

# Exploring Sources of Marketing Knowledge for Small Business Decision Makers

Donald R. Bacon and Abigail B. Schneider

**Purpose of the Study.** Where do small business owners and managers get the marketing knowledge they need to make marketing decisions? Using a marketing knowledge value chain framework, this research identifies the sources used by these marketing decision makers.

**Method/Design and Sample.** An online survey of small business owners and managers ( $n = 226$ ) was conducted. Using a constant sum response format, respondents were asked to report the degree to which they used 15 different information sources, including such things as formal education, trade publications, and on-the-job training. Various demographics were included to explore differences across groups.

**Results.** On-the-job training was the most heavily weighted information source (25% weight), followed by colleagues, peers, and associates (18%). Even though 59% of the sample had taken a college-level marketing course at some point, formal education had a modest importance weight (13%). Academic journals received a very low weight (1%). Few differences in sources used were found across education level, size of organization, and revenue growth.

**Value to Marketing Educators.** Recognizing that a large percentage of marketing graduates will work for small businesses, this study highlights the need for marketing faculty to make marketing knowledge creation and dissemination more relevant to small businesses. To accomplish this goal, more academic research can be targeted toward small business challenges, and client projects, internships, and case analyses can integrate more small businesses.

**Keywords.** Small business marketing, SME, marketing science value chain, practitioner learning, value of marketing education.

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As marketing educators, we are often interested in preparing and developing our students to become successful business professionals through the content that we teach in the classroom (Bacon, 2017; Finch, Nadeau, & O'Reilly, 2013; Rundle-Thiele, Bennett, & Dann, 2005; Schlee & Karns, 2017; Wellman, 2017). However, we also realize that many of the ideas, insights, and tools students need to be successful are learned on the job. Students' sources of learning are the agencies with which they work, the business press, their managers, the web, and most likely many other sources. To fully understand marketing education, marketing educators must understand the entire process by which novices become experts so we can better understand the limits and potential opportunities within the role of the professional marketing educator.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

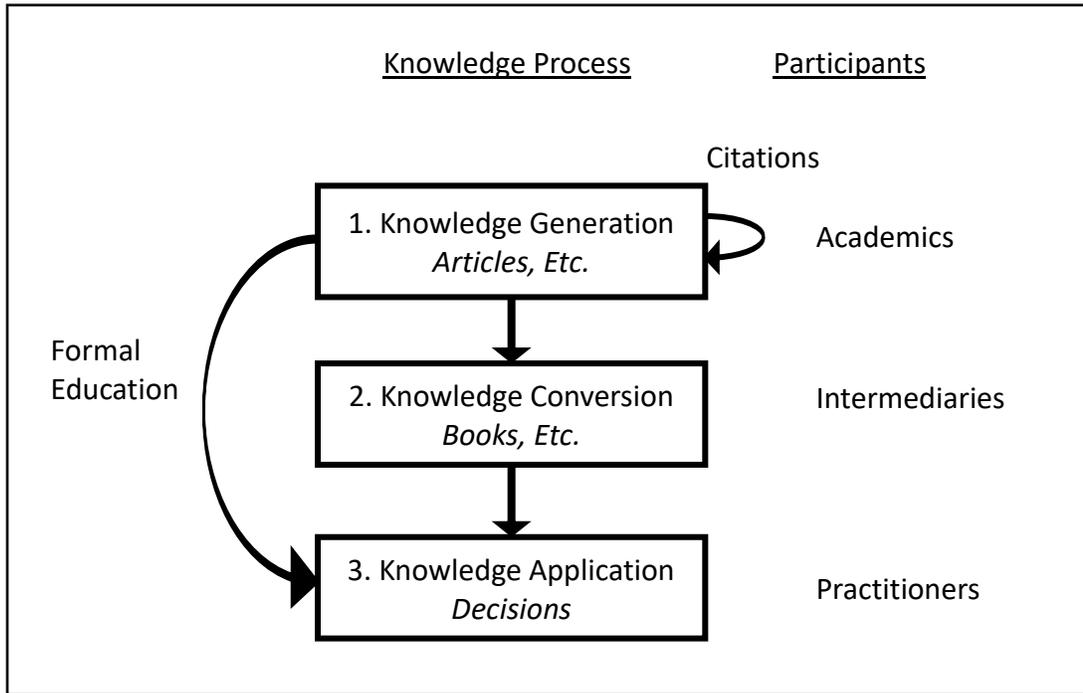
The foundational work on the "marketing science value chain" and the research on which this paper is largely based, was conducted by Roberts, Kayande, and Stremersch (2014) who proposed that three stages of

marketing knowledge are processed by three types of actors. First, academic marketing science knowledge is generated by academics. In the next step, intermediaries such as marketing research firms or consultancies integrate the knowledge into practical tools. In the final step, practitioners use this practical knowledge to make marketing decisions.

