might be 'canceled' by social media platforms. Thus, companies like Twitter are allowed to use 'editorial' discretion to block users and entire firms from their platforms (Gotchie, 2021).

This exploratory study reports the full results of a series of qualitative interviews (approximately 35 interviews, 20 undergraduate and 15 graduate students). The purpose of these interviews is to explore undergraduate students' attitudes toward social media editorial decisions regarding who can post, what they can post, and how users appeal these decisions.

The research proposition was that students would be unaware of the reasons that certain business models and products are banned on social media. For example, TikTok has banned all multi-level marketing (MLM) companies, even though most forms of MLM are legal in the United States. This is a social justice issue because micro-entrepreneurs banned from social media platforms lose the capacity to earn income, creating inequality globally, particularly among women, who represent almost 75% of direct sellers worldwide and micro-entrepreneurs in emerging countries (Business for Home, 2021). This broad editorial discretion also means consumers have restricted access to products and services on social media platforms.

Therefore, we hypothesized that there could be a significant potential for educating students on the processes in place to monitor social media. Respondents reported spending as many as five hours a day on social media platforms, which they perceived as primarily for entertainment, to pass the time and distraction, with some use of business news. Despite the time spent on these platforms, the students were woefully ignorant of how a person or a company could be banned from these platforms. Even when they knew of someone who had been banned on these platforms, few could name a clear reason, even in the case of a well-known person as Donald Trump.

When the students did know of someone who had been banned, it was often a TikTok influencer who had been banned for inappropriate dress, although they did say that the influencer often reappeared a few days later. Few could mention a firm or business model that had been banned from social media usage. In general, students did not think that social media platforms should be given such a broad hand in regulating what is offered on their platforms, particularly in terms of business models. Students thought since social media is such an essential part of business today, the platforms should not ban specific business models and businesses because it would not be 'fair' and would detract from individuals' ability to make money. These respondents perceived that there might be issues with the current system of allowing the social media platforms to effectively 'police' the internet.

The results are consistent with prior research that indicates that consumers using social media attempt to influence what happens on social media networks without knowing how the algorithms work or having an actual say in content

moderation. Given these perceptions and opinions, an opportunity exists within the context of marketing pedagogy to incorporate a richer discussion of these issues into the social media curriculum regarding social media platforms' community guidelines. One of the biggest challenges professors have in teaching social media today is keeping up with these platforms' changing trends and policies. Encouraging students to take an active role in discussing these policies and their societal implications can help keep the classroom up-to-date and relevant.

Some suggested student exercises for the classroom based on these preliminary results include:

1. Research the policies of the various social media platforms in terms of banning business models or products and report back on the different policies. In addition, students can compare and discuss the policies on each platform.
2. Discuss whether the protections of Section 230 are still necessary at this stage of the development of the internet by exploring recent court cases regarding Section 230 and the internet.
3. Discuss whether legal business models should be banned from social media platforms.
4. Debate the social justice implications of consumers not having access to information about businesses and products.

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# STUDENT PERCEPTIONS ON THE BENEFITS OF NEARPOD IN THE HYFLEX CLASSROOM

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## *POSITION PAPER*

Active learning strategies for student engagement, such as feedback, classroom response systems, or collaborative activities, differ in a face-to-face delivery versus online delivery. Binnewies and Wang (2019) posit that student engagement measures need to be customized for each delivery mode. In courses offered via HyFlex (hybrid-flexible), students can choose to attend class either in an assigned face-to-face environment or in an online environment, synchronously or asynchronously. While HyFlex courses provide the highest flexibility for student learning, they pose a number of challenges to learning design.

Engagement is important in all disciplines, but for business programs, fostering student engagement is the first objective set forth by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in the accreditation process (Heilporn & Lakhal, 2021). According to Trowler (2010, p. 3), “student engagement is concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimize the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution.” Best practices in pedagogy says that the more direct involvement students have in the course, the more invested and productive they will be. It is imperative that instructors know how to engage students in HyFlex courses so as to maximize student engagement and learning.

HyFlex delivery is aimed at serving both online and on-ground students with a limited set of resources including time, faculty, space (Beatty, 2019). This “student-directed hybrid” learning experience gives students the freedom and ability to choose which mode to participate in from session to session, and as a result they are able to create their own unique hybrid experience (Beatty, 2019, p. 6). Today’s students are more diverse in terms of demographics, methods of educational access, and work-life balance (Keiper, White, Carlson, & Lupinek, 2021). Of the 16.8 million undergraduate students in Fall 2017, only 37% were in the traditional age range of college students under 25 (Keiper, White, Carlson, & Lupinek, 2021). Similarly, smartphone ownership spans across economic, racial, educational, ethnic, and age backgrounds (Keiper, White, Carlson, & Lupinek, 2021). 96% of Americans own a cell phone of some kind and 81% of those cell phone owners are smart phone users (Keiper, White, Carlson, & Lupinek, 2021). Mobile technology has shifted the way people access the internet, do their jobs, and learn.

This paper explores how Nearpod, a web-based learning application that facilitates and controls interactivities, can be used to effectively engage face-to-face, online synchronous, and online asynchronous students in a HyFlex course. Specifically, this study aims to measure student perceptions on the effectiveness of Nearpod as an engaging, interactive learning tool within a marketing course delivered in HyFlex format. The advantages and disadvantages of Nearpod are also explored.

The challenges include the costs of delivering a course via HyFlex while incorporating new technology. The greatest challenge of HyFlex for students the additional effort required to self-manage their participation. In terms of HyFlex delivery, the clear cost to faculty is the additional time it takes most to create complete learning paths for all students regardless of attendance method. When faculty incorporate new technology such as Nearpod, they face several challenges. First, the faculty must learn how to use the technology in order to teach it and answer student questions related to the technology. Second, faculty must allocate time within an already full course. The last challenge of implementing new technology is the expense of the equipment or software to the university and/or department.

Without question, the future of higher education includes some component of online delivery. As a result of the global pandemic, technological advances have impacted nearly every facet of higher education, yet little is known about how pedagogy has or has not shifted to engage students in all modalities.



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# MBA STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE IN THE HEART OF THE PANDEMIC

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## POSITION PAPER

Using a transcendental phenomenological lens, MBA students in a southern Minnesota metro area were interviewed regarding their experiences during the heart of the pandemic in 2021 and 2022. Transcription of results was done for eight participants and then themes emerged from each detailed response and were recorded and analyzed to get at the lived experience of each individual participating in this unique and life-altering time. A second layer was added to have individuals react to their colleagues' experiences reflecting on at least one other individual's experience.

For the purpose of this study, a transcendental phenomenological approach was used. Phenomenological inquiry was chosen as the aim is to understand the experience and perceptions of participants, seeking to understand the underlying structure of the experience. Transcendental phenomenology studies the lived experience of participants, allowing for development of perspectives including external, physical, and isolatable stimuli. In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher brackets out his or her understanding or pre-conceived ideas, as the purpose is to move beyond everyday experience to a state where everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). The population studied are adult, male and female MBA students living in a southern Minnesota community during a period of their studies in a program delivered in the Midwest. These individuals are working to complete their degree and transition into new workforce opportunities and enhance career mobility. The sample being studied are eight adult, MBA Students of men and women living in southern Minnesota community during a period of their studies in a program delivered in the Midwest. These individuals are working to complete their degree and transition into new workforce opportunities and enhance career mobility. None were coerced to participate, and their responses have been documented for us to learn from their own lived experience.

This course was originally offered as an on-ground experience, but due to increases of COVID related cases, the course and interviews were moved to a virtual synchronous and asynchronous based modality of delivery. Interviews took place via Zoom, email follow-ups and by phone using the same questions for each participant.

Below are the results of keywords that appeared most frequently in the transcription of each respondent. Please reach out if you wish to see the detail, which was rich, affirming and challenging for each individual contributing. Dialogue among participants ensued but was not included in this document for confidentiality and anonymity reasons.

Table 1 - Results and Themes that Emerged From the Data Collected

Top Responses:	COVID 43, Pandemic 39, Work 35, People 30, Now 25, Think 24, Vaccine/vaccination 19, Test (testing) 19, Virus 19, Healing 17, Every 17, Health 16, Feeling 15, Thoughts 15, Home 14, Start 13, Life 13, Live 13, Worse 12, Years 12, Serious 11, Days 11
Ten responses:	Social, Family, Okay, Furlough
Nine responses:	Politics, Fear, Expect, Need, Old
Eight responses:	Mask, Know, Coping, Change, Best, Better, Normal, Well-being, School, Mental, News, Deal
Seven responses:	Good, Begin, House, Effective, Understand, Care, World, Fun, House, War, Situation
Six responses:	Reason, Long, Science, Thankful, Believe, Myself, Agree, Fortunate, Everyone
Five responses:	Supervisor, Promotion, Quarantine, Experience, Marketing, Interest, Positive, Open, Quick, Flu, Spread, Friends, Hard, Spread, Bad, Symptoms, Nation
Four responses:	Social media, Focusing, Alone, Business, Differences, Future, Viewpoint, Immune, Isolate, Variant, Learning, Joy, Impact, Stress, Gather, Countries, Bar, Lost

Three responses:	Everything, Blessing, Lead, CDC, Play, Trying, Parents, Question, Divide, National, Human, forward, toxic, lucky, rally, Shock, Potential, Population, Love, Outside, Go out, Approval, Pet, Opinion, Distance learning, Kids, Fight, Public, Emotion, Another, Eye opener, Children Significant, Money
One and Two responses:	There were myriad choices of words to describe their experiences.

In addition to words like pandemic and COVID which topped the list, discussion of work, dealing with people, questions such as “What do we do now?”, and thinking differently - living among a vaccine testing for virus world was present in discussions.

Talk of healing emotionally and physically, regaining health and preserving it, while balancing feelings and thoughts of altered home lives were present. Others discussed in great detail how this pandemic brought on a new start to live a new life. Some complained that our existing culture could get worse and serious, but optimism was evident. Social structures with families changed, politics surfaced, and furloughs and layoffs became a reality for many participants. Fear, expectations and the need to care for loved ones more frequently was mentioned often.

Understanding one another, coping, changing for the better, maintaining well-being and balance to find goodness was discussed frequently. Refer to the Table 1 provided for a list of common responses that emerged from the interviews.

Isolation, the impact of social media, focusing, being alone, understanding our differences and viewpoints, while trying to find and maintain joy were common responses among these eight MBA participants during the pandemic. The desire to gather in common forums was desired and discussion of where we are headed left uncertainty. Still others saw hope and opportunity for a better work life balance as a result of this quarantine time.

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# TEACHING NETWORKING SKILLS IN AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE: INITIAL FINDINGS ON THE IMPACT OF A LINKEDIN ASSIGNMENT

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## POSITION PAPER

Professional networking and career development skills may fall outside the traditional marketing curriculum but helping students to develop these self-marketing abilities remains a priority for many educators. Two of these skills are the ability to establish a network of career connections and to communicate a professional image to that network (McCorkle & McCorkle, 2012; Peterson & Dover, 2014). These “support skills” or “soft skills” are transferable across disciplines and support a student’s knowledge and abilities to successfully enter the professional field and find success.

One method for developing these self-marketing skills is using collaborative web 2.0 tools such as social network sites (SNSs). LinkedIn is the dominant social network focusing on professional rather than personal life, with over 750 million users worldwide (Statista Research Department, 2022). This study details the creation of an assignment utilizing LinkedIn in an undergraduate course to teach professional networking skills, including the preliminary results from the first semester using this assignment and plans for subsequent research.

