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Victoria L. Crittenden is Professor of Marketing and Peter M. Black Endowed Faculty Scholar at Babson College. Vicky is editor of the Journal of Marketing Education. Her research interests are vast but focus currently on entrepreneurship, digitalization, direct selling, and teaching & learning. She has published in journals such as the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice, Journal of Business Research, Psychology & Marketing, Marketing Letters, Sloan Management Review, Business Horizons, and Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice. Amongst many awards and honors, Vicky received the AMS CUTCO/Vector Distinguished Marketing Educator Award in 2021, the AMA Higher Ed SIG Lifetime Achievement Award in 2021, and the Circle of Honor award from the Direct Selling Education Foundation in 2019. She holds a DBA from the Harvard Business School, an MBA from the University of Arkansas, and a BA from Lyon College in Arkansas.

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Dr. Debra Zahay-Blatz

Professor of Marketing, St. Edward's University

Dr. Debra Zahay Blatz is a full professor of marketing in the Department of Marketing, Operations and Analytics at St. Edward's University in Austin Texas. She has successfully designed and implemented four undergraduate programs focusing on digital/interactive marketing. As former department chair and director of the Master of Science in digital marketing and analytics at St. Edward's she spearheaded the development of the first online Master's degree program at the University. Publishing as Debra Zahay, she researches how firms use customer information for competitive advantage and also studies best practices in digital marketing pedagogy. She has published extensively and presented her work at many academic and practitioner conferences. She has co-authored two Cengage textbooks in digital and social media marketing and solo-authored a practitioner book in digital marketing. She holds her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, her MBA from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, her JD from Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, and her AB from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

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Dr. Don Bacon

Professor Emeritus, University of Denver

Don Bacon received his PhD in Marketing from the University of Michigan. He retired as a full professor from the University of Denver after 33 years of service and is now professor emeritus. In his research, Professor Bacon applies psychometric theory and multivariate statistics to a variety of marketing problems, but he is perhaps best known for his research in marketing and management education and he was a frequent attendee at fall MMA conferences. He has received research awards from several national associations, including the American Marketing Association, the Marketing Educators' Association, and the Management and Organizational Behavior Teaching Society. Professor Bacon served as the Editor in Chief of the Journal of Marketing Education from 2012 to 2019, and he serves on the editorial review boards of several business education journals. He remains active in research and has received the Outstanding Article of the Year Award from the Journal of Marketing Education in each of the past two years.

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Marketing Communications & Promotions - MC/P-CP02-MMAS24

REVERSIBLE FIGURE ADS—A NEW FORM OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Praggyan Mohanty, Governors State University, pmohanty@govst.edu

Reversible figures have fascinated researchers in the psychological sciences since the 1800s. However, although these intriguing images have consistently been featured in marketing communications, advertising research has been negligent in acknowledging reversible figures as a distinctive form of advertising. This paper aims to fill this research gap by systematically investigating reversible figures in advertising and studying their effects on variables pertinent to marketing and advertising, thereby contributing to theory and practice. The results obtained from four studies reveal that reversible figure ads boost mainstream indicators of ad effectiveness, such as brand attitude, perceived brand innovativeness, and perceived ad creativity. Further, the paper supports a novel ad processing model, where reversible figure ads enhance perceptions of ad creativity, increasing perceived brand innovativeness and thereby strengthening brand attitude. Lastly, results indicate conditional indirect effects, such that the above serial mechanism materializes in individuals with higher (vs. lower) levels of artistic interests.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TO INITIATE INSTRUCTION

Marilyn Martin Melchiorre, The College of Idaho

ABSTRACT

This research investigates student engagement through four assignments designed to stimulate classroom discussion. Three assignments, "Commercial Break," "Google Trends," and "What's Viral," were deployed in an undergraduate marketing class, while "Global Minute Chat" was utilized in an international business course. Students select topics of interest, preparing short presentations for class. These assignments serve as icebreakers, setting the tone and transitioning into daily topics. The assignments foster public speaking skills and provoke discussion. Faculty connect presentations to course theory, deepening engagement. Survey results from four courses show positive student impressions, value, aid in learning, and the confirmation these assignments should be used in future courses.

Keywords: Engagement, Active Learning, Marketing, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is a popular topic in higher education. Educators strive to involve students as active participants in the learning process. Developing activities and assignments to stimulate student reflection and thinking that apply to theories covered in a marketing course is a challenge. With a teacher's guidance, students can bring topics/subject matter interesting to them into the classroom discussion. To stimulate students' interest at the beginning of the period, an activity/assignment can engage the class while some students arrive shortly after a class period begins. These assignments, "Commercial Break", "Google Trends" and "What's Viral" were developed to spark conversation and class engagement at the start of a marketing class period. "Global Minute Chat" was developed to engage students at the beginning of an international business course. The assignments were designed to achieve these curriculum objectives (a) a favorable way to begin class instruction, (b) add value to the class instruction, and (c) aid student engagement related to the course content.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The assignments are based on academic theory related to thoughtful discourse, active learning, and participative pedagogy. These three areas of literature review are closely related to student engagement in the educational process. By actively participating in their learning, students can develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their education.

Thoughtful Discourse

Establishing an environment in the classroom where students are comfortable contributing to the dialog is important for facilitating learning. Thoughtful discourse around a subject is valuable as well as active listening on the part of students. Active listening has become a topic of conversation within higher education as an essential student competency (Wolvin & Coakley, 2000). An engagement activity is intended to gain students' attention and foster a desire to listen. The communication of ideas includes both discussion and listening. Heifetz (1994) proposed active listening is both an internal and external process for students. First, students must understand their lens and 'filters' through which they see the world to interpret information (Heifetz, 1994). Thoughtful discourse includes the willingness to listen to alternative ideas and participate in respectful discussions. The class starters are designed to initiate discussion among students.

Active Learning

The student giving the presentation is engaging in active learning by leading the instruction. Active learning is a broad concept. Higher education has been moving toward more student-centered and active instructional approaches in recent years (Kozanitis et al, 2023). Research has supported the superiority of active instruction for learning achievements as compared to passive instruction (Burgess et al., 2014; Hofer et al., 2018; Swanson, et al., 2017). Engagement activities where students select a topic of interest to them and share this information with the class contribute to developing positive feelings toward the subject matter. The peer-to-peer sharing and discussion of information to promote knowledge creation facilitates an active learning environment at the start of the class period. These assignments empower students as active participants in building knowledge.

Participative Pedagogy

Chickering and Gamson (1987) offered a framework of seven key actions to encourage student engagement: student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, giving prompt feedback, emphasizing time on task, communicating high expectations, and respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. Student engagement is defined as the amount of time and energy students put into creating meaningful learning outcomes and experiences (Lewis et al, 2011). The most fundamental form of engagement is behavioral engagement, which focuses on students' actual actions during class instruction (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). According to Murray (2018), academic achievement requires students' active participation. Students' ability to understand and direct their cognitive effort during learning is a key component of "cognitive engagement," and research has shown that employing a variety of different learning techniques leads to distinct types of thought (Kaed et al, 2023). The literature consistently shows a positive correlation between student engagement to academic success (Kunka, 2020). Engaging students at the start of a class with an active learning assignment helps establish students' interests are valued.

METHODOLOGY

Student Engagement Activities Overview

Four class-starting activities, Commercial Break, What's Viral, Google Trends, and Global Minute Chat, bring topics relevant to students into an assignment that requires students to investigate a topic through an evaluative lens that aligns with their understanding of course content. These activities were incorporated in undergraduate in-person classrooms. The course modality is not limited to in-person instruction. These activities could also be used for online synchronous courses. The researcher did use these activities in online courses. Student feedback from online courses is not included in this study.

Commercial Break, What's Viral, and Google Trends were designed for Marketing courses. The Global Minute Chat was designed for international business courses but could be modified, by altering the questions, for other courses. Each assignment requires students to engage in active learning through their research, for an example to share in class. An added learning element is having students lead a short discussion. These assignments are also an opportunity for students to speak in front of a group. The students' presentations are short and are on a topic they found personally interesting. Student engagement activities are designed to spark questions and set the tone to encourage participation for the remainder of the class period. Faculty provide context to transition to the course topic for the day.

Commercial Break

Commercial Break is an assignment best utilized in an introductory marketing course. Students are exposed to video commercials every day, and many of these advertisements gain students' attention. The average American spends six hours and 58 minutes online per day (Allconnect, 2024). Requesting the selection of a video and then sharing that video with their personal commentary flows nicely with course content. Every student comes to the front of the classroom to give their presentation to show a commercial. Teachers can supplement the presentation with applicable course theory and ask for other students' reactions and comments. See Appendix A for assignment details.