Roberts et al. (2014) originally conceptualized that the intermediaries include marketing research and/or consulting firms that integrate the knowledge into practical tools. We extend intermediaries for the purposes of our study to include textbooks, popular business books, and the business press, which Roberts et al. (2014) categorized as "direct" influences (see the adaptation in Figure 1). This extension recognizes that intermediaries also translate the knowledge in many forms and include academics who did not originally generate the knowledge as well as journalists, consultants, and various marketing agencies who translate the knowledge into white papers, magazine publications, or applied models presented on websites or directly to clients. Academics may also be practitioners, and practitioners may also generate new knowledge, so the knowledge processes and roles are

suggestive but not definitive. Further, practitioners may learn directly from the knowledge generators.

Figure 1  
*The Knowledge Diffusion Process*



Adapted from Roberts et al. (2014).

Importantly, the value chain model presented by Roberts et al. (2014) includes a connection between the generation of knowledge by faculty and the application of knowledge by practitioners. These knowledge generators directly share their knowledge with current or future practitioners, often in forms that are modified to directly apply to marketing decisions. Although Roberts et al. (2014) define the direct impact of marketing science as the adapting of academic articles to the solving of practical problems, the direct path is essentially the role of formal marketing education. Through case analyses, client projects, and a variety of other methods, faculty members help students to understand marketing and to learn how to apply tools to make marketing decisions.

Conceptualizing the production and distribution of knowledge as a value chain linking knowledge generators with practitioners raises several important questions. The primary question for readers of this journal is the role of formal education in shaping marketing decisions. Marketing educators may assume that the knowledge taught in school will shape the marketing decisions made by their students for years to come, but how substantial is this influence relative to the influence of other sources? One limitation of the Roberts et al. model (2014) is that it only addresses marketing science knowledge from academic sources (specifically academic journal articles) so it is not possible to determine the relative impact of academic knowledge compared to other knowledge types.

Another limitation is that their study sample focuses on fairly sophisticated knowledge users. For example, the intermediaries include professionals working for some of the largest marketing research companies in the world such as AC Nielsen. Their survey of practitioners includes senior managers with connections to the Marketing Science Institute or the Institute for the Study of Business Markets. It is unlikely that smaller firms will find positive ROIs in hiring costly intermediaries or utilizing advanced marketing science techniques that may require hundreds of thousands of dollars in research spending. For example, a company with only \$20,000 in annual marketing spending will have difficulty justifying spending the entire budget on marketing research and forgoing all other spending for a year. For a company with \$5 million in annual marketing spending, a \$20,000 investment or more in marketing research makes good sense. Thus, the model needs to be revised in the context of small businesses.

***Small and Medium Enterprise Marketing***

The use of marketing knowledge among small businesses is particularly important to understand because marketing knowledge is critical to small and medium enterprise (SME) success (Bocconcelli et al., 2018; Hills, 1995; Lussier, 1995), and many students will be employed by small businesses. In the United States, nearly half (47.8%) of all employees in the US work for firms with fewer than 500 employees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). In his comprehensive study of

the gaps between what is taught in marketing classes and the needs of businesses, Wellman (2017) notes that higher education currently seems focused on large, multi-national businesses while most students will work for much smaller businesses. Similarly, Cheng, Laurenço, and Resnick (2016) argue that the traditional marketing curriculum needs to be more closely aligned with the marketing practices more heavily employed by SMEs, supporting earlier findings that owners and managers of small businesses require a different kind of marketing education (Carson, 1985).