Students are less aware of LinkedIn and less likely to use it than the most popular personal SNSs, and believe it is only valuable after graduation (Florenthal, 2015). Those with accounts tend to be passive and unlikely to utilize the most beneficial features such as making connections and sending messages (Carmack & Heiss, 2018). Although some studies have used LinkedIn for a professional networking assessment similar to the one detailed here (McCorkle and McCorkle, 2012; Peterson and Dover, 2014), those studies have not typically followed up to measure whether student LinkedIn usage continued after the assignment was complete.

This exploratory pilot study used LinkedIn as a pedagogical tool to teach professional networking skills in an undergraduate Introduction to Business course at a small university in the midwestern U.S. During the Fall 2021 semester, students first completed a pre-survey and consent form, and then learned about the benefits of professional networking and about using LinkedIn to obtain those benefits. The assignment required them to create a LinkedIn account, and to take actions in their account that included completing the profile, obtaining at least 40 connections, posting two updates, joining two groups, and asking for a recommendation. After completing all requirements, students submitted a written reflection discussing LinkedIn’s perceived value and their future site usage intentions. A post-survey was then distributed, and students were told they will be surveyed every year they remain at the university prior to graduation about their ongoing LinkedIn usage.

Preliminary results from the first semester indicated that the assessment did influence attitudes and behaviors. After the assignment, 73 students (89.0% of enrolled students) completed the post-survey. Of these, most (65 participants, 89.0%) now reported having 26-100 connections. In addition, 72 participants (98.6%) indicated that they used five or more LinkedIn features, with the most used being looking up people they knew, updating their profiles, joining a group, and posting information. Participants indicated that LinkedIn could build connections with industry professionals ( $\bar{x} = 4.59$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), help their professional careers ( $\bar{x} = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ), and keep them informed ( $\bar{x} = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ). Based on results from hypothesis testing, the average rating for these perceptions in the post-survey increased from the pre-survey. Finally, 50 participants (68.5%) indicated they will use the site more often or the same amount in the next year as compared to the intervention period, and 56 participants (76.7%) indicated they would use it the same amount or more after graduation, as compared to this intervention period.

After the intervention, students in this sample will receive one follow-up survey six months later and a second 12 months later, asking about current LinkedIn usage, attitudes regarding the site, and any perceived benefits obtained.

In spring 2022, 67% of those from the fall study completed the follow-up (55 respondents), indicating that students may be willing to participate in ongoing research. On this first follow-up survey, most participants reported having more connections, although the number of features used returned to pre-survey (pre-intervention) levels. Participants did indicate increased use of LinkedIn features for looking up people they knew, searching for internships, and searching for jobs. These results are consistent with activities that would be expected for a professional networking site and do indicate significant increases in connections and use of some features before and after the intervention. When asked about their current usage of LinkedIn per month, 27 participants (57.4%) continued to indicate they never used LinkedIn, but 20 participants (42.6%) indicated they used LinkedIn at least once per month, which is a significant increase from the pre-survey (p-value=0.0007).

After the spring 2022 assessment, the researchers plan to examine results across the academic year and consider potential alterations to methodology for subsequent courses. Results after the first semester of this pilot study indicated that students believed LinkedIn to be more potentially valuable and were more active users after the assessment. They expressed intent to continue their usage in the future, and that eventual networking activity will be the most reliable indicator of the value of this assessment for other marketing educators.

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# INTEGRATING PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS INTO EXISTING CURRICULA

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## *POSITION PAPER*

Higher education is facing an unprecedented challenge today: preparing students with the necessary skills, competence, and knowledge to fill the talent gap while helping the U.S. remain competitive globally. As part of an initiative to modify the curriculum of programs housed in the Marketing and Business Information Systems Department (MKBI), extensive secondary research as well as primary qualitative research was conducted starting in fall 2014. The results were consistent across all groups; a successful career and career development path involve competencies in professionalism, communication, critical thinking, digital and analytical skills, teamwork, and continual personal and professional improvement. This paper summarizes MKBI's tactics for integrating Professionalism and Professional Certifications into existing curricula.

With this research, MKBI began multi-stage curriculum modifications across the three programs housed in the department (Marketing, Management Information Systems, and Supply Chain/Logistics). One of the goals for the modifications was to incorporate professionalism training as well as professional certifications into the required program curriculum. To achieve that goal, a two-phase strategy was employed. The first phase was the introduction of a continuing 0-credit hour course in fall 2016, Engagement and Career Exploration (ECE). As a graduation requirement for all students entering programs housed in MKBI, students were required to register for the course every semester. In order to pass the course, students were required to accumulate points each semester based on activities and achievements. Course requirements for first-years and sophomores focused on providing students with opportunities to engage with internal and external constituents, explore their major at multiple platforms, and engage in networking and interviewing events. Requirements for juniors and seniors focused primarily on professional certifications, defined as credentials offered through associations, industry groups, or the owner of an intellectual property. However, throughout the eight semesters of coursework there were a variety of engagement, networking, and mentoring activities that could earn students points in addition to certifications and professionalism.

The value of these professional certifications were communicated with the faculty members who were teaching the related subject matter. Faculty teaching those courses could choose to include these credentialing opportunities into their courses as an incentive or as a requirement providing students with multiple opportunities to benefit from the credentialing process. Over time, faculty have made many of these credentialing activities permanent requirements in their courses. Certifications embedded into courses included Google Analytics, HubSpot, six sigma, and HAZMAT.

Individual faculty voluntarily "taught" the ECE sections for each cohort of students. The role of faculty is to be the main contact person for students, to track and record student activities, and to be the champion for the program. All student progress and tracking were monitored and recorded on Blackboard or, later, Canvas.

The initial cohort of students began in the fall of 2015. At the end of four years, spring 2020, the initial cohort of participating students graduated. In this cohort, a total of 158 marketing students completed HubSpot, 87 Google Analytics, 2 Hootsuite, and 1 Facebook Blueprint certifications while a total of 3 supply chain and logistics students completed the HAZMAT certification and 2 earned the Six Sigma Green Belt certification. These findings for the initial cohort were promising and informative especially since that initial cohort were graduating at the beginning of the Covid-a9 Pandemic

The "0" credit Engagement and Career Exploration (ECE) served as an effective albeit a transitional motivational tool for faculty; it directed them to focus on the inclusion of professionalism and certifications into the existing

curricula for the three programs housed in the department. Many of the certifications became course requirements in both required and elective courses across the three majors. Other faculty have begun to explore and implement different external certifications into courses including certifications from APICS and the Project Management Institute.

The Center for Professional Development (CPD), the Rohrer College of Business career center, was established in 2014 and as the center has expanded, and in coordination with the ECE faculty, many of the networking and professionalism activities have been transferred to the Center. The CPD introduced a new course, Business 101, in fall 2020 which is a business professionalism course required of all RCB students. The CPD also collaborated with the Marketing/BIS department in creating a summer certificate program that allows students, regardless of business major, to complete a series of professional certifications.

As these new initiatives were implemented during the Covid-19 Pandemic, meaningful data was difficult to collect. However, as the restrictions resulting from the Pandemic, data is again being collected.

As the use of the ECE course achieved its goals, it is being phased out of the curriculum after 6 years. The final cohort will graduate in spring 2023. The function served by ECE is now shared across departments and courses as well as with the CPD.

In order to achieve the goals of increasing student professionalism and strengthening their credentials, MKBI implemented a two-step process to integrate professional certifications and professional activities into traditional academic programs. The success of the initial step, a 0-credit course (ECE) has led to the creation of a free-standing professionalism course for all business majors and the embedding of professional certifications in required and elective coursework.

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# CHOOSING A BRAND: LUXURY AND STANDARD BRANDS IN DEVELOPED VERSUS DEVELOPING MARKETS

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## POSITION PAPER

The purpose of this study is to compare the perception of luxury and standard brands in a developing market and compare them with perceptions in a developed market. As countries evolve and shift from developing to developed economies, discretionary income generally increases for consumers. And with that shift, consumers may seek out luxury products and brands that allow them to display their ability to afford these more expensive products. In this paper, we provide preliminary evidence of the brand preferences between a developed (USA) and an emerging market (Turkey).

Initial findings from a logistic regression of the data suggest that Turkish drivers are more likely than American drivers to choose a luxury car brand. In addition, drivers who had higher levels of luxury brand aspirations were also more likely to choose a luxury car brand. Further analysis that focused on the level of brand-awareness by participants showed that the level of brand social media interaction tended to compel a driver to prefer a luxury car brand. All other variables of interest did not have significant effects.

This preliminary study suggests that consumers from an emerging market (Turkey) are more likely to prefer luxury brand vehicles than are consumers from a developed market (USA). While this may seem somewhat counterintuitive, given the relative income differences between the two markets, it makes sense that luxury brands are preferred due to the high level of quality that is attributed to them. Consumers tend to focus on the brand, especially when status is an important signal that comes with the brand. When consumers have restricted discretionary income, other research has found they do prefer branded products as the brand tends to guarantee that consumer investment will not be wasted. What is also interesting is that only the level of brand social media interaction had a significant effect on the choice for a luxury brand. It could very well be that the direct interaction that can be experienced on social media has a greater effect than will brand confidence, satisfaction, or trust.

As this was a preliminary investigation of the brand preferences between a developed and a developing market, our initial findings are encouraging in suggesting that there is still much to be investigated. Our exploratory research suggested that consumers from developing markets are more luxury brand minded and that brand social media interactions matter for them. In future research, we hope to investigate these findings further to understand the reasons why this is the case. Since we simply assessed the data with a simple logistic regression, it could very well be that we have a more complex story to tell. We plan to investigate a process model that involves the mediation of Regulatory Focus to evaluate whether consumers from developed markets are more likely to follow a promotion-focus rather than a prevention-focus when deciding among luxury versus standard brands.

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# ENGAGING APPROACHES TO INCORPORATE ETHICS & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INTO THE CURRICULUM

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## *PANEL POSITION PAPER*

Our vision for incorporating ethics and social responsibility into our curriculum starts with intentional critical reflection, open curiosity, and recognizing creative approaches to engage students. Regardless of whether institutions or curriculum include required courses focused on ethics, we share our experiences and suggestions for colleagues to incorporate growth and development. Our panel shares ways we engage in inclusive, diverse, and equitable practice to improve student engagement and understanding. Specifically, we highlight our application of film, industry examples, and case studies focused on diversity, inclusion, equity, and ethical decision making while identifying industry trends, innovation, and timely social and cultural issues. We encourage students to apply these principles and establish their critical and inclusive practices as they grow into future professionals. In addition to mastering course content and learning outcomes, our hope with every student is they foster and develop socially responsible life skills of inclusion and ethical decision making.

At Atlantic Cape Community College, all academic programs are required to be at 60 credits to constitute an associate degree. In 2018 this was implemented as state law to help to control the cost of college education. This is a benefit to students who find tuition costs burdensome. However, this becomes a departmental challenge as the faculty are continually debating on the core classes that need to be part of the Business Degree program. Whereas there is usually consensus on the Management, Marketing, Accounting, and Business Law classes, there are lively discussions about elective classes. Atlantic Cape offers electives in Entrepreneurship, Business Logistics, HR Management, Leadership, and of course, Ethics. With the differing perspectives in the department, these courses remain Business Electives for the students to select. Students often enroll in classes that fit into their schedules rather than taking classes that will benefit them in their careers. The ethics class becomes a “hit or miss” with business students, so many are not getting a thorough review nor understanding of ethics.