What's Viral

The What's Viral assignment was created for a social media or digital marketing course. Following the same start-of-class format, students share their reactions to something that has gone viral. This clarification is given in the assignment, "Appropriate for class viewing". Students can select a hashtag, video, meme, article, or other element gaining wide viewership. These examples are chosen from any social channel, including X (formerly Twitter), Buzzfeed, Digg, or Reddit. Students need to be prepared with a visual presentation as part of their discussion. The visual can include a PowerPoint presentation or going to the social channel where the viral media was discovered.

Again, relevant course theory applied by the faculty follows as part of the discussion. See Appendix B for assignment details.

Google Trends

The Google Trends assignment was created for an introductory digital marketing course that introduces Google AdWords. Following the same start-of-class format, students pick a topic and research the topic using Google Trends to "explore what the world is searching". The PowerPoint presentation includes multiple graphs outlining the search history for the key term. Students provide a reflection and opinion about the search results including one-year results and subregions within the United States. Analysis of related query topics is also presented by the student. See Appendix C for assignment details.

Global Minute Chat

Global Minute Chat (GMC) was developed for an international business course, however, this concept could be modified and applied to any course to aid students in a class getting to know each other better. This assignment is valuable for building cultural diversity awareness in courses with international students. Students lead the class discussion by using one of the prompts provided in the assignment sheet. The key element is the international focus of the discussion. See Appendix D for assignment details.

Sample

The undergraduate courses surveyed were offered in person at a college located in the northwest United States. These courses included Principles of Marketing (Commercial Break), Social Media Marketing (What's Viral), Marketing Strategy (Google Trends), and International Business (Global Minute Chat). The sample size of college students varied by enrollment in each class. Class sizes varied from 20 students to 35 students for a total of 108 students surveyed. See Table 1 for class size details.

RESULTS

To assess the student's perception of the value of the engagement activities, the students were surveyed at the end of the semester. The voluntary online survey was collected using Microsoft Forms. Participants remained anonymous. A Likert-type scale to measure attitude was used on the first three questions. Questions one and three used a numerical value of 1-5, with 5 being the highest rating. The numbers were used to indicate the varying degrees of endorsement of the question. Question two provided verbal anchors in the form of statements. The fourth question asked for a yes/no answer.

Student Survey Summary

Full data collection results are available in Table 1.

1. Rate your initial impression of starting each class with a xx (name of assignment).
   (Rate out of 5 with 1 low and 5 high)

Commercial Break	4.56 average
What's Viral	4.58 average
Google Trends	4.3 average
Global Minute Chat	4.55 average

   Overall 85% of students rated the activities with 4 or 5 stars.

2. Was there value in starting each class with a xx?

   Somewhat valuable or Valuable ratings

Commercial Break	94%
What's Viral	96%
Google Trend	92%
Global Minute Chat	95%

   Overall 95% of the students rated the activity valuable or somewhat valuable.

3. How would you rate that xx aided in learning about marketing/international business?
   (Rate out of 5 with 1 low and 5 high)

Commercial Break 4.43 average
What's Viral 4.42 average
Google Trends 4.2 average
Global Minute Chat 4.2 average

Overall 89% of students rated the activities with 4 or 5 stars.

4. Should the xx assignment be included in future classes?
Select Yes or No with Yes answers

Commercial Break 94%
What's Viral 100%
Google Trends 92%
Global Minute Chat 100%

Overall 96% of students answered yes the assignment should be included in future classes.

Table 1. Student Self-Reported Value and Learning

		Commercial Break	What's Viral	Google Trends	Global Minute Chat	Total	
		N35	N27	N26	N20	N108	
1	Rate your initial impression of starting each class with xx.						
	Low ★	0	0	1	0	1	
	★★	1	0	0	1	2	
	★★★	2	0	3	2	7	
	★★★★	8	10	6	2	26	24%
	High ★★★★★	23	14	14	15	66	61%
2	Was there value in starting each class with xx?						
	Not valuable	1	0	0	0	1	
	Somewhat not valuable	1	1	1	0	3	
	Neutral	0	0	1	1	2	
	Somewhat valuable	12	14	9	8	43	40%
	Valuable	21	12	15	11	59	55%
3	How would you rate xx aided in learning about (course topic; marketing, social media, international business)						
	Low ★	0	0	0	0	0	
	★★	1	0	1	1	3	
	★★★	2	1	2	3	8	
	★★★★	13	13	13	7	46	43%
	High ★★★★★	19	12	10	9	50	46%
4	Should the xx assignment be included in future classes						
	Yes	33	27	24	20	104	96%
	No	2	0	2	0	4	

DISCUSSION

Students generally express positive feedback regarding the various assignments incorporated into the class structure, highlighting the real-world application of concepts in the Commercial Break activity. They appreciate the assignment's role in easing into lectures and prompting thoughts on the effectiveness of commercials. The "What's Viral" activity is praised for promoting individual research and contributing to a better understanding of diverse forms of marketing. The Google Trends activity receives praise for its quick yet informative nature and the opportunity it provides to explore less common topics. Global Minute Chat is liked for its educational and enjoyable start to class, fostering a sense of connection among students through personal stories, international perspectives, and insights into different cultures. The survey results and student comments support meeting the curriculum objectives by a majority of the students (a) a favorable way to begin class instruction, (b) add value to the class instruction, and (c) aid student engagement related to the course content. See Appendix E for a sampling of student comments.

Assignment Challenges

There are challenges to incorporating an assignment at the start of class. There is always the risk of students arriving late to class and causing a distraction as they enter the room. This distraction may interrupt the presentation flow. The student's choice of topic could be another challenge. Students could choose an example to share that others in the class do not find interesting or may even find the topic inappropriate or offensive. It is recommended to preface each assignment with the guidance "appropriate to view in a classroom setting". A third challenge is if students lack enthusiasm or confidence for presenting in front of a group. Specifically, regarding the Global Minute Chat, if students lack appreciation for diverse cultural perspectives some students might lose attention.

For all these assignments the faculty member's expertise is important to facilitate the transition of the opening activities to course content. Instructors' level of knowledge in transitioning the students' examples to the course content could be a challenge (Crowley, 2017). The instructor needs a competent level of knowledge and class facilitation skills to incorporate activities where students initiate the topic.

A large class size would also present challenges. The number of students presenting needs to be factored into the time plausibility of using the assignment. Is there enough time in the class period and the semester to add an assignment for each student? Students may need to work in pairs or small groups to compensate for the time available.

Adaptation

In summary, these student engagement activities can be adapted to a wide variety of classes with modifications that match course content. The goal is to engage students at the beginning of a class to facilitate interest and learning. When students are allowed to select a topic of interest to them for discussion, there is a high likelihood the example is of interest to other students. The pursuit of excellence in marketing education remains a paramount goal, one way is through innovative pedagogy (Seung Hwan, 2023). An active learning assignment to start a class is one such example.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
COMMERCIAL BREAK ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS

- Everyone will give an in-class presentation to share a video commercial. The presentation should explain: Why do you like or dislike, the commercial? Who is the target audience? Do you think the commercial is effective?
- Approach of the commercial – humor, fear, sex appeal, celebrity endorsement, animals, babies/children, informative, emotional, rational (practical needs), music, scarcity (hard to find, limited time), snob appeal, adventure appeal,
- bandwagon (everyone is doing this).
- Have you seen the ad on TV or the web? If on, TV or streaming service where or what program did the video air during?

APPENDIX B

WHAT'S VIRAL ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS

- At the start of each class, students will share a reaction to something that has gone viral. (Appropriate for class viewing)
- Discuss in a 3-4-minute discussion a hashtag, video, meme, article, or other element gaining wide viewership. Select any social channel.
- Provide a visual example as part of the discussion. This can mean going to a website or developing a PowerPoint. Suggested social channels to research include; Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, TikTok, BuzzFeed, Digg, Redditt etc.

APPENDIX C
GOOGLE TRENDS ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS

- Explore what the world is searching https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=US
- Search a term or topic or sport or TV show etc … and share your insight…
- Provide a reflection/opinion/insight about why the results show what they do in a PowerPoint as part of a 4–5-minute presentation.
- Include all the tables in the presentation
- Search for a general term. Example Search "Dogs" (can also do a comparison of terms)
- Table – Interest over time (could look at different time frames)
- Interest by Subregion - table

APPENDIX D
GLOBAL MINUTE CHATE ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS

At the start of each class, students pick one topic to discuss for 3-4 minutes.
Suggested topics included:

-International travel experience (pictures welcome/ encouraged)
-If native from another country – what have you found unusual about the USA?
-TV commercial/video or print ad from another country (acceptable to show in class)
Provide insight about why you selected the commercial or print ad.
-If you have not traveled internationally – where would you like to go and why?
-Current article (within 6 months) about an international event/story you found interesting.

A visual PowerPoint presentation or visiting a website is optional.