For example, prior research has found that small business proprietors take a different, more idiosyncratic, more fluid, and often less sophisticated approach to marketing compared with professional marketing managers at larger firms (Carson & Cromie, 1989; Collinson, 2017). Small business owners find it more difficult to engage in sophisticated marketing activities (Cohen, 2017). Because they are typically unable to hire expert specialists, they must become generalists themselves, thereby limiting the degree of expert marketing knowledge utilized by the firm (Carson, 1985; Gaedeke & Tootelian, 1980; Scholhammer & Kuriloff, 1979). Small business owners/managers may also deal with financial and time constraints that limit the degree of marketing activities in which they engage (Carson, 1985; Collinson, 2017). As a result of the myriad constraints they face compared with their counterparts at larger firms, small business owners/managers tend to have more negative attitudes toward marketing. They perceive marketing as a cost, and they approach each marketing opportunity as a unique case rather than as a situation to which a standard and more formal approach could be applied (Carson & Cromie, 1989; Cohn & Lindbore, 1972). Thus, Roberts et al.'s (2014) findings may not apply to small businesses. Consequently, small business practitioners are likely to utilize marketing science in their decision-making quite differently than those studied by Roberts et al. (2014).

### **Sources of Marketing Knowledge**

There are reasons to question the value of a formal marketing education compared to other sources including experience (Bacon, 2017; Carson & Gilmore, 2000; Maclaran, McGowan, & Hill, 1997). For example, Armstrong and Schultz (1993) found evidence that the marketing knowledge generated by academics may not be that valuable. In their analysis of nine marketing textbooks, they found relatively few general principles to guide marketing decisions. Further analysis suggests that even these general principles are not particularly surprising nor are they strongly supported by empirical results. In a related study focused on consumer behavior knowledge, Armstrong (1991) found that individuals highly trained in consumer behavior were no more likely to correctly guess the outcomes of consumer behavior experiments than were novices. Finch et al. (2013) found that meta-skills, such as the ability to set priorities or follow through on tasks, were a higher priority for improvement in marketing education than several other topics that are commonly

taught, such as international marketing. These findings echo findings from 20 years prior by McDaniel and White (1993). Most recently, software skills, such as those related to marketing analytics, appear to be increasing in importance and yet may not be covered adequately by many programs (Schlee & Karns, 2017).

The knowledge taught in school may also be quickly forgotten. Bacon and Stewart (2006) estimated that students forget most of what they learned in consumer behavior within approximately two years. McIntyre and Munson (2008) reported similar results for general marketing knowledge. They found that knowledge acquired through cramming was particularly short-lived. The relatively short-term retention of marketing knowledge may explain in part why a formal education in marketing has not been found to be related to financial success in a marketing career (Bacon, 2017; Hunt, Chonko, & Wood, 1986).

Given the questions raised about the value of a marketing education, it is particularly important to understand how this source of knowledge compares with other sources. If marketing educators develop a better understanding of where practitioners obtain marketing knowledge, educators can take steps to enhance learning throughout the marketing knowledge value chain. Further, the sources and uses of knowledge in the value chain may differ between small and large businesses. Following a customer-oriented perspective, this study focuses on the end user, the information sources used by the practitioner, and the study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1: What sources of marketing knowledge are used the most by small business decision makers?
- RQ2: Do sources of knowledge used vary depending upon the percentage of the manager's time that is spent making marketing decisions?
- RQ3: Do sources of knowledge used vary by education?
- RQ4: Do sources of knowledge used vary by marketing education?
- RQ5: Do sources of knowledge used vary by organizational size?
- RQ6: Are sources of knowledge used related to revenue growth?
- RQ7: Is marketing education related to revenue growth among small businesses?

### **METHODOLOGY**

An online survey of practitioners was conducted to identify the sources of marketing knowledge they use to make decisions. Demographic and firmographic information was collected to enable the contrasts necessary to address our research questions. The details of this methodology will be described before directly addressing the research questions in the Results section.

### **Sample and Procedure**

The data were collected as part of a larger study sponsored by an industry organization that wants to

remain anonymous. The survey was sent to 10,705 businesses, and it was administered in two waves. In the first wave of survey implementation, no incentive was offered; in the second wave, survey recipients were informed that respondents would be included in a drawing for a \$200 gift card. To identify possible repeat respondents, responses from the same IP address were carefully examined. If the demographic data was identical, the more complete response was retained and the other was discarded. If the number of completed questions was identical, the most recent completed survey was retained. This approach resulted in a sample size of 274 respondents (123 from wave 1 and 151 from wave 2) and a response rate of 2.5%.

The sponsoring organization was concerned that the length and difficulty of the survey would reduce the number of responses. Therefore, responses were not required on many questions which resulted in some incomplete data. For inclusion in this study, cases were accepted only if the respondents indicated that they spent at least 10% of their time making marketing decisions and if they answered the questions related to sources of marketing knowledge. These criteria resulted in 226 useful cases including 102 cases from the first wave and 124 cases from the second wave.