In other academic institutions, such as Webster University, the accrediting body mandates that business ethics be part of the curriculum. However, the actual implementation remains under the discretion of faculty. This has created an enduring debate regarding whether ethics should be a standalone course taking valuable credit hours that could be allocated to other courses, or whether ethics should be integrated throughout the curriculum. The undergraduate management and marketing programs are often met with students that have not taken a course in philosophy or ethical reasoning and can be somewhat reluctant to enroll in an entire semester of business ethics. The Department of Management has decided that not only should students be trained in a defined business ethics course, but those concepts should be revisited often throughout each subject area in their degree. The reasoning being, apart from creating ethical leaders, this also develops the core business skills of critical reasoning and problem solving which can be applied to numerous contexts.

The Department of Integrated Strategic Communication (ISC) at the University of Kentucky has a required ethics course for all majors. The course, Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues in ISC, is one that often students anticipate will be difficult, dry, and uninteresting. The learning outcomes for the course include developing an understanding of Federal Trade Commission (FTC) laws and regulations as well as industry codes of ethics for professional behavior. Additionally, students learn about ethical principles, theories, and tools for decision making. The reading assignments can be in-depth and require investment of time and attention. By having a required course dedicated to ethical considerations built into the curriculum, on one hand, the structure is in place for students to develop an understanding of critical thinking and ethical decision making. On the other hand, students are often predisposed to feeling “forced” to address these issues, which they anticipate being a tedious and dull experience.

At Atlantic Cape, the Business Department has determined that ethics should be studied in all classes. Whereas a

business ethics class would be beneficial, a “teaching ethics across the discipline” approach is currently the best way to introduce ethics into each of the business classes. Each faculty member (both full-time and adjunct faculty members) is responsible to introduce, teach, and stress ethical business behaviors. Since there is no standardized or structured format, each faculty member has the opportunity to develop their own methods to deliver the topic of ethics. One method that has been utilized is through assignments and class discussions. Assignments and discussions are intended to enhance learning on a particular topic. As these assignments are dedicated to ethics, ethics training will be further developed. This is also true of discussions. As discussions are centered around ethical dilemmas, students are able to listen to the opinions of their classmates which often generates some counter-opinions. The discourse helps students to better understand perspectives of others and the difficulties in making ethical decisions.

Webster University has both the defined and integrated approach, meaning that students take a dedicated business ethics course and have ethics integrated throughout the curriculum. For the dedicated course, we identified student engagement as one of the central issues to teaching an effective course. To help encourage participation, Webster developed a course centered around movies and popular culture and how the underlying themes in films can be applied to business ethics. For example, capitalizing on the popularity of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and its various superheroes, class discussions focus on the decision making process of its characters and how they relate to various ethical frameworks. This can be paired quite well with a real-world case study. For example, when discussing the Ford Pinto fires and the ethical dilemmas faced by its recall coordinator (Gioia, 1992), one might ask, “If Captain America were in the same position, using his dominant ethical framework how would he have resolved the situation?”

Likewise, at the University of Kentucky, professors are afforded academic freedom and are encouraged to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into curriculum as well as to challenge students to: think critically, engage in discourse, and develop frameworks for making responsible ethical decisions. In the required ISC ethics course, faculty present students with films, case studies, and timely industry issues to apply the ethical, legal, and professional frameworks, about which they are learning. At the conclusion of the course, students remark that the class was unexpectedly among their favorites. They were surprised at how much they learned. Several said that they can no longer look at an advertisement without analyzing it for ethical issues. One student wrote, “I appreciated the films that were provided as it helps me to visually understand the topic/concept that we were learning in class. Overall, this class helps you prepare for the real world in knowing ethical, legal, and social issues in today’s society. I feel more prepared for my future career opportunities ahead as this plays an important role.”

Not every degree or program includes a required course focused on ethics. In programs without a dedicated course, it is difficult to examine the effectiveness of attempts to integrate ethics and social responsibility into the curriculum. Since the “teaching ethics across the discipline” approach is not standardized, there are control issues. Given the wide variety of pedagogical philosophies within the body of faculty at any institution, with their varying styles of teaching, there are few standards to measure its effectiveness. Another challenge is that there are no mandates requiring faculty members to adopt this plan to enhance ethics training. There are faculty members who embrace this method and approach (and many who may have already been emphasizing ethics in their classes) and there are faculty who do not find the time (or motivation) to adjust their teaching style, or who are lacking the support and resources to enhance their teaching practice.

Future research can seek to better understand the challenges facing universities and colleges and offer suggested actionable practices. Departments will continually look to convert elective classes into required classes. This is not simple, as all classes have benefits for students, but there are varying methods to rank the true value of different courses. There are also continual challenges with curriculum development, departmental politics, and “home-rule” teaching assignments. Much effort must be put toward not only creating an engaging environment to foster ethical discussion, but one that also builds upon critical thinking skills and problem solving. This should be developed in a context that provides definitive assessment of ethical reasoning. The opportunity remains for faculty, curriculum developers, and administrators to engage in intentional reflection, development, and growth. Faculty should be empowered to lead students in meaningful discussion about ethics. We recognize that they may have received little to no training in the area (or have little interest, as noted). Ethics is a discipline rooted in critical thinking. In addition to having a pedagogical interest in ethics, faculty also need support and resources in order to effectively teach ethical reasoning. Our panel affirms the desire to continue growing as teachers to improve our students’ understanding beyond the content they learn in our courses. We encourage and challenge our colleagues to likewise engage in reflection and seek to develop our students as socially responsible humans engaged in inclusive and ethical decision making. Our discussion panel will offer additional insight and suggestions for fellow colleagues.

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# USING COMPETITIONS AS A LEARNING TOOL

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## PANEL POSITION PAPER

As faculty, we are all committed to reaching our students in pursuit of that “ah -ha” moment, that moment we know that they are truly engaged. We live for that flash of epiphany where there is understanding in their eyes, and we know that they understand. It is our signal that they have made the connections and the content now makes sense. There are many paths to that stage of insightfulness and engagement. We propose that the use of competitions as a learning tool can be one of those paths.

Competition brings a type of gamification of the content into the classroom. Gamification at its core is the use of any game-like techniques in order to increase the engagement of users like scoring and fast feedback (Muntean, 2011). Subhash and Cudney (2018) “identified several benefits of using gamified learning, such as improved student-engagement, motivation, confidence, attitude, perceived learning, and performance. Improved student attitudes, engagement, and performance were the most significant benefits from using gamification and game-based learning applications.” These benefits can all be obtained through the use of competitions in the classroom as a learning tool.

**Sponsored vs. Faculty Developed Programs:** Competitions can be both sponsored and faculty developed events. Participation in sponsored competitions provides students access to large, high-profile clients and corporate cases. For example, the American Advertising Federation’s (AAF) National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) has allowed students to work with clients like Adobe, Tinder and Meta. The NSAC case study is written by the organization’s marketing executives. These marketing executives also participate in Q&A sessions with the students and often serve as competition judges. The American Marketing Association (AMA) is another organization that sponsors a case competition. It has provided students with opportunities to make recommendations for clients including Amazon, Hershey, and the Wall Street Journal. Teams that make it to the finals present their work to representatives from the client, justifying their recommendations. The biggest advantage to sponsored competitions is that they attract large, international clients and provide access through consultation to their top talent.

On the other hand, faculty developed competitions allow the competition to be centered around the specific demographics, learning objectives and the timeline of a particular class or program. Faculty developed competitions are based on targeting and recruiting specific organizations to participate in competitions in their class/program. In place of the national recognition of winners of sponsored competitions, faculty created competitions focus on regional and local businesses interested in recruiting on their campuses. There are generally several awards available to the top teams. With both types of competition, students have the opportunity to walk away with offers of internships and jobs, recognition, monetary rewards and invaluable skills and experience.

**For-profit vs. Non-profit Organizations:** There are advantages and disadvantages of working with for-profit and non-profit organizations. Working with for-profit organizations allows students to work with substantially larger budgets (usually). In addition, working with a for-profit client usually means that students are competing with past work from agency professionals, which may push them to show their absolute best. Students are also given the opportunity and experience to make certain decisions that would need to be made for a client with a larger scope and budget. However, given the greater importance placed on revenue in a for-profit organization, students may not get as much support or leeway in the development of their ideas. And their ideas may not be taken as seriously.

As non-profits are more likely to be under-staffed and under-supported, they may be more appreciative and welcoming of student input and work. Which could mean, students are more likely to see their ideas implemented. Non-profits are also more inclined to have the types of budgets most students will see professionally. This provides a more realistic experience. For different reasons, for-profits and non-profits might not always have time to meet with the students and provide the feedback needed to move the project forward. It is advisable to always go into a competition with clear expectations for the organization, whether for-profit or non-profit, sponsored or faculty developed.

**Incentives for Participation (Credit and Prizes):** Many sponsored competitions, like NSAC, include some sort of prize money for the top few teams. For faculty developed competitions, participating organizations will also contribute both money and company swag. In either case, often the money is not a big factor. In the case of sponsored competitions any prize money goes toward team expenses rather than to students as individuals. In faculty developed competitions, the amount of money is smaller. Regardless of structure, students are most often driven by their competitive nature – intrinsically motivated to be the best they can be – and the desire to make themselves and the people they care about proud – ranging from parents and professors to peers and even their department. They also care deeply about not letting their teammates down.

Incorporating competitions into a class is an incentive to participate. Although the amount of work required will usually exceed that of a “typical” course, it still allows students to get academic credit for their work. Sponsored competitions often require a deliverable that students can include in their portfolio. Depending on the organization, this can also be true of faculty developed competitions.

**Challenges and Benefits (Students):** Participating in national competitions like NSAC push students to perform at their highest level. That can mean a lot of late nights, missed social events and constructive criticism. However, these competitions also push students to create work they did not know they could produce. Practically, national case studies give students a glimpse into agency life “in the real world.” while faculty developed competitions provide them with a more realistic experience of working within an organization directly. Working with small to mid-sized organizations also give students a better overall view of how marketing works with other areas in the faculty developed competitions. In both types of competition, students walk away with some of the deepest, most authentic friendships of their college career – the shared challenges form bonds they never could have expected. In addition, students feel more confident to start their first career jobs.

**Challenges and Benefits (Professor):** Managing a competition, means a lot of extra work for a professor. In addition to the classroom learning that needs to happen, there are also competition deadlines, rules and communication to manage, particularly with sponsored competitions. Competitions often require additional time for feedback and late-night student meetings. Advising teams requires taking on many roles including a coach, a critic, and cheerleader to name a few. While faculty sponsored competitions afford a professor more control over timelines and deliverables, a sponsored competition has less flexibility. In a sponsored competition, a professor has to help students develop their time-management and teamwork skills because usually these endeavors need to be a true team effort operating within strict deadlines. In addition, depending upon the competition, the work might extend beyond the semester in which the students took the course.

These competitions also come with many benefits. One of the biggest benefits is the opportunity to build deep, long-lasting relationships with students. Because of the late nights, extra feedback and competition travel, these student team members become lifelong networking contacts, mentees and even friends. Being there when students experience their “ah-ha” moment and knowing that you have truly engaged them in the content, makes all of the work worthwhile. Some of the best feelings from teaching can come from participating in competition as a learning tool.