APPENDIX E
A SAMPLING OF STUDENT COMMENTS REGARDING THE ASSIGNMENTS:

Commercial Break Student Comments:

"I liked the real-world application of the concepts we learned."
"it was nice to start the class off with this, eases you into the lecture for the day"
"Made me think of what makes commercials memorable and effective."

What's Viral Student Comments:

"I thought this was awesome! Promoted individual research too!"
"I enjoy what's viral before classes a lot. It helps me learn a lot about new things."
"It was good to look at real-world marketing and all different forms of it"

Google Trend Student Comments:

"I like that it was quick yet still informative."
"I liked the ability to explore topics we don't normally hear about"
"I like it because it was quick and easy. It also showed what people were Googling and the trends that were occurring."

Global Minute Chat Student Comments:

"*I liked learning about other people's travel experiences to other countries or where they want to travel and why. It was an educational and fun way to start class."*
"I actually loved the gmc! It was fun getting to hear personal stories from other students and make me feel more connected to the material and to my classmates."
"I really enjoyed learning about how other people viewed US culture. It was interesting to see everyone's different perspectives and experiences."
"I really enjoyed learning from international students and how their lives differentiate from the US."

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EXPLORING THE CREDIBILITY OF ACCENT ACROSS FOUR UNITED STATES CITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores accent, race, and gender's influence on media voice credibility and enjoyment. Analyzing 822 participants across four U.S. cities, it reveals biases favoring NPR-style accents over local ones and white, male voices over others. Statistical analysis confirms these biases, emphasizing NPR accents' credibility, male voices' preference, and white voices' perceived credibility. The findings emphasize accent, race, and gender's significant impact on media representation, advocating for increased diversity and inclusivity in voice selection. This study contributes insights to media responsibility discussions, stressing accurate and fair representation's role in fostering societal trust and understanding.

INTRODUCTION

The study of spoken English and the quest for standardization possess a rich historical tapestry, intricately woven with linguistic evolution and societal norms. John Colapinto's insightful narrative in "This is the Voice" (2021) unfurls the pages of this history, where the advent of BBC radio broadcasts in 1922 marked not only a technological milestone but also catalyzed the establishment of an Advisory Committee four years later. This committee wielded influence by prescribing the pronunciation norms of what came to be known as BBC English (Colapinto, 2021).

In the United States, a parallel exploration unfolded in the early 1930s, spearheaded by Dr. Harry Morgan and Dr. Greet. Pioneers in the study of phonograph recordings, delved into regional dialects, laying the groundwork for subsequent linguistic investigations (Zimmerman, 1946). Their endeavors, though among the first, set the stage for various studies that followed.

Methodological nuances in linguistic research reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the field. The advent of sociolinguistics witnessed a shift from oral transcriptions to the meticulous recording of telephone interviews, preserved in linguistic analyses and phonological data (Labov et al., 2006). The Dictionary of American Regional English further enriched the linguistic landscape by incorporating taped interviews, encapsulating the nuances of regional variations (Maguire & McMahon, 2011).

Within the realm of linguistic exploration, dialectal disparities have assumed paramount importance. These disparities extend beyond the confines of mere phonetics, embracing sentence structure intricacies, regional intonations, and the overarching selection of words within a given lexicon (Maguire & McMahon, 2011). The historical trajectory of American accents intertwines with immigration patterns, yielding a distinctive confluence of linguistic diversity. Notably, the mid-western accent emerged as the acknowledged academic standard, as evidenced by the 1923 Illinois legislature statute designating it as the "American language" (Bailey, 2012).

Nevertheless, the journey of spoken English in the United States has not been devoid of biases. Discrimination, both explicit and implicit, has permeated linguistic evaluations, transcending regional boundaries to encompass racial and ethnic dimensions. Studies by Preston (1998) and Reed (1992) have shed light on biases associated with Southern accents, revealing stereotypes that link regional accents with perceived intelligence.

As we navigate the labyrinth of linguistic biases, it becomes imperative to distinguish between explicit and implicit manifestations. Implicit biases, residing in the unconscious, exert a profound influence on judgments. The "halo" effect, a common implicit bias, often veers conversations away from structured interviews, fostering a sense of camaraderie between interviewer and interviewee (University of Florida Training, n.d.). Furthermore, stereotyping bias, rooted in preconceived notions, perpetuates discriminatory attitudes, as exemplified by Dandy's observation that "Being Black is a social stigma in this country, so the sounds and structures of the people who use the language are also considered by some as inferior" (Dandy, 1991, p. 5).

Recent scholarship has probed the disjunction between perceived and implicit biases (Howell et al., 2015), delved into biases within marginalized groups (Rae et al., 2015), and embarked on a global examination of biases across thirty-two countries (Charlesworth et al., 2022). The multifaceted nature of biases also extends into educational settings, with scholars like Hudley and Mallinson (2011) providing invaluable insights for teachers navigating multicultural classrooms through the practice of code switching.

Code-switching, lauded as a pragmatic linguistic skill, finds endorsement in academic settings. Howard University School of Communications Dean Taylor emphasizes its significance in fostering academic and career success while preserving the integrity of students' home language and communication systems (Dandy, 1991).

The linguistic landscape further diversifies as immigrants bring accented English to the United States. Language fluency, for many, becomes a byproduct of exposure to television dramas and exported music lyrics (Stroud & Wee, 2012). Learning an accent, whether for educational, professional, or artistic purposes, necessitates a foundation grounded in certain elements, facilitated by contemporary technological advancements (Sharpe & Rowles, 2009).

In 1964, against the backdrop of societal shifts, Louis M Sirois published "Good American Diction," underscoring the intertwined nature of language, education, and cultural values. Concurrently, the cinematic release of "My Fair Lady," based on Shaw's 1913 "Pygmalion," explored the transformative power of accents, highlighting societal perceptions tied to speech. Simultaneously, Sidney Poitier, in becoming the first Black man to win an Oscar for "Lilies of the Field," exemplified the challenges and triumphs associated with accent and speech (Poitier & Poitier, 2007).

Despite the legislative strides symbolized by Lyndon Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act in 1964, the passage of six decades has not eradicated biases in voice-generated recordings. This study endeavors to unravel these persistent biases, examining whether participants from diverse cities perceive their local accent or a National Public Radio (NPR) accent as more credible. Additionally, the study aims to scrutinize the influence of race and gender on the perceived credibility of accents. Our hypotheses posit that participants will deem NPR accents more credible than their local accent and that white male voices will be perceived as most credible, irrespective of accent.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in this study were 822 individuals recruited from the online platform Cloud Research. The sample included participants from four distinct cities: Chicago (n = 200), Boston (n = 204), Charleston (n = 214), and Nashville (n = 204). The sample was evenly distributed in terms of sex, with 402 male participants and 417 female participants. In terms of racial demographics, almost an equal number of participants identified as Black (n = 410) and White (n =412). The age range most chosen by our participants was 25 to 34 (20.9%) with a range from 18 to 84 years old.

Participants were recruited through the Cloud Research platform and were compensated for their participation in accordance with the platform's guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they took part in the study, and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and received approval from the Northwestern Institutional Review Board.

The diverse composition of the sample, with participants from multiple cities, sexes, and racial backgrounds, enhances the generalizability of the findings to a broader population.

Procedure

To address the research questions, the study included participants from four cities (Chicago, Boston, Charleston, and Nashville). This study was conducted entirely online from participants' personal computers. The participants from these cities were recruited using an online data recruitment platform named Cloud Research.

In each of the four cities, the study used the same National Public Radio (NPR) voice for all participants, while local stories were presented using distinct accents specific to each location. Each participant was exposed to two randomly selected voices and was asked to answer questions about the story and reader after listening to each voice.

The participant couple is randomly assigned to one of eight conditions NPR/Local, Black/White, Male/Female. The frequency of the participants in each category is listed in Table 1.

Materials

The study utilized audio recordings with varying accents, including NPR, Nashville, Charleston, Chicago, and Boston accents. These recordings were used to present the stories to the participants. The participants either heard their local accent or an NPR accent. The participants heard two different short news clips in the condition they were randomly assigned to. After each recording, they were asked to answer several questions about the news story and the voice they heard.

Table 1. **Frequencies of Accent Heard**

Accent Heard	Sex Heard	Race Heard	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Boston	Female	Black	28	3.4 %	3.4 %
		White	23	2.8 %	6.2 %
	Male	Black	24	2.9 %	9.1 %
		White	26	3.2 %	12.3 %
Charleston	Female	Black	24	2.9 %	15.2 %
		White	27	3.3 %	18.5 %
	Male	Black	27	3.3 %	21.8 %
		White	32	3.9 %	25.7 %
Chicago	Female	Black	26	3.2 %	28.8 %
		White	22	2.7 %	31.5 %
	Male	Black	27	3.3 %	34.8 %
		White	27	3.3 %	38.1 %
NPR	Female	Black	101	12.3 %	50.4 %
		White	94	11.4 %	61.8 %
	Male	Black	100	12.2 %	74.0 %
		White	106	12.9 %	86.9 %
Nashville	Female	Black	31	3.8 %	90.6 %
		White	27	3.3 %	93.9 %
	Male	Black	27	3.3 %	97.2 %
		White	23	2.8 %	100.0 %

Data Collection

Data was collected from participants in all four cities using the online platform Cloud Research. Participants listened to the audio recordings and subsequently provided responses regarding the credibility and enjoyment of the voices heard. The study assessed the credibility and enjoyment of the voices across accent types (NPR, Nashville, Charleston, Chicago, and Boston) and considered participant race and gender as potential variables of interest.