Observing the low response rate, several tests for nonresponse bias were conducted. First, comparisons were made between the sampling frame from the sponsoring organization and the sample of respondents. The sponsor only had data on two variables that were also collected in the sample, number of employees and annual revenue. No significant difference was found in the distribution of number of employees across the sample frame and the sample. The revenue categories used by the sponsor did not align with the categories used in the survey, but the distributions appeared to be similar. In the sponsor's frame, 79% of businesses had 10 or fewer employees, and in the sample, 73% of the sample had nine or fewer employees.

In addition, comparisons were made between early and late responders. A comparison of early survey responders and late responders has been suggested as a test of the magnitude of nonresponse bias in survey responses (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). On the two key variables (use of sources of marketing knowledge, percentage of time spent making marketing decisions), no significant differences were found across the waves, and the data were combined for further analysis. The finding of no significant differences between the sampling frame and the sample, and across the two sample waves, suggests that the level of nonresponse bias in this data is not substantial. Nevertheless, future

research on this topic should seek to obtain a higher response rate, perhaps by increasing the incentive and/or shortening the questionnaire.

### ***Instrument***

A list of the utilized survey questions is shown in the Appendix. All questions were programmed in Qualtrics. One challenge in collecting the desired data was structuring the question about sources used in making decisions (a decision focus was used following Roberts et al., 2014). Fifteen different sources were of interest. There was concern that a rating scale could result in respondent fatigue and acquiescence bias with the respondent indicating all sources were important or frequently used. To circumvent this challenge, two questions were used in sequence. The first question (number 3 in the Appendix) asked respondents to indicate which of the 15 sources contributed to their marketing knowledge in a significant way. The follow-up question asked respondents to provide the extent to which they valued any of the sources that they identified in the previous question. A constant sum scale was used, and respondents were only shown their relevant subset of sources which substantially reduced cognitive load.

## **RESULTS**

In presenting the results, the sample is first described in more detail concerning business size and the respondents' education level. Following these descriptive statistics, each of the research questions is addressed in turn.

### ***Sample: Descriptive Results***

In the United States, the Small Business Administration generally defines a small business as earning less than \$7.5 million in annual revenue or having fewer than 500 employees although exact definitions of size may differ by industry (Carson & Cromie, 1989; U.S. Small Business Administration, 2017). In the present sample, the modal revenue was \$1 to \$3 million per year (21% of the sample), and 90% of the businesses earned less than \$5 million per year. Approximately 99% of the businesses had fewer than 500 employees. Thus, the sample is primarily comprised of small businesses. As shown in Table 1, the sample is also primarily comprised of businesses in service industries. Over three-quarters (76%) of the respondents identified themselves as the owner/CEO, 9% as a vice president or COO, and 12% as a director or manager. The modal age was 55-64 years old (31% of the sample), and 10% were under 35 years of age.

Table 1  
*Study Sample: Industries Represented*

Industry	Frequency	Percentage
Construction/remodeling	55	24%
Other	45	20%
Professional services	30	13%
Home services (HVAC, plumbing, electrician, etc.)	29	13%
Financial & insurance services	17	8%
Healthcare services	16	7%
Automotive services	12	5%
Retail	12	5%
Nonprofit	6	3%
Sub total	222	98%
No response	4	2%
Total	226	100%

Table 2  
*Sample: Level of Education Achieved*

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Less than high school	0	0%
High school/GED	9	4%
Trade school (cosmetology, HVAC, etc.)	8	4%
Some college	32	14%
2 year college degree/associate degree	36	16%
4 year college degree	92	41%
Masters degree	30	13%
Doctoral degree	19	8%
Total	226	100%

In terms of education, 41% of the sample had a four-year college degree (see Table 2), and 59% of the sample completed at least one college marketing course (the median number of completed marketing courses was three). Fewer than 5% of the respondents had an MBA degree, and 7% were marketing majors. The mean percentage time spent on marketing activities was 35% (SD = 25%), and the mean confidence in ability to make marketing decisions was 3.67 on a five-point scale (SD = .93).