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# INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY INTO MARKETING EDUCATION

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## **PANEL POSITION PAPER**

New technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), such as augmented reality, NFC, facial recognition, 3D scanning are transforming business and marketing. Universities and specifically marketing faculty need to quickly adapt to prepare students for the careers of the future by integrating technology into curriculum, which will require major revisions in marketing education. Implementing technology into the curriculum sounds like a great idea. Educators sit through conferences and webinars excited to learn and share with students' best practices of this shiny new toy. However, left behind is sometimes the basics of technology that aren't as shiny, but still as critical as ever to learn as industry has adapted to and implemented.

In a Forbes article by Coleman (2022), "In 2021 there were over 115 podcast listeners in the U.S., and this number is set to grow. So it's no surprise that many marketers plan to increase their spending in this medium" (para. 1). While some professors are comfortable assigning podcast to glean information, few are taking the time to show and instill mechanics of producing. For learners of all topics, there are podcasts that interview experts who share incredible knowledge, many times for free. In order to get students to understand the foundational skills of the process of creating and producing a podcast with an industry expert, students completed a podcasting assignment in a Principles of Social Media Marketing course. While they were encouraged to create and produce by themselves, pairing with another student was permissible as long as the length of the podcast was doubled (instead of 10 minutes, required 20 minutes). During the two weeks of learning about podcasting, students were tasked at researching an industry-specific topic that warranted an expert session. Question development was required, as well as contacting and securing a subject matter expert to agree to be on their podcast. Students were provided equipment should they choose to borrow or many just used their smartphones. After the interview took place, students were taught on software within the class how to best edit podcasts. This included editing out information that didn't fit and adding background music to both open and close the podcast for a more professional feel. Finding a host site for posting and sharing podcasts was required.

Students have commented how insightful and valuable this assignment has been. "I loved the podcasting assignment the most. Not only did I actually learn how to use the technology, I made my own show! I want to make this into a regular thing. Also, the industry alumni who I am now connected with was an added bonus!" Furthermore, those seeking these skills in their employees and interns also are thrilled with the podcasting skill. One internship supervisor commented, "Not sure where 'students name' learned how to create podcasts, but wowzers, that was a game changer for our business this summer. Thanks for not just making your students listen to podcast (they already know how to do that), but actually how to create content on their own from start to finish!"

Microcredentials are a badge or certificate which recognizes that highly sought-after skills or competencies have been verified and endorsed. Nationally, microcredentials are gaining momentum to supplement existing degree programs with the specific skills/competencies that today's employers are seeking. Implementing microcredentials in marketing courses meets the needs of both business and industry while preparing students with stackable and marketable skills. Many microcredentials are offered in Digital Marketing courses.

The challenge presented is the multitude of tools available in Digital Marketing and their appropriate application in the marketing discipline. Students will need to be proficient in many software and platform applications to stay competitive in the marketplace. Fortunately, key software companies offer trial uses of their applications that can be demonstrated in the classroom. Further, Hubspot, Hootsuite, Google and SEMRush are all platforms in the digital marketing field that continue to offer various free certifications today. Regularly, students confirm the pursuit of and achieving certifications strongly augments the classroom lessons and discussions that develop.

The wealth of digital marketing tools can be quickly and easily applied in traditional marketing concepts such as

understanding markets, segmentation, targeting and positioning. The marketing instructor should be versed in the basic concepts of the software application but an expertise of such is not necessarily needed to send the student exploring such on their own. In fact, appreciating the broader use of the software concept will help the student transfer from one application to the other better in instances of new software opportunities or instances when a software company perhaps goes out of business. This is further supported with the recent 2022 Martech Map that includes a 24% increase in just two years in software solutions in the marketing technology field.

Considering businesses are implementing virtual reality (VR), universities should also start integrating VR technology into curriculum. Biocca and Delaney define VR as the hardware and software systems that seek a comprehensive, sensory illusion of being in another environment (1995). VR invites businesses to rethink how they engage with their customers and consider new possibilities for showcasing products and services (Marr, 2017). VirtualSpeech, a virtual reality (VR) education platform that allowed students to practice how to deliver successful video-based sales pitches was piloted in an Integrated Marketing Communications course in Fall 2021. Students in the selected IMC course worked with and for two local organizations: the local humane society and the regional boys and girls club. In the pilot program, two weeks of the 15-week semester was set aside for students to learn the fundamental techniques and strategies for giving video-based sales pitches through articles, videos, quizzes, and case studies. After completing the module on video-based sales pitches, students practiced their sales pitch in the VirtualSpeech VR platform. The simulation analyzed student's voice and delivery, provided feedback on pace, audience perception, and confidence.

Students reported that they "liked" the VR experience. One student said, "What I liked about the VR module is in went into pretty good depth about different scenarios that you may encounter in the marketing world. We went from being the listener to being the person giving the pitch which was nice. It was something new and different and made the learning environment more enjoyable." Another student commented, "For the VR I really liked that we were able to upload our own presentations and practice them before we have to present. I also like that the VR gives us feedback when we talk. I think VR is a great tool if you have trouble presenting in front of a group of people like I do, it gets me prepared for when I really have to do it."

Faculty face several challenges when they incorporate technology in the classroom. First, faculty have to learn how to use the technology so they can teach it and answer student questions. Faculty must also allocate time within their course. The cost of software and equipment can be an issue for faculty and students. Students may not have the resources to cover the cost if all software isn't provided. Similarly, faculty are constrained by departmental budgets. Lastly, the digital support varies at different institutions to help navigate/support technology within the classroom.

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# ANALYTICS IN THE CLASSROOM

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## **PANEL POSITION PAPER**

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines analytics as “the method of logical analysis,” which appears to be straightforward and uncomplicated. However, introducing marketing analytics in the classroom can become complex in the context of big data and technology-related tools to look for patterns and relationships that may lead to actionable insights and improved marketing performance (Babin, 2019; Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2021). This may result in student disengagement and failure to achieve intended learning outcomes, especially when presented in a lecture without incorporating engaged learning and application opportunities (Mackh, 2018; Nilson, 2016). Recognizing the continued expansion of technology-related capabilities in data collection and analysis, marketing educators should not limit analytics to big data but rather incorporate the important role and contribution of quantitative analysis to each area within marketing.

To achieve a program learning outcome of students demonstrating analysis in identifying a problem or opportunity through leveraging primary and secondary data, the author has been intentionally incorporating data collection and/or analysis applications in courses of the marketing curriculum as it relates to the subject matter. For instance, in sales and sales management, the student analyzes data for planning, management, and evaluation metrics at the account, territory, and management levels. In marketing research, the student develops a questionnaire incorporating several types of scales, collects data, and evaluates the results using central tendency and dispersion metrics. In each of these courses, the topics are explained with examples followed by in-class exercises prior to students working independently outside of class.

One may challenge this approach as the focus is not on big data or predictive analytics (Babin, 2019; Iacobucci, Petrescu, Krishen & Bendixen, 2019) or tied to customer relationship management (CRM), management information systems (MIS) or artificial intelligence (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2021). These analytical areas continue to evolve as technology-related capabilities increase and likely warrant majors and/or minors to meet the needs and wants of students and employers. However, these areas do not address the needs (and hopefully wants) of marketing students concentrating on a creative path in new product development or promotion (e.g., advertising or sales) to be prepared with quantitative skills in problem and opportunity identification as well as in achieving actionable insights. Although quantitative skills may not align with students’ interest in pursuing a career in marketing, having these skills will benefit them and are valued by employers.

Future research should be conducted on the quantitative skills that employers are looking for in college graduates with a marketing degree. Further exploration into the quantitative skills needed in various marketing career paths would aid in curriculum design and learning outcomes to prepare students for successful careers in marketing.

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# BUSINESS CASE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY: DECONSTRUCTING THE CASE ANALYSIS

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## **PANEL POSITION PAPER**

Analyzing comprehensive business case studies can sometimes be an overwhelming proposition for undergraduate students in a Strategic Marketing course. Students often have trouble extracting the appropriate information, especially identifying the key issues in the case. This leads to an analysis and recommendations that may not be meaningful to the case. Additionally, the student's grade will be negatively impacted in pursuit of an inappropriate course of action.

This position paper recommends deconstructing the case analysis to allow students to submit the analysis in sections. Each submission is followed by a class discussion where the appropriate answers are identified. Students can then pivot, if needed, as they continue their analysis. A typical case analysis might have the following format:

**SWOT ANALYSIS** – Based on the information presented in the case, perform a SWOT analysis.

**IDENTIFICATION OF THE KEY ISSUES** – The key issues come directly from the information identified in the SWOT analysis. Issues are things management can act upon or “do something” about.

**ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION** – For each key issue, provide at least 2 alternative courses of action should that specifically address the key issue.

**EVALUATION OF THE ALTERNATIVES** – Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative course of action. Provide support from external references for your evaluation.

**RECOMMENDATION(S) REGARDING THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION** – Recommend one course of action for each key issue based on the above evaluation.

If a student has difficulty identifying the Key Issues of the case, the remaining analysis will not be meaningful. Rather than submitting this as a single analysis of the case, it is recommended that the analysis be separated and analyzed in the following format:

**Submission and Post-Submission Discussion 1** – **SWOT ANALYSIS** – This discussion can provide a foundation for the case analysis.

**Submission and Post-Submission Discussion 2** – **IDENTIFICATION OF THE KEY ISSUES** – This discussion will help students distinguish between elements of the case that are important for management and those that are not. If a student has incorrectly identified the key issues, they can move forward with the correctly identified issues and continue their analysis.

**Submission and Post-Submission Discussion 3** – **ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION** – Students now have the correct issues that were identified in the previous discussion. This discussion focuses on alternatives that are appropriate for the issue and the business at the center of the case study.

**Submission and Post-Submission Discussion 4** – **EVALUATION OF THE ALTERNATIVES & RECOMMENDATION(S) REGARDING THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION** – Students may revise their alternative courses of action based on the previous discussion. This discussion centers on the support provided for their alternative courses of action and that evidence leads to the recommendation.

Students are evaluated for each submission, so while they may lose points for not identifying the key issues, this decision does not impact them throughout the entire case analysis. Students can get 'back on track' at each submission and hopefully improve their comprehension of the case as well as their grade. These Submission-Discussion Cycles can be conducted face-to-face, online or a combination of both. Additionally, Discussions 1 and 2 could be combined in an effort to save time.

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# ONLINE TEACHING TECHNIQUES

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## **PANEL POSITION PAPER**

Post pandemic online learners continue to grow in record numbers. Why? It is more convenient. During the pandemic, students flocked to online programs because they could work and still maintain being a “student.” The enrollment climbed 186% from the previous year (Distance Learning, 2021). According to survey conducted by Best Colleges, 37% of students felt online was the only option during the pandemic. However, the pandemic is not the only reason students select online learning. Learning house cites in their survey conducted in 2021 that 55% noted affordability as their number one reason and the number two reason was the accreditation of the school. As an educator with over 20 years of teaching experience, this presents an opportunity for teaching course online. Is this just a trend? Fad? According to the National Center for Education Statistics, over 6 million students are studying online in the United States as of 2021. And, Western Governor’s University reported over 136,000 online students in 2020 while 45.5% were enrolled exclusively in an online program (NCES).