RESULTS

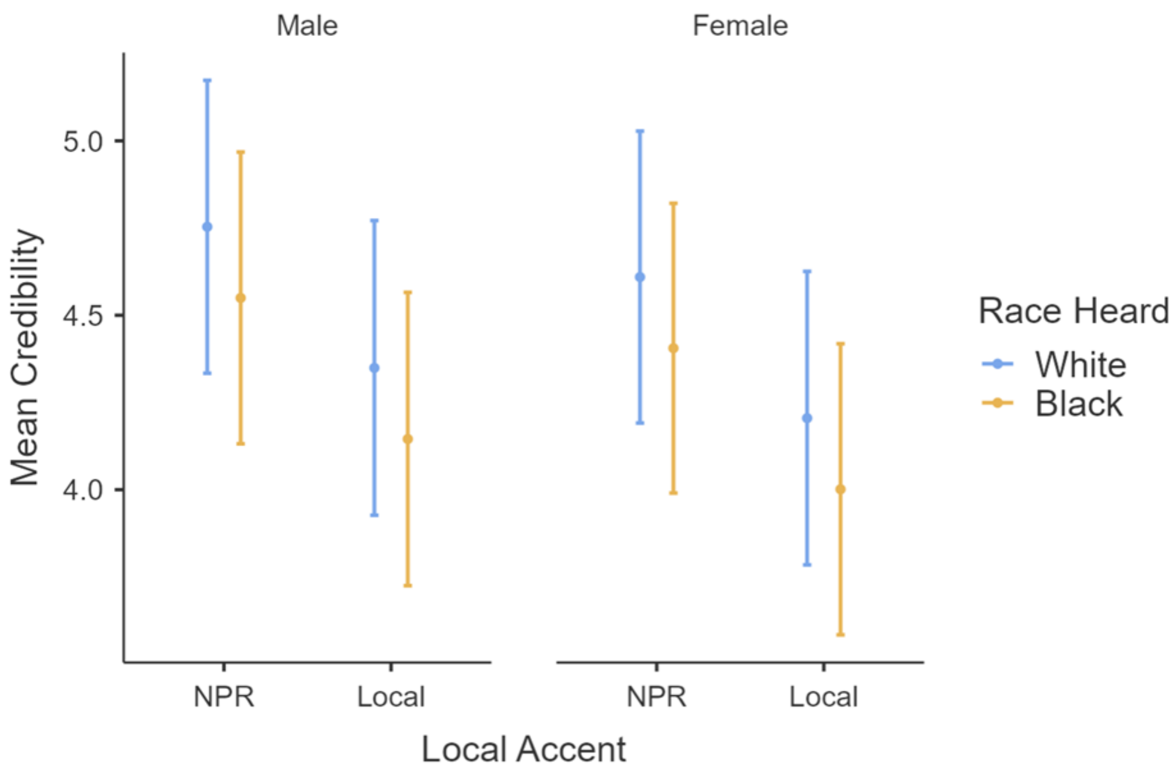
Credibility of Accent

First, we performed an independent sample t-test with the independent variable being whether the participant heard a local vs. NPR accent and the dependent variable being the average credibility score ranging from 1 to 6, with 6 being the most credible. Participants were not given a definition of credibility. Overall NPR accents (M=4.14, SD= 1.07) were chosen as being significantly more credible than local accents (M=4.14, SD= 1.07) regardless of location, t (820) = 5.51, p = <.001.

Impact of Race and Sex

To investigate how race and sex influence the impact of accent on credibility scores we conducted a multiple regression with sex head, race head, and accent (local vs NPR) as predictors of mean credibility of the two stories heard. For this analysis, we also controlled for the participants' race and sex. Overall, our model significantly predicted the credibility of voice (R2=.052, F (6, 815) =7.48, p<.01). We also see that all three of our predictors of interest were significant. NPR accents were seen as significantly more credible than local accents (β = .4, p<.001). Male voices were seen as significantly more credible than female voices (β = .14, p=.05). White voices were seen as significantly more credible than Black voices (β = .2, p<.01). The marginal means for the regression analysis can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Marginal Means



DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the intricate relationships between accent, race, and gender in the perception of media voices. In this section, we will delve deeper into the implications of our results and their alignment with existing literature, with a focus on understanding the broader societal and media landscape.

Effect of Accent on Credibility

Our study's observation of a preference for NPR-style accents, characterized by their neutrality and standardization, aligns with previous research on the influence of accents in communication. Giles and Billings (2004) have highlighted that speakers with specific accents are often perceived as more or less credible in particular contexts. The association between neutral accents and credibility suggests that media outlets may strategically leverage such accents to enhance the perceived trustworthiness of their content (Lippi-Green, 1997). This association resonates with Tracy's (1998) work, emphasizing the role of language, identity, and accents in shaping public perception, particularly in the context of the public sphere.

In addition, our findings also converge with insights from communication research that highlight the persuasive power of credibility. Hovland and Weiss (1951) introduced the concept of source credibility, suggesting that a credible source is more persuasive and influential. Our study contributes to this body of literature by demonstrating that accent can serve as a determinant of source credibility, providing an additional dimension to the understanding of how information is received and accepted.

Impact of Race and Sex

The consistent bias observed in our study, where White and male voices were consistently perceived as more credible than Black and female voices, underscores the deeply rooted challenges of race and gender biases in media representation. This bias was present even in participants who were Black themselves. This bias is not confined to the realm of voice perception but is emblematic of broader societal issues. Research by Mendelberg (2008) has shown how stereotypes related to race and gender can profoundly influence public perception, even in political contexts. Our findings not only corroborate these patterns but also suggest that these biases are pervasive, impacting various aspects of public communication. These biases are deeply entrenched and often linked to systemic racism and gender inequality, as noted in the work of Dovidio, Kawakami, and Gaertner (2002).

The findings of our study also have implications in cognitive psychology. The concept of schema theory (Bartlett, 1932) suggests that individuals tend to process and categorize information based on pre-existing mental frameworks. These schemas are influenced by societal norms and stereotypes, and our results align with the idea that media representations can reinforce and perpetuate these schemas, particularly in the context of race and gender.

Interaction of Race and Gender with Accent

Our study's identification of a robust bias that persists across different accents highlights the intersectionality of race and gender. The concept of intersectionality, as introduced by Crenshaw (1989), emphasizes how multiple social identities intersect to shape individuals' experiences and the biases they encounter. Our findings illustrate that these intersectional dynamics of race and gender continue to influence credibility ratings, regardless of the type of accent. Media organizations should be acutely aware of these complex interactions when making decisions about voice representation to ensure fair and equitable coverage.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The implications of our research resonate with the broader discourse on media responsibility and the need for diverse and inclusive representation. Media outlets hold significant sway in shaping public opinion and societal norms (Gerbner et al., 2002). Our findings underscore the importance of recognizing and mitigating biases in media voice representation, as they can impact not only credibility perception but also the public's trust in media outlets (Kiousis, 2001).

In the recent past, we see that the demographics of both those who own media companies and voices heard in media are male-dominated. Specifically, we see that only 6% of CEOs of the top 100 media companies in the world are women while only 20% of those companies' boards of directors are women (Edström & Facht, 2018). Additionally, we see that the demographic breakdown of newsroom employees is more white male-dominated compared to other professions. Specifically, we see that 77% of newsroom employees are white males compared to 63 % of the American workforce.

Fortunately, we see that these trends are trending toward there being a more equitable demographic breakdown of those who have power. Improvement in roles and gender participation have been demanded by stakeholders in many fields. In 2022, women held more than 30% of Fortune 500 board seats, up from 26.5% in 2020 (Green, 2023) while women ran 10% of the companies. However, women of color are still more difficult to find in leadership roles and only 8% make up the board directors in the Fortune 500. Continuing to address these biases in the demographic breakdown of those in power in the realm of media by supporting and encouraging more women and people of color is fundamental for media organizations to fulfill their role as responsible information providers in a diverse and dynamic society.

In conclusion, this study's findings are embedded within the broader literature on accent, race, and gender in media and their combined impact on credibility perception. These biases are multifaceted and have far-reaching consequences for information dissemination, public perception, and social equality. Recognizing these dynamics and taking active steps to address them is essential for media outlets to play their part in promoting accuracy, fairness, and inclusivity in information delivery.