#### Research Questions

The first research question concerns the information sources used by managers in small businesses for

marketing decisions. As shown in Table 3, on-the-job training was the most valued source, with an average weight of 25%. Interestingly, formal education of some sort was valued with an 18% average weight. Industry seminars, consultants, and other intermediaries also played a valuable role. Academic journals received the lowest value rating (1%). This finding is consistent with concerns discussed recently by Glick, Tsui, and Davis (2018) that faculty research benefits faculty reputations more than it benefits society. At least in the context of our study, academic research has little direct effect on small business decision makers, though it still may play an indirect role.

Table 3  
*Value Weighting by Knowledge Source*

Knowledge Source	Percent
On-the-job training	25%
Colleagues, peers, and associates in the industry	18%
Formal education (e.g., high school, college, graduate school)	13%
Industry seminars and conferences	12%
Marketing or other business consultants	10%
Trade journals and publications (specific to respondent's industry)	5%
General surfing on the web for related content	4%
Social media (e.g., industry blogs)	3%
Continuing education or certification training programs	3%
Business and trade books	2%
General business periodicals (e.g., <i>Business Week</i> , <i>Wall Street Journal</i> )	2%
Professional association newsletters	2%
Advertising agencies	1%
Marketing research companies	1%
Academic publications (e.g., academic journals such as <i>Journal of Marketing</i> )	1%

The second research question explores the relationship between the knowledge sources used and the percentage of time a manager spends making marketing decisions. All of the respondents included in this study spent at least 10% of their time making marketing decisions, but some managers spent much more time. To test for differences related to time spent on marketing, the sample was divided into the following three groups: 1) those spending 10% of their time on marketing decisions ( $n = 64$ ), 2) those spending 20 to 40% of their time on marketing decisions ( $n = 92$ ), and 3) those spending 50% or more of their time in marketing decisions ( $n = 70$ ). Separate ANOVAs were conducted for each of the 15 information sources, but no statistically significant differences in marketing knowledge sources used were found across these groups.

The third and fourth research questions concern differences in knowledge sources used based on education in general and marketing education in particular. To explore differences related to education, the sample was split into two groups – those without a four-year college degree ( $n = 85$ ) and those with a four-year degree or more ( $n = 141$ ). A series of  $t$ -tests was conducted to determine if the value weights of any of the 15 sources differed across education groups. Only two significant differences were found. Respondents without college degrees valued on-the-job training more than did those with college degrees ( $M = 30.7\%$  v.  $21.1\%$ , respectively,  $t = 2.05[224]$ , Cohen's  $d = .28$ ,  $p = .042$ ). Not surprisingly, respondents without college degrees valued formal education less than did those with college degrees ( $M = 8.4\%$  v.  $16.1\%$ , respectively,  $t = 2.49[224]$ , Cohen's  $d = .35$ ,  $p = .014$ ).

To explore the value of a marketing education, the sample was divided into two groups – respondents who had not completed a college marketing course ( $n = 92$ )

and those who had completed at least one marketing course ( $n = 133$ ). Again, two significant differences were found. Paralleling the results just reported, respondents without a marketing course valued their education less than did those with a marketing course ( $M = 5.9\%$  v.  $18.4\%$ , respectively,  $t = 4.13[223]$ , Cohen's  $d = .58$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Those without a marketing course reported a higher value for surfing the web for related content than did those who had completed at least one marketing course ( $M = 6.5\%$  v.  $2.9\%$ , respectively,  $t = 1.99[223]$ , Cohen's  $d = .28$ ,  $p = .048$ ).

The fifth research question concerns the relationship between organizational size and the perceived value of marketing knowledge sources. To explore this question, the sample was divided into two groups – organizations with up to \$500,000 in revenue ( $n = 105$ ) and those with more than \$500,000 in revenue ( $n = 115$ ). Only one significant difference was obtained. Respondents from smaller organizations placed less value on general business periodicals than did those from the larger organizations ( $M = 0.3\%$  v.  $2.9\%$ , respectively,  $t = 2.52[218]$ , Cohen's  $d = .42$ ,  $p = .013$ ).

Research Question 6 addresses knowledge sources by revenue growth. Here, the sample was split into businesses with well below average to average growth relative to their industry ( $n = 134$ ), and those with above average or well above average growth ( $n = 88$ ). Surprisingly, no significant differences were found. Although the more successful subsample reported a greater value of formal education, the difference in value was not statistically significant ( $t[220] = .29$ , Cohen's  $d = .04$ ,  $p = .771$ ).