These staggering numbers presents an opportunity for online education classrooms. Over the last two years, the author heard from a number of students who are now seeing less offerings in person and having to take online course. While some students prefer the independence of setting their own pace, others prefer the personal touch in an online course. The sense of building a community still exists whether you’re on ground, hybrid or online. Many educators miss the element of the human connection. One of the first messages that all of my students see from the first faculty announcement is “if you wouldn’t rate me a 5 out of 5, let’s talk.” It shows upfront that the course is built around the student experience. One student recently commented on how that stood out that I was student centered and wanted to ensure a positive experience in the classroom. There are a number of methods which the instructor can create community. One particular way is to humanize the connection to the students. By posting short videos, students can see you are making a connection. The instructor can use the talking head method which is the most common form; an instructor is lecturing into the camera for a few minutes. Utilizing the “chunk and chew” method keeps students actively engaged.

A strategy to employ for introductions are to use video or infographics to connect others in the online classroom. Moving away from the traditional fill out some demographics about yourself and share with the class can be more creative and fun for the learner at any stage where its undergraduate or graduate level studies. Even the grading can take on a human element; you can use video or voice recordings when correcting student work. The online strategy is to provide numerous resources to connect and bring together a sense of community. Over the course of a semester, group work is still valuable working in small teams. Even if you do not want to offer group project, using the technique in a discussion post called a “jigsaw” can create a sense of community. Using the jigsaw technique can create a sense of community with “expert” groups where a small number say 3-5 focus on one aspect of the learning outcome for the week. This is not a new concept in education and is even used in elementary schools across the county. The key is preparation where the students can gain access to the necessary reading materials. The goal is to get the small teams to become the experts and serve as a “piece of the puzzle” when everyone comes together; the puzzle becomes whole.

In conclusion, try to personalize the course where possible. Each online course presents an opportunity to customize a unique learning experience. It requires creative thinking on the faculty member, advance notice, preparation and an open relationship with an instructional designer to try out new techniques, get feedback, refine and execute. Even though an instructional designer may design the overall bones or shell of the class, faculty have the ability to put their own personal spin on delivering an exceptional experience for the online learner while still maintaining the rigor and outcomes that each course must deliver. Humans still have the need to connect. Ensure that your course is getting updated on a timely basis with fresh content, new videos and bridge the gap between online and onground communication to students.

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# DILEMMAS WHILE TEACHING MARKETING RESEARCH AND MARKETING ANALYTICS

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## **PANEL POSITION PAPER**

In this session, we will discuss dilemmas faced by instructors while teaching marketing research and analytics. Dilemmas are conflicts in which we are faced with several equally viable alternatives each of which have their own benefits and challenges; dilemmas are an integral part of teaching (Caspari-Gnann & Sevian, 2022).

Brooke Reavey will present the dilemma between teaching marketing research vs. marketing analytics. She will discuss how to update the marketing research course at both the graduate and undergraduate levels so that it reflects modern market research practices. She will also discuss the reasons why instructors may want to consider resisting the temptation to include both analytics and market research principles in the same course. Additionally, she will (briefly) discuss the multitude of DIY platforms that are available for free on the web that also help students collect their data.

Purvi Shah will highlight the dilemma of teaching quantitative vs. qualitative research methods in marketing research and analytics courses. In this digital era, almost 90% of the data available is qualitative or unstructured (e.g., text, images, audio, video) (Bussler, 2022). Over 90% of market researchers (especially the ones with less than five years of industry experience), collect and use some form of qualitative data (Fuel Cycle, 2022). This shows the importance of qualitative data in the industry and the need for skilled qualitative researchers. However, in the classroom, where we train these future researchers, instructors face the dilemma of whether to teach quantitative research or qualitative research or a combination of both. Dr. Shah will discuss the causes underlying this dilemma and brainstorm solutions to overcome these challenges.

Vasu Unnava will discuss the dilemma of programmatic analytics vs. pragmatic research in marketing research and analytics courses. This is an important dilemma as marketing data and analytics are not delivering expected competitive advantages to businesses despite heavy investments in the data and analytics teams. Senior marketing managers struggle to justify impact of these investments on business ROI. Though the students are trained in the programmatic analysis of data, most often the recommendations are not actionable or unclear to implement. Realizing the requirements for framing research questions resulting in actionable outcomes requires pragmatic research skills in identifying models and collecting suitable data. Finally, Dr. Unnava will highlight the important role of marketing research in combination with marketing analytics course focusing on data requirements for a set of typical marketing insights that can lead to actionable recommendations with high confidence.

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# INTEGRATING ANALYTICS INTO COURSES AND CURRICULUM, OH MY!

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## *PANEL POSITION PAPER*

As availability of data and data analysis tools continues to grow, students entering the workforce must have some level of data fluency (Kurtzke and Setkute, 2021). Therefore, business programs are under increasing pressure (e.g., Weathers and Aragon, 2019; Wilson et al., 2018) to add curriculum or programs which help students develop their data analysis skills for marketing jobs. This session will cover three initiatives addressing this growing need.

The first initiative includes building an assignment using with anonymized data from the professor's research as an effective and efficient way to build students' proficiencies in Excel. The second initiative will describe a curriculum mapping process that has provided a springboard to (1) gently introduce analytics for all marketing majors and (2) create a concentration in marketing analytics. The third initiative will discuss using the publicly available data in Google Trends in an assignment to have students think about data conceptually and consider how to use make use of it in a meaningful way.

Initiative One-The first initiative began when the professor was searching for an analytics case to enhance the marketing curriculum and decided to use data collected from a study previously completed. Since the professor owned the data, it made the process of adoption less complicated from a permissions perspective. A set of initial questions were created to address analyzing the data in a couple ways including numerically and according to population. The first learning outcome centered on a case question were students selected what survey questions to analyze in order to answer the question, make decisions on the data presented, assess the outcome, and provide recommendations. Since marketing students studied the importance of population, segmenting data demographically was a second learning outcome. Students were to assess the differences between age groups, income level, and more deciding if there was truly a difference in the various populations, which enhanced the assignment. Due to the fact that approximately 400 students complete the course per year and, at times, answers can be shared in multiple platforms, a set of rotating case problems were created so each semester, the questions would change. In addition, the Excel document was altered so the population and demographic numbers provided rotated as well.

Initiative Two-While spending a week "interning" at a local company, I (the instructor) heard numerous "co-workers" talk about the importance of data in marketing. In fact, I came to witness how this company and its marketing decisions were driven by data. Something I found curious was how few of the people I spoke with in the marketing department were marketing majors in college—IS yes, statistician yes, mathematics yes, finance/economics yes/yes. During this same timeframe, I was serving on the board of a local chapter of another marketing organization and met quite a few mid- upper-level marketing managers. These marketers were heavily relying on consumer/customer data and marketing analytics to drive the decisions of their marketing clients or the brands/companies for which they worked.

Combine these experiences with the opportunity to teach a capstone marketing course, and I realized the students I was teaching who would be entering the workforce in 1-6 months were lacking the very skills this collective of marketing managers were looking for when they were hiring. Voila, I realized we needed to do something to better position and prepare our students for the job market and marketing careers in THESE companies. Furthermore, we had other majors across the university asking for the option of a marketing minor to better prepare their majors for a career in (or even starting their own) business. Fortunately, I work with a very collegial marketing faculty, and they were fully on board to correct our "ship's" course. Loaded with all this input, we were able to create a marketing minor for any major to meet internal "demands."

Over the last two semesters, we have solidified the personas of our future graduates and have begun the process



of curricular mapping of our marketing degree. We began with the end in mind (personas of future grads) and are assuring the learning objectives—especially those Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) that underpin data driven decision-making—are identified, instituted, AND reinforced throughout our curriculum. We will gently start by introducing the idea of data driven decisions and some light analytics in our Principles of Marketing courses, then all required marketing courses will build on this foundation—in fact some will become prerequisites for other marketing courses. For example, we are completely reworking the marketing research course to better prepare students for marketing seminar and our newly created marketing analytics course. Our major will now have a marketing analytics concentration to meet external market demands.

Initiative Three-The third initiative was integrated into an undergraduate Digital Marketing class, but it can be integrated into Consumer Behavior (when discussing the consumer decision making process and, specifically, the consumer information search process) or Principles of Marketing. This initiative was used as an in-class team activity. The instructor had students navigate to Google Trends. Google Trends provides data about search queries over time and across different regions. The data is normalized by the time and geographic location of the search, so it is not very useful to directly interpret the numbers. However, the graphs that show “interest over time” and “interest by subregion” can be used to identify search patterns and longitudinal trends. This data can also be downloaded as .csv files. An effective example to share with students is the search term “Doritos” or “Budweiser” in the “United States” for a custom date range from “Middle of January to two days after the Super Bowl that same year.” Searches for these brands typically increase before and during the Super Bowl due to the release of television ads during this event. After walking through an example and the different functionalities in Google Trends, students are asked to work in small teams to analyze (1) a brand and a competitor brand in the same product/service category, (2) over a period of time that is longer than 90 days, and (3) any geographic region of their choosing. If students struggle to identify a brand to examine, Interbrand’s list of annual top global brands is recommended as a starting point. The students are given 25 minutes to work with their teams to examine the trends. They are asked to do a little research to determine what may drive peaks in consumer search about a brand. For example, in 2022, Taco Bell had peaks in search queries due to the release of new products (e.g., Mexican Pizza item). The point of this exercise is to get students comfortable examining data and thinking about what may drive the patterns they observe, a useful skill for any occupation or graduate school. The student feedback for this introductory (the students complete the assignment usually in the first two weeks of class) has been overwhelmingly positive.

These different approaches to integrating data analysis and analytics into classes and curriculums have provided students experience with the knowledge and skills required in an increasingly data driven industry environment. More detail about the initiatives will be provided by the authors at the panel session. In addition, the authors are happy to share specific materials with anyone interested.

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# USE OF PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER CULTURES

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## *PANEL POSITION PAPER*

International marketing is an extremely important area of study within business domain, especially due to globalization (O'Brien & Deans, 1995). This is apparent by the huge increase in student enrollment in this major and programs offered globally (Boluda & Lopez, 2007). Teaching efforts are being focused to develop pedagogy, which can create value for students such as project-based learning, study abroad program (Paik, 2020), innovative program (Ortiz, 2004), transnational marketing project (Singh, 2022 a, b), and collaborative online international learning (Hans de Wit, 2019). One of the key elements in learning about international marketing is to understand the culture existing in the international market. Without understanding the local culture, it is not intelligent to develop business strategies. It is not easy for students to understand a new culture and to develop appropriate marketing strategies. Unfortunately, there is almost no research on how to teach culture in a manner that can be interesting and fun. Thus, the purpose of this study is to develop a framework to help students learn about other cultures. In other words, the framework will facilitate faculty to teach about culture easily. This work is extending the research on 'Transnational Marketing Project' approach to teach international marketing.