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EXPLORING THE AISLES OF AUTOMATION: THE BLACK CONSUMER EXPERIENCE WITH SELF-CHECKOUT IN RETAIL

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Melanie Powell Rey, Southern University Law Center
Malcolm Hagan, Southern University and A&M College

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The advent of self-checkout technology in retail stores has been heralded as a convenience and efficiency enhancer for consumers, aimed at reducing their wait times, giving consumers control over their shopping experience, and increasing their shopping engagement and enjoyment (Elliot, Hall, & Meng, 2013; Fernandes & Predroso, 2017; Lee, Fairhurst, & Cho, 2013). However, the impact of such technologies may not be uniform across different demographics since adopters of self-service technologies tend to be younger, well-educated males with limited need for personal contact in their shopping experience (Fernandes and Predroso, 2017; Lee, Fairhurst, & Cho, 2013; Weijters, Rangarajan, Falk, & Schillewaert, 2007). Years of underinvestment by the private sector has left certain segments of consumers with a paucity of options in retail (McKinsey Quarterly, 2021). For these consumers, is that underinvestment also salient in the retail automation experience?

This study focuses on the Black consumers, a group whose experiences in retail settings has been historically sculpted by racial dynamics, including profiling, excessive surveillance, and discrimination (Gabbidon & Higgins, 2020; Pittman, 2017; Schreer, Smith, & Thomas, 2009). Therefore, the efficacy and reception of these systems can vary widely among Black consumers. Their experience with self-checkout is further shaped by the wider social and cultural milieu, which can affect how they engage with the technology and the quality of service they ultimately receive. Understanding their interactions and experiences with self-checkout systems can illuminate those broader issues of technology adoptions and customer satisfaction within this crucial consumer group. Although earlier studies (i.e., Lee et. al, 2013) have examined self-checkout across demographic domains such as gender, limited research has been conducted across this group. As this qualitative study is developed, it aims to uncover the nuanced interactions between race, technology, and the customer experience within the retail context, providing insights into how retailers can impactfully address the needs of a critical consumer group in an increasingly automated world.

Black consumers, like all consumers, exhibit a range of attitudes towards technology based on individual preferences, experiences, and levels of comfort. While some may embrace self-checkout for its perceived speed and autonomy, others may be skeptical, distrustful, question efficacy, or find it less intuitive. The digital divide, which disproportionately affects minority communities can influence the ease with which Black shoppers embrace and interact with self-checkout systems (Darko, Hinton, Horrigan, Levin, Mundi & Wintner, 2023). Although the digital divide encompasses lags of computer ownership, technology adoption, and digital skills (Darko, Hinton, Horrigan, Levin, Mundi & Wintner, 2023), studies on this have uncovered more nuances to the digital divide that transcends the mere solution of putting a computer or tablet in the hands of consumers (Walker, Hefner, Fareed, Huerta, & McAlearney, 2020).

Black shoppers often report feeling under heightened surveillance when using self-checkout, a perception that can stem from broader experiences of racial profiling in retail settings. Studies such as those conducted by Pittman (2017) detail the racial hierarchies that Black Americans navigate while procuring products and the marred experience they incur when shopping in retail settings. The presence of anti-theft measures, such as cameras and weight sensors, while intended to deter shoplifting, can inadvertently contribute to a sense of mistrust and discomfort among Black consumers due to past traumatic experiences with excessive monitoring in stores and false accusations of shoplifting (Gabbidon & Higgins, 2020).

The level of customer service available at self-checkout stations is a critical component of the user experience for Black consumers. When assistance is needed, the responsiveness and demeanor of staff can greatly affect perceptions of the technology and the retailer. In some cases, Black customers have reported feeling ignored or receiving subpar service when seeking help because they were seen as unfit. Pittman (2017) details this in customer interviews. Research participants consistently shared shopping experiences where the sales staff ignored them.

The demeanor of staff can impede the customer experience. In the field study conducted by Schreer, Smith, and Thomas (2009), sales staff complied when "customers" requested that the security sensor be removed from a pair of sunglasses at high end retails stores, but displayed greater levels of suspicion (e.g., staring, following) among the Black customers. Similar actions applied to the self-checkout process could exacerbate feelings of alienation, devaluation, or frustration.

Data collection for this study is in progress. A qualitative design, incorporating a grounded approach and thematic analysis, will be employed to provide rich, detailed insights into the experiences of Black consumers. Data collection methods consist of three components:

- In-depth interviews with 60 Black consumers, of varying ages, who have used self-checkout systems in various retail settings.
- Three focus group discussions with 8 to 10 participants each, allowing for interaction and shared experiences to emerge.
-

Retailers should be accountable and responsive to their customers (Kohan, 2022). The authors contend that a more inclusive and responsive self-checkout experience that recognizes the unique challenges and concerns faced by Black consumers is needed. The Black consumer has been historically overlooked by retail firms (McKinsey Quarterly, 2021). Retailers must demonstrate cultural competence by understanding and addressing the unique experiences of Black consumers with self-checkout systems. This involves training staff to manage their biases, change their behavior, and track their progress, and to provide equitable service to all shoppers. In their sessions, they should be given information that contravenes stereotypes and allows them to connect with people whose experiences differ from theirs (Gino & Coffman, 2021).

Additionally, retailers can engage with Black communities to solicit feedback on self-checkout experiences and to co-create solutions that enhance usability and satisfaction. The findings from this study can also serve as a guide in that process. The Mitigate Racial Bias in Retail Charter, which pledges to design and implement actions that reduce racial bias in the shopper experience and foster inclusive shopping experiences for all can also be leveraged (Kohan, 2022).

The experience of Black consumers with self-checkout in retail is multifaceted and influenced by a complex set of factors, including individual attitudes towards technology, societal perceptions, past shopping experiences, and the level of customer service received. Retailers have a responsibility to ensure that self-checkout systems are accessible, user-friendly, and sensitive to the needs of all consumers, including Black shoppers. By fostering an environment of inclusion, accountability, and responsiveness, retailers can improve the self-checkout experience for Black consumers and, in turn, for their broader customer base.

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GROOMED FOR GREATNESS: NURTURING IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING – AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY OF PERSONAL CARE PRACTICES AMONG BLACK MEN CONSUMERS

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Black American men are often overlooked when it comes to conversations about personal care and grooming practices. Personal care is often perceived as a feminine trait, that leads to the marginalization of Black men's experiences and preferences in this area (Mbilishaka, et al., 2021). Skincare companies have fueled this perception by replicating the exact business model of women skincare companies without considering the mechanical nature of a man and the physiology of his skin which differs in so many ways (Patterson, 2022). Despite consistent evidence that hair and hair care have implications on mental health and Black identity for women, to date, there is limited research on the construction of Black men's identity through personal care practices (Mbilishaka, et al., 2021).

The authors posit that a qualitative study on the personal care practices of Black men is essential to capture the complexities and nuances of their experiences. Personal care practices are not merely routines of hygiene and grooming; they are deeply embedded in cultural identity, self-expression and self-image, and societal perceptions. This even includes the selection of fragranced personal care products such as deodorant (Van Paasschen, et al., 2015). Black men's personal care practices may be influenced by a myriad of factors, including but not limited to historical context, media representation, socioeconomic status, and community norms. A qualitative approach allows researchers to engage with participants in a manner that respects and values their lived experiences and personal narratives. The need to examine the depth and breadth of Black male racial socialization is critical in understanding unique ways in which Black boys and men develop racialized gendered identities, self-pride, and the social analyses needed to make meaning of navigating life as a member of a historically marginalized group (Smith, 2023).

The findings from this study are significant for a range of stakeholders. The research would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Black masculinity and cultural practices. For the personal care industry, insights could inform the development of products and services that better meet the needs of the Black male market. For health professionals, an understanding of these practices could lead to more culturally sensitive advice and care. Finally, for Black male consumers, this research could illuminate the diversity of their personal care practices, encouraging a more inclusive definition of self-care and grooming.

Research questions that will guide this study include:

1. What are the personal care practices of Black men, and how do they vary across different ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and geographic locations?
2. How do Black men perceive the role of personal care in their lives, and what meanings do they attach to their routines?
3. In what ways do cultural heritage and community expectations shape the personal care practices of Black men?
4. How do societal norms and stereotypes about race and gender influence the personal care decisions of Black men?
5. What challenges do Black men face in maintaining their personal care practices, and how do they navigate these challenges?

Personal care practices among Black men serve as a conduit for expressing identity, fostering self-esteem, and promoting mental and physical health. Personal care is not simply about looking presentable; it is about feeling fortified in one's own identity and cultivating a sense of pride and self-worth. The unique hair and skin care needs of Black men, coupled with the cultural significance of grooming, make personal care an essential aspect of daily life that warrants greater attention, from a qualitative context, by researchers.