Research Question 7 concerns the relationship between revenue growth and marketing education. The correlation between the number of completed marketing courses and self-reported relative revenue growth was positive but not significant ( $r = .10$ ,  $n = 221$ ,

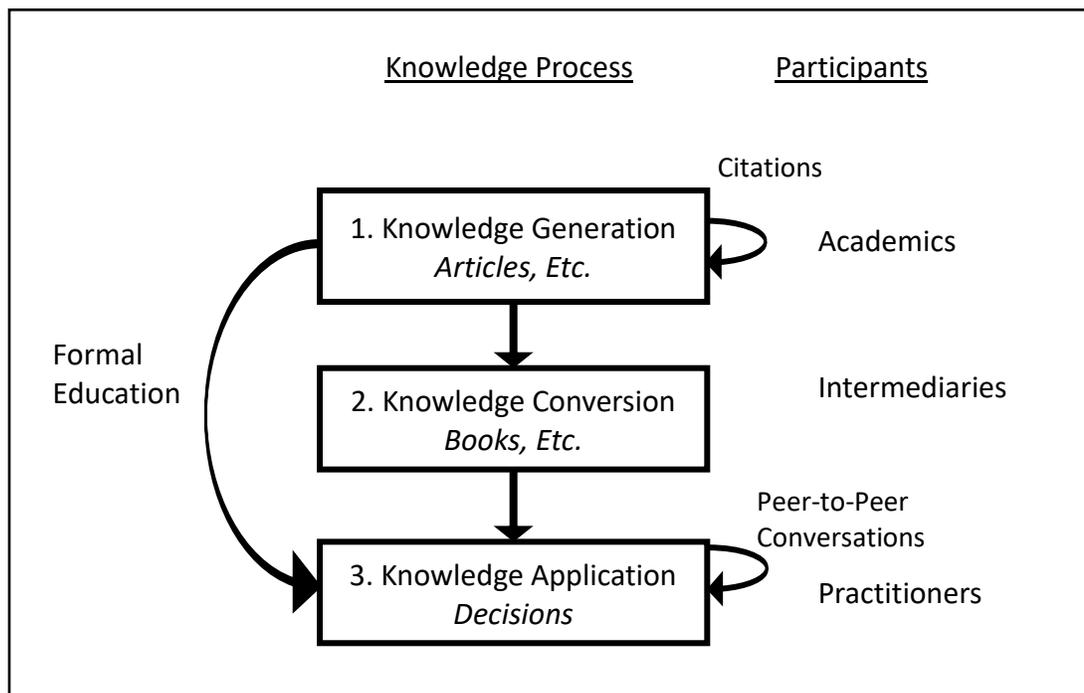
$p = .151$ ). The correlation between a college degree and self-reported revenue growth was also positive but not significant ( $r = .07, n = 222, p = .311$ ). Among small businesses, the data do not support a substantial relationship between revenue growth and marketing education or higher education in general.

## DISCUSSION

The results reflect the view of marketing knowledge as held by a small business practitioner. While some marketing faculty may believe that the marketing knowledge learned in school is instrumental to

marketing decision making, results indicate that this source of knowledge comprises 13% of the value of marketing knowledge used by small businesses to make marketing decisions. Practitioners utilize much more heavily what they have learned in their jobs and from colleagues and associates in the industry (43% weight combined). Further, we found no evidence that a marketing education is associated with an organization's revenue growth. While a primary purpose of marketing may be revenue generation, we find little support for the contribution of formal marketing education to this objective.

Figure 2  
*The Knowledge Diffusion Process (Revised)*



Adapted from Roberts et al. (2014).

These results suggest that the Knowledge Diffusion Process (Figure 1) should be revised. The original Roberts et al. (2014) figure includes a return loop on the Knowledge Generation box indicating that academics communicate and share knowledge with each other through reading and citing each other's research. An academic article's citation count is seen as a measure of the article's contribution to knowledge; however, the article is likely only a contribution to the knowledge of other academics (cf. Glick et al., 2018). In our revised model, we propose that a similar loop should be added to the Knowledge Application box, as practitioners learn on the job and through conversations with other practitioners (see Figure 2). These two closed loops (echo chambers on each end of the knowledge value chain) may partly explain why a perpetual gap exists between academics and practitioners. Each group appears to value the marketing insights from their peers more than the insights from the other end of the value chain. As pressures to enhance research productivity

increase, fewer academics are likely to run successful small businesses or serve on the boards of businesses. At the same time, as the maturity of marketing academic research increases, fewer practitioners are likely to serve on editorial review boards. For example, in the January, 1965 issue of the *Journal of Marketing (JM)*, 57 individuals are listed as reviewers (Front Matter, 1965). Of these, 23 (40%) had academic affiliations. In the first *JM* issue in 1985, 81 individuals are listed on the editorial review board and 96% had academic affiliations (Front Matter, 1985). As of this writing, the *JM* website lists 178 individuals on the editorial review board, and 100% of these have academic affiliations (<https://www.ama.org/academics/Pages/Journal-of-Marketing-Editorial-Review-Board.aspx>). In light of these trends, we expect that the gap between academic knowledge and practitioner knowledge could increase.