'Transnational Marketing Project' (TMP) was developed to teach international marketing at Clarion University (now Penn West University) in 2019 (Singh, 2020). TMP refers to the academic projects that involve students from two or more countries (partnering institutions) to jointly develop a project such as marketing plan (Singh, 2022 a, b). It utilizes hybrid high-Impact (HIP) pedagogy by involving four HIPs: International Collaboration (study abroad), Research, Creativity, and Learning Communities (Bringle, 2017; Kuh, 2012). There are five key components to TMP: business idea and industry analysis, cultural analysis, economic analysis, marketing environment analysis, and marketing plan. Students from the partnering institutions collaborate in teams to develop a marketing plan for international market. To be a successful in this project, the first and critical step is to understand consumers and their culture. For this, domestic students rely on international project partners (IPPs) or the international students for information and learning. Thus, at its core TMP aims to provide an immersive experience to students via first hand interaction with international consumers who are the IPPs to gain insights on consumer behavior and culture. In the previous two TMP experiences, an important gap in learning about cultural aspects was found. The teams who interacted more were able to get some understanding than those who limit themselves in completing assignments/reports. So, the outcome of cultural analysis was limited to the information gathered from secondary data available on internet rather than the first-hand interaction. Because of this limitation in current TMP, it is proposed to include a framework based on cultural orientations model (Schmitz, 2012; Walker, 2003). The model is simple to understand as compared to Hofstede's model that provide five cultural dimensions of national culture: Power distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty avoidance, and Long-term versus short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2005, 2007). The ten dimensions of the cultural orientations model (Dzenowagis, 2009) are:

1. Environment: How individuals view and relate to the people, objects and issues in their sphere of influence
2. Time: How individuals perceive the nature of time and its use
3. Action: How individuals view actions and interactions
4. Communication: How individuals express themselves
5. Space: How individuals demarcate their physical and psychological space
6. Power: How individuals view differential power relationship
7. Individualism: How individuals define their identity
8. Competitiveness: How individuals are motivated
9. Structure: How individuals approach change, risk, ambiguity, and uncertainty
10. Thinking: How individuals conceptualize

While these 10 dimensions are easy to understand, it is important to make them usable in TMP context. In other words, it is important to make it easy for students to apply these 10 dimensions to understand cultural aspects of their IPPs. Therefore, it is proposed to develop a framework using projective techniques such as Word association test,

Sentence completion test, Thematic apperception test (TAT), and Third-person techniques. Projective techniques are the approaches that are used in research to unearth the deeply held attitudes and motivations that are often not verbalized by respondents when questioned directly. Respondents may or may not be aware of these attitudes or feelings. By using the projective techniques respondent's real feelings are inferred from what s/he has said/responded about others. It can be used by interviewing individuals or small groups. Thus, the goal for this research as part of TMP is to design tools (questions) within each of the commonly used projective techniques that can be used to gather responses from IPPs. The data thus gathered will be used to analyze how successful the tools are in terms of providing information about the other culture and consumer habits in that culture. Based on the success of these tools the framework will be finalized for future use in teaching about culture with TMP projects. Some of the tools within each of the common projective techniques are as under:

- *Word association test*: A list of words or phrases (such as brand name) presented to respondents, who then write a related word or phrase that pops into their mind. Respondents can even provide a small description of any object or product or even a situation that comes to their mind. For example, a group of tourism professionals were asked to come up with personality traits (or human characteristics) for villages. Their responses included 'Reliable' and 'Friendly'.
- *Sentence completion test*: In this method, respondents are provided incomplete sentences, which they are required to complete. For example, "My daily routine include the following 5 things...", "The five things that I purchase regularly are...", "I live in an area were...", "If I have to get my work done, I will...", and "I see my future as...".
- *Thematic apperception test (TAT)*: In this method, respondents are shown pictures and asked to describe what is happening. It can also be in the form of an illustration/story, drawing, or cartoon that respondents can write about.
- *Third-person techniques*: This method is used for eliciting deep seated feelings and opinions held by respondents. For example, when asked why you might choose to buy from local versus a branded store or purchase branded or unbranded product, the response can be very different than when you ask why people in general (or your neighbor or third person) might buy from local versus a branded store or purchase branded or unbranded product. By providing opportunity to speak about someone else, such as neighbor, relative or friend, respondents talk freely about attitudes that they would not accept (or speak) for themselves.

For the framework to be finalized, the assumption is to have at least five examples of tool/method mentioned above, under each of the 10 dimensions of cultural orientations model: Environment, Time, Action, Communication, Space, Power, Individualism, Competitiveness, Structure, and Thinking, to the extent possible. It is important to note that having a context might be an important consideration for this framework because of which there can be multiple frameworks for different scenarios. Another thing is the involvement of experts from the local culture, who can help validate the tools/methods and the frameworks before finally applying them to capture responses. It is logically assumed that such frameworks will be very effective in learning about others culture and behavior as consumers, especially when used as part of TMP. Finally, the framework thus developed will help students learn to interact with people from different cultures, gain first-hand experience of different cultures, overcome the challenges of working with people from other countries, encourage discussions and communication, learn about consumer behavior, and differences in international markets.

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# CLIENT-BASED PROJECTS: WORKING TOWARD A FRAMEWORK TO BUILD CAREER-READY COMPETENCIES IN STUDENTS

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## *SPECIAL SESSION POSITION PAPER*

As the world continues to grapple with accelerated technology growth and external disruptions large and small, organizations are transforming and as a result, so are their talent and skill needs. In addition to content knowledge, the most important qualities that employers cite are the ability to work in a team, analyze and solve problems, communicate, take initiative, and lead (National Association of College and Employers [NACE], 2021). Since a primary goal of marketing education is to prepare students to secure jobs in the field upon graduation, it is important to continually evolve pedagogical practices to ensure currency and relevancy. Traditional pedagogy such as lecturing has left a gap between what is taught in the classroom and what is expected from the industry. Conversely, experiential learning, defined as “the study of learning through action” (Payne et al., 2011, p. 206), is one of the most valuable and high-impact pedagogical approaches in marketing, developing both content knowledge and critical professional skills.

A subset of experiential learning, client-based projects (CBPs) are a “high-impact” educational practice that gives students the opportunity to apply what they are learning to real-world challenges. These high-impact practices are effective because they entail a considerable time commitment, compel students to communicate with peers and professors, expose students to diverse ideas and people, offer students regular feedback, and facilitate opportunities for students to apply their learning outside of the classroom (Kuh, 2008).

Client-based projects (CBPs) have been recognized for their value as an experiential learning device and as a way to increase critical thinking and problem-solving skills in that they provide real-life experience for students and are beneficial in learning business processes and developing professional skills (Bush & Miller, 2011). Research shows CBPs have improved specific competencies situationally: creative problem solving as a core marketing competency (Jaskari, 2013); critical thinking, cross-functional teamwork, data analytics and communication leadership (Oh & Polidan, 2018); student confidence related to problem solving, critical thinking and teamwork skills (Childers et al., 2020). Finally, when implementing CBPs in classes, student ownership over their learning and engagement increases (Lopez & Lee, 2005; Yuksel et al., 2021). Despite these myriad benefits, existing literature has not fully explored the relationship between CBPs and career-readiness skills.

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), career readiness is based on a foundation of eight core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management. The eight core competencies of NACE are career and self-development, communication, critical thinking, equity and inclusion, leadership, professionalism, teamwork, and technology. These competencies were developed as a result of research conducted with career services, university relations, and recruiters to develop a shared understanding of what is needed to launch and develop a successful career, a common vocabulary by which to discuss needs and expectations, and a basic set of competencies upon which a successful career is established (NACE, 2021).

Collectively, the authors have taught 197 CBP focused sections or courses over a combined 49 years, reaching more than 5,312 students. From this experience, we have observed that in order to achieve strong outcomes and actionable recommendations and deliverables for the client, students require simultaneous learning in three focus areas: content, application of content, and career-readiness competency. The authors have discovered that those who excel in or develop career-readiness competencies have more successful and enjoyable experiences in CBPs. This supports Jaskari’s (2013) findings that argue assessment of the creativity competency in marketing is more about the

process than the outcome. Similarly, the authors posit that purposefully integrating and assessing NACE competencies in a CBP course can be a powerful mechanism for increasing students' awareness and development of these career-readiness skills, which can be even more valuable than the final outcomes. The authors posit that CBPs are a mechanism to increase awareness and development of NACE competencies by students.

To encourage the implementation of CBPs that successfully develop career-readiness competencies, the authors are working toward a framework. Under the proposed framework, the role of the college professor focuses more on coaching, with the marketing theories and concepts more powerfully embedded in the learn-by-doing approach central to CBPs. The teaching of theories and concepts in marketing and communications can be embedded in the learn-by-doing approach in CBPs. The authors shared the seven-stage framework in an interactive session at the 2022 Marketing Management Association Fall Educators' Conference where facilitators led small group discussions exploring each of the seven stages in the proposed framework. Looking ahead, each stage will be dissected to explore the roles of the university, department, faculty, client, and student as well as the career-readiness competencies developed.

While the authors address the value and benefits for CBPs in building career-readiness skills in the context of marketing education, we recognize it is limited based on our classroom experiences. Therefore, there may be a bias toward recent CBPs rather than older projects. The study is also limited by its sample size and its specific context. We encourage further investigation in other regions of the United States, in other countries, and with students representing culturally diverse populations. Future studies could also replicate our study in other business-related courses.

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# TOO MUCH OR NOT ENOUGH? DEBATING THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE MARKETING CLASSROOM

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## **SPECIAL SESSION POSITION PAPER**

The purpose of this panel presentation is to debate the potential merits and drawbacks of and discuss strategies for using technology in the marketing classroom. Specifically, four key questions will be discussed: 1) To what extent does technology distract students and impede learning? 2) To what extent does technology engage students and enhance learning? 3) How do students and faculty feel about technology use in the classroom? 4) What are recommended approaches for effectively using technology in the classroom?

Using technology in the marketing classroom can be used purposefully on the part of the instructor (“on-task” use) or it can be used for reasons not related to the class (“off-task” use) and can take place in several forms. Off-task purposes include the use of laptops, tablets, or cell phones during class for social media, email, text messaging, etc. On-task purposes include students responding or participating instantaneously in online polls or games, collaborating in real-time on written work, and engaging with various types of media, for example.

In this panel presentation, research that has investigated the effects of on-task and off-task technology use on student engagement and learning is discussed (e.g., Glass, 2019; Neiterman & Zaza, 2019). For example, research has found that technology enhances the classroom experience by effectively engaging students, but others have found a causal link between off-task cellphone and laptop use during class and poorer exam scores due to long-term retention of the material being hindered (Glass, 2019). In addition, an important component in effectively using technology – an understanding of student and faculty beliefs and attitudes toward the use of technology in the classroom – will be discussed. Then, recommended approaches for effectively using technology in the marketing classroom are presented. Finally, panel members will solicit opinions and experiences from conference attendees regarding their use of technology in the marketing classroom.

This Special Session ought to be of strong interest to MMA conference attendees as we believe that many faculty members ponder and sometimes struggle with the issues of how, what forms, and how much to integrate technology into the marketing classroom. Also, we believe many faculty members are likely faced with the same decision dilemma we have encountered. On one hand, students may expect the integration of technology and entertaining content in their courses, while instructors may feel that technology, games, and the like may encroach on the delivery of “serious” content. In other words, competition between content and “entertainment value” is likely faced by many faculty members and should provide for a lively discussion.

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# POST-PANDEMIC TEACHING: BALANCING MOTIVATION, EMPATHY AND RIGOR

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## *SPECIAL SESSION POSITION PAPER*

Teaching during a pandemic presented numerous challenges for faculty. Many universities switched to remote operations for some period of time requiring faculty to create or modify courses for online learning. Even when in person courses began again, the classroom environment was significantly altered by the world around us. Researchers have found that the pandemic led to an increase in depression and anxiety for college students (Wang, Hegde, Son, Keller, Smith, Sasangohar, 2020). It also increased barriers and created additional hardships for students of color and low income students (Lederer, Hoban, Lipsin, Zhou, Eisenberg, 2020) with Black, Latinx and Asian students reporting worries over financial difficulties and lower expectations of completing their schooling compared to White students (Reyes, Portillo et al., 2022). These difficulties impacted not only the classroom experience but also the post-graduation outlook for students. Not only were students struggling to complete school work and get to graduation, but now getting work experience, internships, and having the confidence to search for jobs were all significantly hindered as well. Though we may be learning to live with the pandemic, the way we handled these challenges may be useful and necessary in order to continue to help students to succeed moving forward.