A qualitative design, incorporating a grounded approach and thematic analysis will be utilized to explore the rich tapestry of personal care practices among Black men. This method will enable researchers to:

- Capture detailed descriptions of personal care routines and the products used.
- Explore the impact of social constructs, such as masculinity and racial identity, on personal care choices.
- Uncover the influence of family, peers, and media on shaping personal care perceptions and behaviors.
- Identify challenges and barriers faced by Black men in accessing personal care products and services that cater to their specific needs.

Despite the importance of personal care for Black men, various barriers may hinder their access and engagement with these practices. These barriers include limited representation and availability of products specifically tailored to the needs of Black men, cultural stereotypes surrounding masculinity and personal care, and systemic factors such as racial mistrust of medical care and lack of health awareness (Stevenson et al., 2021).

A qualitative study on the personal care practices of Black men is a necessary step toward a more comprehensive understanding of the intersection between personal care, cultural identity, and social dynamics. By adopting a qualitative approach, researchers can amplify the voices and experiences of Black men and provide a platform for their personal care narratives to be heard and appreciated. Such a study can inform and transform personal care industries, health practices, and societal perceptions, ultimately fostering greater inclusivity and esteem for diversity in personal care practices.

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REVERSIBLE FIGURE ADS—A NEW FORM OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A Canon print ad promoting the EOS lens accompanied with the slogan "For every point of view" portrays Rubin's faces or vase image (Rubin, 1958), one of the most famous reversible figures, involving figure–ground organization. Researchers propose that the experience of reversible figures involves two related but distinctive components—ambiguity and reversibility (Long & Toppino, 2004). A reversible figure is perceptually ambiguous, i.e., the single image produces more than one cognitive interpretation or percept (e.g., the percepts of the two faces or vase). Also, a reversible figure is perceptually bi- or multi-stable, i.e., observers' perception spontaneously shifts between the distinct perceptual interpretations (e.g., the oscillation between the two percepts).

Psychologists have been obsessed with studying reversible figures concerning the determination of ambiguity and reversibility since the early 1800s (Refer to the review paper, Long & Toppino, 2004). These explorations have not involved marketing and advertising variables. Research on reversible figures as a form of marketing communication is non-existent, although they consistently feature in ads, fueled by advertisers' need to break through intense advertising clutter and facilitated by technological advancements in graphic design that have enabled advertisers to create highly sophisticated visuals (Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver, 2006; Tapia, 2003).

This is the first paper that examines reversible figure ads as a distinctive *style* of advertising. The research article contributes to the extant literature on marketing and advertising by systematically investigating the following unanswered questions. 1) What is the effect of reversible figures in ads on consumer responses? 2) What is the mechanism underlying these responses?

Reversible figures used in advertising are a form of indirect communication style where the message is not conveyed directly and needs inference (Scott, 1994). Indirect ads necessitate more processing resources from the audience. They are often caused by collative properties that attract attention, elicit exploratory behavior, and demand deeper processing to decode the underlying message (Berlyne, 1971). Reversible figures are ambiguous, evoking the responses attributed to the collative properties. Furthermore, in the case of reversible figure ads, the perception of multi-stability or reversibility, when the audience shifts from one perspective to the other, potentially sets into action a visual experience that causes the ad to be viewed as creative (Smith et al., 2007) and the brand to be perceived as innovative (Shams et al., 2015).

The results from four studies *(N* = 620) corroborate the hypotheses that reversible figure ads boost brand attitude, perceived brand innovativeness, and perceived ad creativity. Also, the favorable effects of reversible figure ads on brand attitude are mediated serially by perceived ad creativity followed by perceived brand innovativeness. These results exemplify the potency of reversible figure ads as a unique style of marketing communication. Notably, the paper offers managerially relevant findings that support the belief that depicting ad messages as reversible figures can yield positive ad and brand evaluations.

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AIRPORT HOTELS RESPONSE APPROACH TO NEGATIVE ONLINE REVIEWS ON THIRD-PARTY BOOKING PLATFORM

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POSITION PAPER

Airport hotels offer proximity advantage for overnight layovers, long transit connections, business travelers with short turnaround and airline crews. Recent hospitality studies tend to concentrate on online customer reviews, specifically the types and frequency of response in luxury hotel brands. This paper explores the airport hotels' response approach to negative online reviews on third-party booking platform.

Negative online reviews response basically revolves around two major approaches. Problem-solving approach perceives online reviews as a catalyst for prompt, efficient and discrete resolution of customer complaints. The aim of this approach is to protect the hotel's reputation and assure service recovery through quick, corrective actions. The strategic approach focuses on customer engagement to enhance a hotel's operational effectiveness. The goal is to generate co-value by aligning the hotel's offerings with customers' expectations with the hope of retaining and attracting customers in the long term.

The data comprised of publicly available information on Booking.com among unhappy guests who posted their reviews from their most recent stay in Dubai's major airport hotels. Content analysis was conducted on the responses posted by 13 airport hotels, until data saturation was reached.

Based on the most recent replies by hotel management, it was discovered that no specific negative response approach dominates. Hotels that pay attention to problem-solving approach often offered personalized responses within 24 hours. Some hotels had no undefined timeframe of promised corrective action. Hotels adopting strategic approach followed standard service recovery strategies. This paper encourages airport hotel management to share the actual improvement or actions they had accomplished with dissatisfied guests through email as a step towards customer service innovation.

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TEACHING INNOVATION IN RETAILING

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POSITION PAPER

In the US, retailing has been facing challenges due to shifts in consumer behavior triggered by the pandemic. There is a surge in online retailing, while retail stores are struggling to generate foot traffic. The macro-level external environmental factors (i.e., sociocultural, technological, and economic) have contributed to the struggles of retail stores. For example, San Francisco market has one of the worsts economic recovery after the pandemic. Retail thefts are on the rise and the city's downtown has experienced a rise in the homeless population. These market specific conditions of San Francisco has led to the closure of many stores (e.g., Nordstrom) in recent times. Consequently, in the current volatile retailing scenario marketing educators face challenges in teaching the effective application of marketing mix in stores. This challenge becomes tougher in an accelerated degree program where the duration of a marketing course is shortened. Specifically, marketing educators face difficulties in achieving two distinctive course learning objectives. First, explaining to students how different marketing mix variables can effectively interact in retail stores to affect consumer's purchase decision journey. Second, explaining to students how implementation of marketing mix variables in retail stores may differ across countries depending on specific macro-level external environment. The teaching innovation focuses on increasing student engagement and retention in an accelerated learning environment. The innovation focuses on active learning which is facilitated by live interaction with managers of a retail store. Additionally, the teaching innovation focuses on understanding the application of key marketing mix concepts in the retail context through comparative analysis using photographic narrative inquiry. The exercise of hotographic Narrative Inquiry Retail Atmospheric (PNIRA) suggested by Seung and Sergueeva (2017) was adapted to conduct a field visit. This field-based exercise required students to visit an assigned mall. Within the mall, students visited a specific retail footprint within an assigned retail store. Specifically, students visited the retail footprint of Emporio Armani located within the store of Bloomingdale's in Westfield Mall, San Francisco. To achieve the first learning objective, students interacted with the business managers of Emporio Armani's apparel, cosmetic sections, and of Bloomingdale's to understand how the brands have overcome the challenges posed by the recent macro-environmental trends. The managers explained the steps outlining the effective implementation of marketing mix variables. Some of the demonstrated marketing mix examples included involving the students by showing them sustainable labeling in Emporio Armani's apparel, offering them product trials of Emporio Armani's lipstick range, offering them promotional coupons, explaining them Bloomingdale's loyalty programs, and demonstrating them the prestige pricing strategy of Emporio Armani. To achieve the second learning objective, the teaching innovation focused on dividing the students into teams. Students analyzed a retail store of their choice in the mall and worked with their teams to conduct comparative analyses with a similar store located in another country. Through photographic narrative inquiry teams prepared a presentation comparing the retail stores explaining how implementation of marketing mix variables in retail context may differ across countries depending on the specific macro-environmental market forces. After the field visit, teams gave a presentation on the comparative analysis and did a reflective observation discussion on both the learning exercises. This innovation is novel as it positively impacts student learning outcomes through experiential learning. The innovation also positively impacts the business community. Due to current market condition challenges in San Francisco downtown malls are facing a decrease in retail traffic. The assigned retail store and mall were positively impacted by the footfalls generated by the field visit exercise. The team at Bloomindale's also had a chance to showcase their brands and talk about their loyalty programs to the group. The business had an opportunity to interact with prospective consumers and to generate positive word of mouth.