However, there are a number of steps that marketing educators can take to shrink the gap between

academics and practitioners and instead, to build a bridge between knowledge generation and knowledge application. For example, educators can continuously revise curricular outcomes and course objectives to be aligned with the skills that are required to run small businesses effectively, assign activities that will help to develop those skills, and evaluate whether the outcomes and objectives are being achieved (O'Keefe & Hamer, 2011; Rundle-Thiele et al., 2005). Additionally, in line with the AACSB's (2017) recommendation, marketing educators can co-create knowledge with SME partners rather than simply supply knowledge to them (see Lilly & Stanley [2016] for an example in the context of teaching sales). Similarly, departments could invite executives-in-residence to teach courses, deliver guest lectures, and informally meet with students and faculty members (Achenreiner & Hein, 2010). Marketing educators can also develop experiential courses that incorporate SME participation through live cases, client-based projects, and other methods. Faculty can place a greater emphasis on case-based scholarship and provide intellectual contributions that specifically engage SMEs. Finally, with regard to traditional scholarship, academics can generate knowledge with practical implications directly affecting SMEs.

The finding that small business managers place so little emphasis on academic research is not surprising, but it offers one more data point that supports the claim that academic research does not benefit society as much as it should. Glick et al. (2018) estimate that \$3.8 billion is invested annually by AACSB business schools in creating academic research. Small business managers' reliance on this information for about 1% of their marketing knowledge suggests that a substantial gap exists between the marketing knowledge provided by academic research and the needs of small businesses. Glick et al. (2018) discuss how such gaps have led to the formation of the Community for Responsible Research in Business Management (cRRBM), a group which champions alternative methods for assessing a study's applied value in research funding decisions. Given the amount of marketing done by small businesses, marketing academic leaders in general, and marketing education leaders in particular, should revisit their approach to academic research by focusing more on practitioner-focused, in addition to theoretical, research. It would also be interesting for future research to explore the extent to which insights from academic research are being used to develop the marketing tools and technologies to which a new generation of business owners increasingly has access and upon which it relies, thereby underscoring the indirect effect of academic research on practice. In general, future research should investigate the specific types of marketing efforts in which small business decision makers are engaged and how those specific efforts are correlated with the sources of information used. For example, to what extent are small business owners engaging in personal selling compared with content

marketing and search engine optimization, and how are they learning these skills?

It is important for marketing educators to remain current with the shifting trends in today's dynamic business environment, especially concerning the small and medium enterprises that will employ nearly half of our students. According to The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business' (AACSB) accreditation standards, "[b]usiness schools must respond to the business world's changing needs by providing relevant knowledge and skills to the communities that they serve" (AACSB, 2017, p. 2). For example, schools can develop new programs, curricula, and courses or create other intellectual contributions that advance marketing knowledge. We recommend that at least some of the knowledge generated and communicated by marketing educators address the specific needs of SMEs which comprise a significant portion of the business community.

This study has several limitations that are important to note. First, respondents may not perfectly recall or be completely aware of the sources from which they glean marketing knowledge. However, this self-report study still provides important evidence for understanding the sources that influence small business decision makers. Similarly, revenue growth is self-reported and may not be accurate. If the variable is biased upward, the correlational results should not be affected, but if the estimate represents substantial guessing, the results would be invalid. In future research, it would be ideal to use actual changes in revenue.

A third limitation is that the respondent decision makers were often not full-time marketers. Thus, any of the relationships may be attenuated because this sample represents primarily part-time marketers. However, we suspect that a full-time marketing role does not exist in many small organizations. It is possible that a full-time marketing individual is more important to an organization than a highly-educated marketer. This possibility is an interesting question to explore in future research.