The three main areas of focus for this paper are motivation, rigor and empathy. Each plays an important role in teaching and must be balanced in order to provide a challenging, compassionate and impactful learning environment. This was even more true during the pandemic. How we handle each one greatly impacts our effectiveness, as well as student engagement, confidence and understanding.

Motivating students can sometimes feel like herding cats. Especially for any faculty member who has taught a fully online course, a 3 (or more) hour lecture course or an 8am class, it can be challenging to keep students engaged. Choosing topics that students can relate to and understand is important. Delivering content in an easily digestible way is even more so. While much of what we teach can be complex and often brand new to students, one of the key ways to help students understand is through application. Whether it be through assignments, projects, or discussion, actually having to understand how a concept is used can provide clarity to a subject that students may find confusing. During the pandemic it may have seemed even harder for students to grasp this type of material. However, the pandemic also presented the opportunity to take advantage of online resources. Using simulations or videos, students could still be engaged, even in fully remote courses. Also, allowing for real world projects or applications can help students to gain skills for their future and increase their interest in the course. This may have been difficult online however, project based learning requires flexibility and with the addition of zoom or any video platform, students can have group meetings, meet with an organization or have class and still manage to learn through doing. These online changes can still be helpful even if courses are in person.

During the pandemic, student motivation was significantly lower. Returning to a more normal environment has still not led to a more motivated student body. With many students out with Covid or worried about money or their family, or attempting to regain their life, students have not mentally been able to focus on their schooling as much as they could prior to the pandemic. During the pandemic, reaching out to students to “check in” and to encourage them to stay motivated became more necessary. Whether it be sending weekly emails to students in classes to remind them about their work, encourage their effort and let them know you are there, or checking on advisees to keep them motivated as the semester progresses, it’s important to make sure students are okay. This can be as simple as reminding students of campus resources such as tutoring, academic coaching, counseling, and career services. While many faculty put these things in their syllabus, reminders throughout the semester can help students so they don’t forget and also don’t think they have to go without help. While these check-ins and reminders were helpful during the pandemic, they really can be helpful all the time, and are fairly simple as they can usually be done in an email or post on a class site.

Empathy became essential during the pandemic. Students were not only getting Covid, but they were working more, dealing with sick family members, feeling isolated and anxious and generally overwhelmed (as many of us

were). Many faculty struggled to balance course deadlines and work expectations with student absences, illness and lack of motivation. It is imperative for faculty to decide what deadlines and assignments are immovable and where flexibility can be offered. Late work doesn't ever need to be consequence free necessarily, but if a student is willing to complete an assignment and learn more about a concept, we should always think twice about why we want to halt that process. My goal is for a student to learn. If they want to do that on their own timeline in a way that doesn't impact other students (or my time), and earn a lower grade for it, that is their choice. There will always be work and assignments that cannot be moved or done late but there are things that are out of a student's control and offering flexibility can be helpful to reduce anxiety for students. Many students have gotten Covid during the 2021-2022 school year that interfered with important presentations, projects and exams. Creating a policy ahead of time is important so students know what to expect. Faculty can also build time into the course where students may need additional time to complete work or revise things where applicable. This provides a cushion for everyone without holding anything up. Creativity on the faculty members part is important. Can a student send a video of themselves giving their final presentation if they are quarantining? Can an exam be taken early if a student knows they have a conflict (they would get less time to study than other students in this case)? Can homework assignments or quizzes be virtual giving all students access no matter where they are? Being able to provide flexibility when appropriate can make a big difference for students who really are trying and just need some understanding to continue to succeed.

At this point many faculty members would say that students are no longer able to meet high standards and giving students flexibility can lead to a lack of rigor. First, you should understand what rigor means in your courses. Rigor can mean difficult concepts, or challenging work. It can also mean work with impactful outcomes like service learning or real-world projects. Rigor does not necessarily mean burying students in work or having immovable deadlines. It is important to evaluate our assignments, projects and course activities every semester, and even keep a running list of changes to be made during the semester when you see what things are working and what things are not. Things that are not helping students learn, that seem superfluous, or are just designed to keep students busy should be removed. All course materials should help students learn at a minimum, but allowing students to apply concepts, practice skills, utilize new knowledge or use their creativity can be even more rigorous as well as motivating.

Another example of rigor can be through course reading. Many faculty use a book to assist student learning. It is important to choose a book wisely and all faculty should read their textbook completely at least once. You may realize it's wonderful, with great tools for students. You may also realize its tedious with outdated examples and incredibly time consuming. Students should learn to read critically, and it is important our reading materials allow them to do this. However there is a balance between a challenging read and a book they will not open or buy. Encouraging students by telling them what benefits the book offers and why they are reading it is important but ensuring the book is a good fit is too. This is also an area where virtual components that were added during the pandemic can be helpful. Online modules that come with books may help with concept application. Using articles and videos to support the reading can also provide students with a well-rounded view of the material. In addition to textbooks, consider shorter books as well that explain theory in an applied way for students, or even books that have an audio component.

Overall the pandemic has put increased emphasis on how faculty balance motivation, empathy and rigor in their courses. While the beginning of the pandemic may have required a lot of empathy, and motivation may have been lacking for everyone, hopefully we can use what we learned moving forward to still provide a rigorous learning experience, while also keeping students motivated, and being empathetic to their lives and the world around us.

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# THE IMPLICATIONS OF INDUSTRY TRENDS ON THE DESIGN OF MARKETING ANALYTICS COURSES

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## *SPECIAL SESSION POSITION PAPER*

Designing and teaching marketing analytics courses in higher education has several challenges, most notably the need for the course design and materials to keep pace with the swift and ongoing evolution of the marketing analytics field.

The unprecedented demand for business and customer insights has fueled rapid growth in new marketing analytics technologies. This includes data collection and analysis tools, data visualization tools, machine learning platforms, and many other specialized tools to perform digital analytics. In fact, in many cases, multiple analytic platforms and techniques are required to provide the level of data-driven insight that is needed to inform today's most pressing business and marketing decisions.

When operating in this constantly changing environment, it is critical to initially consider and regularly review the course materials through the lens of three important questions. What marketing analytics business applications should be covered in the course? What data sources and data analysis methods/techniques should be incorporated into the course? What analytic programming languages, platforms, and tools should be utilized in the course?

Insights derived from marketing analytics have become a vital contributor to decision-making across all facets of the marketing mix. In addition, the shift to omnichannel marketing practices has altered the way marketing analytics is performed across different channels, particularly digital channels. Therefore, the course needs to be designed to cover fully developed applications of marketing analytics (e.g., informing email targeting strategies) as well as emerging applications (e.g., prescribing an optimal omnichannel content marketing roadmap). In fact, depending on the demand for analytics courses in the marketing curriculum, it may be beneficial to offer multiple analytics courses that focus on different types of marketing analytics applications, enabling a more comprehensive study of each business application.

The widespread use of social networks and the rapid adoption of digital commerce and communication channels has revolutionized the access businesses have to consumer and marketing performance data. Analysts are using this data to perform a broad set of data analysis techniques. This can range from the use of experimental design and measurement techniques to optimize online promotions, pricing strategies, and UX design to the development of machine learning-based predictive models to target the ideal consumers for new products. The course design should consider the full spectrum of data sources and data analysis techniques currently used by marketing analysts to determine the right mix of data and analytic techniques to include in the course.

Thoughtful integration of analytical software and platforms is also required in the classroom. Selection of analytical platform(s) that allow students to develop expertise and confidence using industry-leading marketing analytics tools is a must. This may include programming languages such as SQL, python, R, or SAS, and data visualization software such as Tableau or Power BI, and specialized tools such as web analytics (e.g. Google Analytics), social media analytics (e.g. Brandwatch), search analytics (e.g. Semrush) and spreadsheets (MS Excel).

As mentioned before, the primary challenge when designing marketing analytics courses is to keep abreast of the changes in the marketing analytics field so that the appropriate adjustments can be made to the course design across all three areas previously discussed (applications, techniques, and software). A secondary challenge is ensuring the course effectively teaches students how to apply the marketing analytics insights to meet the demands of different business problems. The use of case materials and experiential learning approaches are very useful and help students connect the dots between uncovering analytical insights and applying the insights to successfully address various

marketing challenges. Identifying a business partner that will provide students with data and a marketing business challenge is an ideal way to have students hone their marketing analytics skills in a hands-on, collaborative learning environment.

There is currently great demand for teaching marketing analytics courses because educators and students understand these skills are necessary to be successful in the current marketing and customer experience management working environments. However, it is equally important to teach students how to apply their marketing analytics skills in socially responsible and ethical manner. Analysts often have access to very detailed and personal consumer information, and it is critical that students learn how to become responsible stewards of this consumer data. Incorporating ethical practices into the design of marketing analytics courses would be an extremely valuable area of future pedagogy research.

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# COMMENT, COLLABORATE, AND CONSIDER: USING WEB ANNOTATION TO BUILD CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS, ENCOURAGE THOUGHTFUL DISCOURSE, AND ANALYZE MARKETING RESEARCH

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## *TEACHING INNOVATION COMPETITON TEACHING NOTES*

Two elements remain at the core of marketing education. First, building students' critical thinking skills allows them to appropriately assess, evaluate, and synthesize various data and information. Second, the ability to identify and use credible information sources in research and other analysis is critical when there is an abundance of information available with a few clicks. This innovation has two parts. Either part can be offered as a stand-alone assignment. However, using both parts is effective in providing students a holistic perspective about a particular topic.

Part 1 utilizes web annotation as a mechanism for building students' critical thinking skills and encouraging thoughtful discourse. Critical thinking is the foundation for high order thinking and problem solving in the marketing field (e.g., Celuch & Slama, 1998). Marketing educators have used and developed innovative methods to foster critical thinking in the classroom. Structured case analysis uses defined exercises to provide students a theoretical framework from which they can transition to a case analysis with less guidance. This method, moving from more to less structure, enhances students' critical thinking skills and marketing knowledge (Klebba & Hamilton, 2007). Similarly, online simulations allow students to leverage information provided in the simulation and knowledge gathered in each round of the simulation to enhance their decision making about future rounds (Deitz et al., 2022). Finally, there is strong alignment between the skills necessary for crafting evidence supported argumentation in a debate and critical thinking. Therefore, classroom debates have been effectively used as an exercise for critical thinking development (Roy & Macchiette, 2005). To date, the research on web annotation in marketing courses has been limited. Annotation is the process of adding comments to an existing text. Web annotation is adding comments to an online text and can be conducted as a collaborative activity where annotators can see and respond to each other annotations (Kalboussi et al., 2016). The act of annotating an online text changes how a student reads the text, knowing that he/she/they will need to respond to the material. In addition, it provides a venue for debate which is less time bound and not restricted to oral communication. From an instructor perspective, web annotation can be used as a homework assignment or leveraged in an online class or hybrid setting. The student learning objectives of Part 1 are to (1) critically analyze a popular press article covering a topic in marketing and (2) respond to peers' assessments of the same topic. Part 1 utilizes a free, online Web Annotation tool, Hypothes.is. This assignment was developed from workshop provided by the Director of Education at Hypothes.is and the Office of Teaching Learning and Scholarship at a university in the United States. Instructors can quickly set up a class account using: <https://web.hypothes.is/quick-start-guide/>. A popular press web article is chosen to help students easily delve into the topic. Students are instructed to provide two annotations about the article. The first annotation is a detailed question, insight, or example the student has generated based on the reading. The second annotation is a response to another student's comment (generating an online discussion among students since they are notified if someone replies to their comment in the Hypothes.is system). Instructors can download all the annotations using the instruction provided in: <https://web.hypothes.is/help/how-do-i-export-my-annotations/process> to quickly grade or view all the annotations.