The teaching innovation was used in teaching the core course of Marketing Strategy offered to the accelerated 1-year MBA students. This course was offered in the Fall-term of the academic program (2023-2024). The Marketing Strategy course is offered in 7 classes which are 3 hours each. The teaching innovation was offered in class 5 and over these classes students were working on understanding the course-concepts related to marketing mix. On class 4, students were told that they would have a field visit after class 5. I and the academic team accompanied the students on the field visit. Students were taken to Westfield mall in San Francisco. Students had live interaction with the business managers of Emporio Armani and Bloomingdale's. In teams, students analyzed a retail store of their choice in the mall and conducted comparative analyses with a similar store located in another country. Through photographic narrative inquiry teams prepared a presentation comparing the retail stores. The explanation provided to students is described in Table 1. The teams explained how implementation of marketing mix variables in retail context may differ across countries depending on the specific macro-environmental market forces. The academic team (i.e., class Professor & Academic Dean of the program) accompanied the students. The mall was located close to the school campus. Appointments were made with the Emporio Armani and Bloomingdale's team. Bloomingdale's team organized additional security as there were 61 students.

Table 1. Explanation provided to students on the PNIRA exercise.

From the field tour:

1) Pick a brand of your choice from Westfield Mall, San Francisco.
2) Submit reflection piece using photo narratives comparing the respective store's marketing communication with a similar store located in another country.
3) Look at the following:
    - product assortment
    - new product displays
    - branding decisions/packaging
    - warranties and/or return policies
    - physical surroundings of the store including store employees,
    - purchase process of consumer
    - technological advances within the store
    - customer service personnel

The teaching innovations were live interaction with business managers within a retail store and comparative analysis of a retail store versus (vs.) another one in a different country using PNIRA. Such teaching innovations help in achieving student learning outcomes in an accelerated learning environment. Field visit strengthens the traditional learning environment by providing students with learning through observations and reflections (i.e., experiential learning). As future business leaders, besides academic preparation in marketing, industry demands a clear understanding of real-world market conditions. In-person retailing is shrinking and there is more demand for online retailing. Stores are struggling to increase footfall. Many stores are shutting down. The teaching innovation provided students with live interaction with a successful retailer. To demonstrate the application of course concepts in effective implementation of marketing mix, the retail store treated the students as prospective consumers. Therefore, through the role-play element students were demonstrated effective marketing mix strategies which were successful in attracting consumers to visit the retail store despite the challenging environment. This experience allowed students to observe how marketing mix course concepts are effectively implemented in complex real-world scenarios. Through the comparative analysis exercise using PNIRA, students developed critical thinking skills by understanding how retail environments can vary in different geographies due to varied macro-level external environment. The knowledge learned from the field visit can be integrated into the cognitive structure of students. Active participation in field visit results in greater retention of key course concepts thereby improving student learning.

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SPEED KILLS? THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME-ON-TASK, INFORMATION PROCESSING SPEED AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

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POSITION PAPER

One of the primary goals of effective pedagogy is to optimize learning and academic performance for all students, including those who do not necessarily self-identify as 'accommodation / disability' students, but still process information at a relatively reduced speed compared to other students. Diminished speeds could arise from differences in cognitive style, language proficiency, underrepresentation of cultural influences / diverse backgrounds, illness, stress, fatigue, age, and other factors, (e.g. Ackerman & Ellingsen, 2016; Kyllonen & Zu, 2016). Although a complete investigation into all the causes of reduced processing speeds will not be addressed in this paper, language proficiency, (LP), and undergraduate grade point average, (GPA), will be considered here due to their relevance to student academic achievements. With respect to LP, since adequate levels of language comprehension are needed for the precise comprehension of questions / answers on exams, reduced LP students may require additional time for the consideration and interpretation of these materials. Similarly, slower information processing styles are correlated with both lower individual examination scores as well as relatedly, lower undergraduate GPA results. Since slower information processors also need additional time to consider questions and answers and since a substantial number of undergraduate examinations are time-restricted, slower processors likewise will not have sufficient time to optimally demonstrate their material mastery. Thus, simply because of differences in processing speeds, some students may experience unintentional systemic biases in the form of lower examination scores and GPA results.

In order to prevent these potential biases and to ensure inclusivity and equity for all students, one examination factor that can be easily modified is *time*. Rather than using restricted times for exams, (RT), an instructor could design examinations with very generous time allocations, ('a power test', (PT); Gernsbacher, Soicher & Becker-Blease, 2020). The literature suggests that power tests provide more accurate and valid student evaluations for all types of students. More specifically, during PT examinations, students who process information at a reduced rates would have enough time to consider examination question / answer content fully, potentially increasing their grades. Noting that many students tended to complete their examinations at quite diverse time intervals, the instructor decided to implement restricted (RT) and power test (PT) time variations on the two examinations in her four Sales class sections (n=231) to test the effect of time on student examination performance. Each of the sections had identical class content / structure and had no significant differences amongst sections with respect to gender, year of program, major, self-reported GPA, perceived difficulty of exams and how much they studied for each exam or average final class grade (74.23%). Students in the classes were evaluated by two multiple choice examinations, worth 35% and 40% respectively and one group project (25%). All examination questions were order- randomized but identical in content over all the sections. The first exam, covering the first half of the course materials consisted of sixty multiple choice questions with 60 minutes allocated for completion: the restricted- time condition (RT). The second exam, covering materials from the last half of the course, consisted of one hundred multiple choice questions but here, 180 minutes was allocated: the 'power test' condition. (PT). The preliminary questions investigated here are: first, were student examination results generally higher in the PT condition compared to the RT condition, second, did all students benefit equally from the PT condition, in terms of improvements (if any) of examination grades, third, did differing LP and GPA students vary in terms of how much of the time they did actually use and finally, did any other student demographics or other data have any impact on these results?

After confirming normalcy, the student means / time usage data for the RT and PT conditions were compared. The average grade in the RT condition was approximately 67.04% (scaled up by 3% for the final course grade calculation) and 230 of the 231 students took the full 60 minutes to complete the examinations (the other student had less than one minute left before the examination period closed). For the PT condition, the average examination grade was 73.39 % and here, only two of the 231 students used the full 180 minutes to complete the exam. In the PT condition, the average time spent on the exam for all the students was approximately 110.7 minutes. The differences in the mean RT and PT examination grades were significant, $t_{(1, 230)} = 10.49$, $p < .000$. All students performed better on the PT examinations. Next, a paired- sample GLM was completed with the examinations as the dependent variable and LP and student GPA as the between-subjects factors. Here, there was a main within-subjects effect for the test condition, $F_{(1, 230)} = 50.80$, $p < .000$ which confirmed that students generally performed better on the PT test compared to the RT test. There was significant between-subject effect for GPA, $F_{(3, 228)} = 13.121$, $p < .001$, which indicated as GPA increased, the relative performance effects of the RT condition decreased. Here, consistent with the literature, it appears that lower GPA students benefitted more from the PT condition (in terms of percentage improvement) than the higher GPA students. Lower GPA students had more time to consider the materials and this change seemed to improve their ability to more optimally demonstrate their knowledge of the course materials on the examination. There were also significant between- subject effects for LP, $F_{(4, 227)} = 2.48$, $p = .045$, indicating that the effects of the examination conditions also varied by language proficiency. Similar to the effects for GPA, lower language proficiency students also appeared to generally benefit more from the PT time allocation, as compared to the higher LP students. Further, in terms of whether or not the amount of time remaining on the exam was impacted by either of LP or GPA, another GLM procedure was completed where the time remaining was the dependent variable and LP and GPA were the between- subjects factors. The effects of LP were significant, $F_{(4, 227)} = 2.87$, $p = .024$ as were the effects of GPA, $F_{(3, 228)} = 5.72$, $p < .001$. These results imply that students with both lower GPAs as well as lower LP factors used more time to complete the exam than their higher GPA and LP student counterparts, consistent with the current literature. Specifically, since lower GPAs and reduced LP tend to be related to slower processing speeds, additional time on examinations would tend to disproportionately be used by these particular students. Finally, the analyses revealed that none of the student demographics (sex, major, year of program) or collected data, including studying time for each exam, perceived difficulty of each exam, attendance, and teaching evaluations, had any significant effects on these results.

There are a number of limitations to this paper including the generalization of these results to other instructors, classes, course content, types of examination questions (short / long answer), types of students, and academic levels, the inclusion of additional student measures such as motivation, interest, and other similar factors. Despite these limitations, adding additional time to academic examinations is an easy, straightforward method which may help to alleviate some unwanted, unintentional but systemic negative evaluation biases for students in the classroom. Since learning, retention, and optimized academic performance for all types of students are some of the primary goals of academic pedagogy, this simple act of adding more time to examinations seems like a very minor modification which could garner substantial positive impacts towards achieving these goals.