Finally, a potential limitation is our response rate. The 2.5% response rate is somewhat low, but it is similar to the response rate achieved when the industry organization conducted the survey in previous years. Further, this rate exceeds the 2.2% response rate in the Aistrich, Saghafi, and Scigliampaglia (2006) study of business manager attitudes. Because small business owners are generalists with numerous responsibilities, they may have less time to take a survey, and more substantial incentives may be necessary to achieve higher response rates.

## CONCLUSION

The present research provides a view of the marketing knowledge landscape from the perspective of a small business practitioner. While marketing faculty may see themselves as large players in this landscape, practitioners view academic learning in general as having a much smaller role in marketing decision

making. Conversations with colleagues and on-the-job learning are the sources for most of the knowledge that is necessary to make reasonable marketing decisions. Industry seminars, consultants, and trade publications also play important roles. To improve the practice of marketing, marketing faculty should not only consider

how they teach their current students, but also how they can impact the other channels of marketing knowledge that seem so important to practitioners. Exactly how marketing faculty can work with these channels represents an important area for future research.

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Appendix: Survey Questions

1. What percentage of your time would you say you spend in marketing activities? (branding, product development, pricing, distribution, sales, advertising, monitoring and managing the customer experience through customer surveys, etc.) Please estimate to the nearest 10%.

0% (1) ... 100% (11)

2. How confident are you in your ability to make good marketing decisions for your business?

Not at all confident (1) ... Extremely confident (5)

3. When making marketing decisions in your job now, where do you think you have learned what you need to know about marketing? Please select only those sources that have contributed to your marketing knowledge in a significant way and help you to make marketing decisions in your job now.

Formal education (e.g., high school, college, or graduate school) (1)

Industry seminars and conferences (2)

General business periodicals (e.g., Business Week, Wall Street Journal, etc.) (3)

Trade journals and publications (specialized to your industry) (4)

Academic publications (e.g., academic journals, such as Journal of Marketing) (5)

Professional association newsletters (6)

Business and trade books (7)

Colleagues, peers, and associates in the industry (8)

General surfing on the web for related content (9)

Social media, such as industry blogs (10)

Continuing education or certification training programs (11)

On the job training (12)

Advertising agencies (13)

Marketing research companies (14)

Marketing or other business consultants (15)

4. You have indicated that you have learned about marketing from the following sources. We would like to know to what extent each source has contributed to your marketing knowledge in an important way. Please enter a percentage of points for each possibility according to how valuable each source has been in contributing to your marketing knowledge compared to the other sources. Points must add to 100.

*(Show only sources selected in previous question.)*

Formal education (e.g., high school, college, or graduate school)	_____ (1)
Industry seminars and conferences	_____ (2)
General business periodicals (e.g., Business Week, Wall Street Journal, etc.)	_____ (3)
Trade journals and publications (specialized to your industry)	_____ (4)
Academic publications (e.g., academic journals, such as Journal of Marketing)	_____ (5)
Professional association newsletters	_____ (6)
Business and trade books	_____ (7)
Colleagues, peers, and associates in the industry	_____ (8)
General surfing on the web for related content	_____ (9)
Social media, such as industry blogs	_____ (10)
Continuing education or certification training programs	_____ (11)
On the job training	_____ (12)
Advertising agencies	_____ (13)
Marketing research companies	_____ (14)
Marketing or other business consultants	_____ (15)

5. What is the highest level of education you have received?

Less than High School (1) .... Doctoral Degree (8)

*(If undergraduate degree)*

6. When you were an undergraduate, was marketing your major or one of your majors?

Yes (1) No (2)

7. How many college marketing courses have you taken?

0 (1) ... 15 or more (16)

*(If graduate degree)*

8. Do you have an MBA?  
Yes (1) No (2)

9. What is your business's annual revenue?  
Less than \$100,000 (1) ... Above \$10,000,000 (8)

10. In terms of revenue growth, how well would you say your business is performing now relative to your industry?  
Well below average (1) ... Well above average (5)

11. How many employees does your business have?  
0 (1) ... 1000 or more (10)

12. In what industry is your business?  
Construction/Remodeling (1) ... Other (9)

13. What is your role in your company?  
Owner/President/CEO (1)  
Vice President/COO (2)  
Director/Manager (3)  
Supervisor (4)  
Front line employee (5)

14. What is your age:  
18 to 24 (1)  
25 to 34 (2)  
35 to 44 (3)  
45 to 54 (4)  
55 to 64 (5)  
65 or older (6)