Part 2 builds on Part 1 by using students' annotations as an impetus for discussion and the basis of a short research assignment. While the Internet and a plethora of online resources has increased access to information, this has also resulted in the need to equip students with the capabilities to discern between credible and non-credible information (Gurney et al., 2004). Increasingly, marketing students are expected to be able to navigate through copious amounts of information and effectively apply that knowledge for roles in practice (Cluley et al., 2020). At the fundamental level, these skills are based on information literacy and the ability to identify and apply relevant information to a given context (e.g., Castleberry, 2001). Part 2 of this innovation provides students an opportunity to look for peer-reviewed sources that connect to the topic examined in Part 1. The students are asked to describe their process of identifying

relevant sources to encourage reflection on the research process. This is an add-on to Part 1, or it can be integrated as a standalone assignment to most marketing courses. The student learning objectives are to (1) move the online conversation from the web annotations to an in-class discussion and (2) use an online database to find peer-reviewed, scholarly research that addresses the marketing topic in the popular press article. If building from Part 1, instructors can use the exported annotations to quickly gauge common questions/themes that arose from the reading to discuss in class. This 20–25-minute discussion reenergizes students about the topic and reminds them about their own analysis of the article. Then students are asked to work in small teams (3-4 students) to find two peer-reviewed sources that address key questions generated in the class discussion and to reflect on their process to ensure the sources are peer-reviewed and related to the given topic. If completed as a stand-alone assignment, then instructors can begin with the key questions to motivate the research. For example, a class on new product development may propose “How important is pioneering advantage in new product development?”

Web annotation provided students flexibility to read an assignment and develop their thoughts. The comments about the articles were detailed and offered thoughtful analysis since students were not time bound as they would be in a class discussion. Further, while discussion in class can be skewed toward a few outspoken students, the instructor noted that students who were often quiet in class provided long annotations. Further, students’ reactions to their peers’ comments often began with “This is a great point...” or “I had not thought of this...” The instructor noted that this enhanced the in-class discussion the following day (Part 2) and had the additional impact of building community in the classroom. The instructor used Part 2 in prior semesters as a standalone assignment, and it was met with mixed results. However, by starting with the web annotation assignment, students were already engaged with the topic. The class discussion about the assigned reading was lively as students felt confident to participate having already provided comments in their annotations. Therefore, they were more interested in research assignment. The analysis of the popular press reading also generated more specific questions (e.g., how could the new product development process have been accelerated?) so the students’ research process was more focused. Further, students’ verification of whether a paper was peer-reviewed resulted in the identification of more credible and relevant sources.

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# DISCOVERY FROM THE ENNEAGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT: INITIATING A PERSONAL BRAND WITH SELF-AWARENESS AND PERSONAL GROWTH MOTIVATION

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## TEACHING INNOVATION COMPETITION TEACHING NOTES

Grounded in self-expansion theory, the Enneagram Self-Assessment (ESA) engages students in self-discovery and self-reflection, building a foundation for developing a personal brand. A pilot took place in an online five-week course. Students recommended the ESA, while survey analysis provided evidence for self-expansion activity characteristics and enhanced personal growth motivation and self-awareness.

The Enneagram is a personality typing system that shows the nine ways that people in the world default to live their lives. Personality systems tend to determine your type by *what you do*, your traits and behavior. The Enneagram explains the *why you do*, at our core why we do, think, and feel the way we do. The self-assessment can form the basis for developing a personal brand. To prepare, the instructor should become familiar with the Enneagram and its nine types by accessing Enneagram Explained at [enneagramexplained.com](http://enneagramexplained.com). This website can also be shared with students for their own review. Explain the purpose of the ESA, provide an overview of the Enneagram, and explain how the Enneagram can help students in developing a personal brand.

The first assignment for students is to write a one-page reflection summarizing the type they think they are and why they landed on that type. The written submission should also include their thoughts on the descriptions for core desire, core fear, wounding message, core longing, and core weakness. Finally, students should include one specific example of where they can see their type manifested in their life.

After submitting the first personal reflection, students complete the free assessment at [cloverleaf.me/enneagram](http://cloverleaf.me/enneagram) and review their personal results. This review includes all elements of the Enneagram output noting areas that align with their predictions and results that were unexpected.

The second assignment for students is to write a two-page reflection addressing how accurate their predictions were about their Enneagram, noting affirming and surprising elements. This submission should include identifying their personal strengths and weaknesses. Students then address identifying their personal growth motivations. Again, students should provide at least one example of how they see their type manifested in their life. Finally, students should discuss the next steps in their career preparation journey and how they can use this information in crafting their personal brand.

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# TRANSNATIONAL MARKETING PROJECTS: LEARNING DIVERSE CULTURE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR VIA INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

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## *TEACHING INNOVATION COMPETITION TEACHING NOTES*

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how ‘Transnational Marketing Projects (TMP)’ can provide enhance learning of diverse culture and consumer behavior via international collaboration. A TMP is an academic project where students from two or more countries must collaborate to solve a marketing problem or develop a marketing plan. TMP projects involve three high-impact practices (HIPs): *Undergraduate Research, Learning communities, Global Learning (Study Abroad)*. TMP was implemented in International Marketing course in the Fall 2020, Fall 2021, and Spring 2022. Clarion students partnered with international students to develop international marketing plans. Findings suggest that TMP helped students learn how to interact with people from diverse culture, gain first-hand experience of a new culture and understand consumer behavior in international markets (Singh, 2020; 2022).

The importance of pedagogies such as TMP is evident from increasing globalization, which directly influences businesses and education. Findings from survey on “future trends in business education,” conducted jointly by AACSB, EMBAC, and UNICON suggest that there is a growing demand for multicultural sensitivity among business students (Executive Core, 2015). Thus, opportunities to enhance cultural understanding must be developed within business education courses. TMP pilot projects were conducted in Fall 2020, Fall 2021, and Spring 2022 from different business schools in India, South Africa, and Indonesia. Collaboration with the international business schools provided exposure to Clarion students to work in international settings and learn about their culture and consumer behavior by directly interacting with the diverse students, who are also consumers in that international market. In TMP, Clarion students collaborated with international students to develop a marketing plan. TMPs incorporate three HIPs, all of which have been shown to enhance student learning and engagement.

*1<sup>st</sup> HIP – Undergraduate Research:* research engages students in investigating a problem (or gap) and search for data (or information) to bridge that gap using scientific methods of inquiry. There are five research components in TMP: (1) Industry analysis using the PESTEL model; (2) Cultural Analysis; (3) Economic Analysis; (4) Market Audit and Competitors Analysis; and (5) Marketing Plan.

*2<sup>nd</sup> HIP - Learning communities:* Clarion students worked with international students and professors to form learning communities. Working with them provides invaluable learnings as people have very different situations and experiences heavily influenced by their culture. Communicating with diverse individuals and asking relevant questions to understand another culture requires creativity. Students learned to ask the right questions.

*3<sup>rd</sup> HIP – Global Learning (or Study Abroad):* Every country has some unique qualities. The differences are stark when comparing culturally and economically different countries such as the US and Asian or African countries. Appreciation of these differences and learning the nuances and implications of these differences on business and social life contributes to the learning experience. Clarion students directly worked with international students for a semester-long collaboration, where they talked, discussed, and shared photos and videos freely.

TMP was implemented in International Marketing (MKTG 469) course in the Fall 2020, 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters. Clarion students partnered with international students or the International Project Partners (IPPs) to develop an international marketing plan. In Fall 2020, students worked in groups with their counterparts in India, South Africa, and Indonesia and developed marketing plans for seven service businesses. This collaboration helped Clarion students and international students learn from each other about diverse cultural nuances by direct interactions throughout the semester using Zoom, Facebook, WhatsApp, Emails, and other social media platforms and technologies. TMP provided first-hand experience that is invaluable immersive experience possible only because of TMP pedagogy. They learned how to manage work in different time zones, communication with non-native English speakers, and learned to cope with a variety of cultural nuances including religion, customs, and traditions that influence consumer decision making. Overall, TMP was a success. Students’ feedback collected on 15 indicators using a 6-point Likert scale to show their agreement or disagreement proves TMP’s success in achieving learning outcomes. Univariate t-test results

show students' agreement on learning via TMP at 95% confidence interval (p-value <0.01). Qualitative data collected separately suggested students' enjoyment and learning by using TMP (see examples below), which confirms the quantitative results:

- *I really enjoyed this class and feel as though this is much more applicable than many of the classes that I have taken at Clarion through the years.*
- *Wonderful project... interesting, really way more than the catalog class description. Really makes breaching those international boundaries more human, approachable.*
- *Being able to work with international students and getting to learn about different countries from these students.*
- *Working with international students; Learning about a different country*
- *I like how we discuss and talk to international students and see how things are different from (United States).*
- *I think the IMPC is a great project (although the work is hard lol). This is an excellent opportunity especially during the unprecedented times we face. It helps us as students to meet with other students (across the world), in a time of social distancing. Although the work we put into our college experience is ultimately what gets us the degree, a larger aspect of college is meeting people and making different connections and this project has given us just that.*
- *This project is a lot of work. It's interesting to learn about all the different countries but it's hard to get into Zoom meetings with them. The Facebook page works the best*

Finally, some key requirements to TMP include (Singh, 2022):

- International Institutional Partners (IIPs) with preferably similar program and courses
- International Project Partners (IPPs) with similar level in the program
- Written permission for information sharing from all students
- Virtual platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or MS Teams for formal meetings
- Virtual platforms such as Facebook (FB) groups, WhatsApp, GroupMe, or Slack for informal meetings
- Certificate of 'Appreciation' or 'Participation' to all students and faculty mentors from partner institute
- Four phases (to develop Int'l marketing plan): business model, cultural, economic, market audit analyses
- Other resources: government websites, industry databases, and journal articles

Finally, it can be concluded that TMP was successful in achieving the learning outcomes as well as bridging the three major gaps in the current pedagogy: avoiding the traditional lecture format (Abrams, 2002), provide international experience to all segments of the students (Linn et al., 2015; Whatley, 2019), and three high-impact practices. As such, TMP provides cultural sensitivity training and access to an international experience (Bingle, 2017; Kuh, 2012) to develop students as a global workforce. Thus, TMP helps improve active learning and promote cultural-sensitivity. International exposure, cultural learnings in an authentic sense, communication ability with people from diverse cultures, and understanding international consumers and markets will provide skills that will equip students to be successful in the global arena. TMP is unique in many ways and therefore considered as teaching innovation. It is the first time that such an effort has been made to develop cultural and consumer learnings. It is the first time that high-impact practices are being used via TMP to provide international experiences to the students while sitting at the comfort of their house and without any additional expense. Testimonies from faculty members and students from both Clarion and international collaborators will be shared/shown during the presentation.

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