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ATMOSPHERICS IN THE MARKETING CLASSROOM: A STUDY ON STUDENT LOYALTY WITH REFLECTIONS FROM THE CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE

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POSITION PAPER

Many customer experiences are surrounded by atmospheric elements. Atmospheric elements consist of sights, sounds, smells, taste, and interactive exhibits that allow touch. Classroom atmospherics at the college level remains a topic that has a gap in academic literature. This writing will detail the topics of atmospherics, marketing classrooms, customer loyalty, and the student as the customer. With these topics, the researcher hopes to combine atmospherics within the marketing classroom to improve student loyalty. A qualitative case study represents the method for this future research project. Being able to create a classroom space that students feel comfortable in represents the idea behind atmospherics within the classroom.

Imagine creating a space within your classroom that influences the student experience in a positive way. Many professors try to create an engaging classroom, but do the professors consider atmospheric elements within the classroom? The idea that atmospherics can influence the customer experience represents the topic of this writing. In this writing, the marketing student becomes a customer. This writing will detail a description of atmospherics, an overview of the marketing classroom, a description of customer loyalty, and the idea of combining atmospherics in the marketing classroom to improve student loyalty. Further, the author will include information on the methodology, findings, and implications.

The use of atmospheric elements to influence behavior represents the idea behind atmospherics. The atmosphere that surrounds an experience can be represented by sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Many businesses have used the influence of atmospheric elements for quite some time to increase the customer experience (Kotler, 1973). Businesses can use atmospherics as a tool within marketing (Kotler, 1973). Retail stores, restaurants, hotels, theme parks, and shopping malls have a certain atmosphere that surrounds them. Each place a customer visits can essentially increase atmospheric elements to increase the customer experience. If a customer has ever traveled to Las Vegas, Nevada or Disney World, the customer has been surrounded by atmospheric elements. Smells, sounds, sights, and interactive exhibits surround the customer. For example, smells impact a shopping experience. First, think about pleasant smells. If a customer walks by the cookie store in a mall and the sweet cookie smell surrounds the customer, the customer will begin to think about cookies and potentially buying a cookie. Next, think about an unpleasant smell. If a customer walks into a grocery store and it smells like rotten eggs, the customer may not complete shopping at that store. Another example of an atmospheric influence is represented by the decorations that a customer can see. A mall at Christmas time is decorated for Christmas. Does that create feelings of Christmas spirit for the customer during the shopping experience? A researcher could take the angle of all the atmospheric elements. A previous academic study researched the combination of the atmosphere in coffee shops and customer loyalty (Dobill, 2020). Two of the main discoveries from the previously mentioned study were comfort and uniqueness (Dobill, 2020). If customers felt comfortable within the business establishment, the customers returned (Dobill, 2020). If students feel comfortable within the marketing classroom and the classroom represents a unique space, the student experience may be increased. This intended study hopes to dive into increasing atmospheric elements in the marketing classroom to increase the student experience.

Many universities have a business program which includes marketing. Students become engaged in a marketing classroom in many ways. Textbooks, discussions, hands-on activities, case studies, real world situations, and more represent ways that students can become involved in the marketing classroom. These tools can be used in other majors as well. However, this study will focus on the marketing major. Marketing students emphasize the importance of learning the skill of creativity in their studies (McCorkle, Payan, Reardon, & Kling, 2007). With the use of the tools listed above, marketing students can learn the skill of creativity. Many introductory marketing classes focus on the foundations and building blocks of marketing. Upper-level marketing courses reinforce these same foundations. Other marketing classes focus on a specific area of marketing such as digital marketing, social media marketing, retailing, consumer behavior, and more.

Customer loyalty is defined as repeat purchases, customer commitment, and favorable attitudes toward a business (Uncles, Dowling, & Hammond, 2003). Increasing the customer experience within a business transaction or customer visit can improve loyalty (Dobill, 2020). In the college or university setting, students become the customer. Therefore, improving the student experience could improve loyalty toward the classroom or the college. A large factor in marketing that contributes to customer loyalty is relationship building (Ndubisi, 2007). The same factor, relationship building, applies to students. If a relationship is built inside or outside the classroom with college stakeholders, the student experience may improve.

This section of writing details the idea of combining atmospherics within the marketing classroom to improve student loyalty. Specifically, this study will focus on the marketing classroom and marketing students. Incorporating music to your classroom, adding hands-on activities, having an engaging student discussion, bringing snacks to class, ensuring there is a pleasant smell in the classroom, ensuring that the lighting is correct, and improving the look of the classroom represent examples that the college or marketing professor can do to improve the atmosphere within the classroom. This list does not include all the atmospheric elements that can be improved but provides a great starting point. One study indicated that the seat location impacted student behavior (Vander Schee, 2011). Therefore, part of the atmosphere of the classroom can be seat locations or the organization of the seats. Providing a comfortable atmosphere within the space can improve loyalty of the customer (Dobill, 2020). Sound represents another atmospheric element to consider in the classroom. Faculty members can play music before class to get the students engaged. Faculty members can show videos or play sounds to engage the hearing aspect in the classroom. One example of a sound to generate conversation in the classroom within a digital marketing class is the dial up internet sound. Further, the relationship created between the student and the professor improves the atmosphere in the marketing classroom. If the students are comfortable or have a good relationship with their peers and the professor, classroom discussions could improve. This consists of both psychological comfort and physical comfort within the surroundings.

This study will consist of a qualitative case study using qualitative methods to add to the body of knowledge on this topic. This study will be exploratory in nature. The researcher will analyze current academic literature within the topics of atmospherics, student loyalty with the student being the customer, and customer loyalty to complete this study. The researcher intends to do marketing student interviews, marketing faculty interviews, and classroom observations to complete the research portion of this study. The researcher will utilize the mentioned qualitative methods to obtain rich and descriptive data. The results of this study have implications for academia, the overall business industry, and the marketing industry. The intended research findings will aim to reduce the gap in literature between the marketing classroom, student loyalty, and atmospherics. The researcher hopes to help professors create a space within their classroom where students feel comfortable allowing the student experience to create loyalty.

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INFLUENCE OF NON-FAMILY CEO SUCCESSION ON BRAND IN B2B FAMILY-OWNED FIRMS

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POSITION PAPER

Family businesses have been long recognized as cornerstones in the global economy, significantly contributing to job creation, wealth creation, and societal stability (Astrachan, 2003; Maharani et al., 2021). Popular literature even goes so far as to say they drive a global economy (*Global Family Business Index*, 2023; Shah, 2023). The data corroborates that story. As recently as 2021, the top 119 family companies in the US contributed to 81% of the US economy (Roberson et al., 2021), and nearly 60% of the US workforce is employed by just over 32 million family-owned businesses (Pieper et al., 2021). Globally, family-owned enterprises provide over 50% of the global gross domestic product and are responsible for employing more than 65% of the worldwide workforce (*Global Family Business Index*, 2023).

Brand management is known to help a family brand distinguish itself from competitors (Craig et al., 2008), influence consumer purchasing behavior (Lude & Prügl, 2018), and enhance overall business performance (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Family-branded firm messaging bolsters consumer perceptions of brand authenticity and trust (Lude & Prügl, 2018). Nevertheless, there is a limited understanding related to how family businesses specifically handle their brand and how their brands are perceived over leadership succession, a significantly disruptive time during the company's history (Yeoh, 2014).

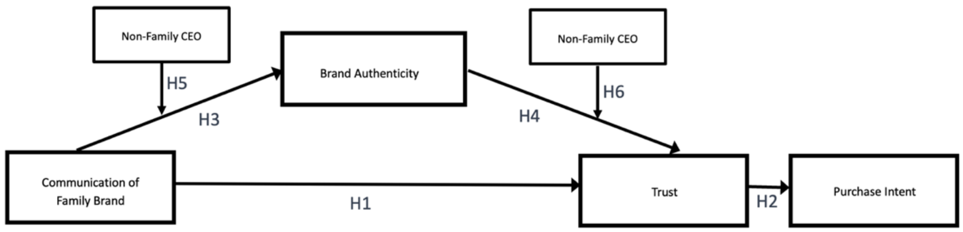
Despite the prominence of family firms using family names in their brand strategies (e.g., SC Johnson or Ford), research has shown that promoting the family business brand appears to have varying effects (Sageder et al., 2018). It is plausible that shifting from a family CEO to a non-family CEO might alter these perceptions. This proposed research sheds light on this under-researched area (Casprini, et al., 2020a) by delving into the complexities surrounding family brands in business-to-business (B2B) marketing within the context of CEO succession.

Communicating the brand is often done through cues, which involves tying the founder's brand identity (e.g., family name) directly to the company using a strong family identity (Beck et al., 2020). This type of marketing strategy can help to create a strong association between the business, the brand, and the family. Consequently, this brand marketing initiative leads to better customer loyalty and a more positive brand image that builds a competitive advantage and (Casprini, et al., 2020b; Craig et al., 2008) returns positive financial results (Beck et al., 2020). When a family brand's identity is known to the consumer, it also strongly correlates to word-of-mouth recommendations and purchase frequency (Sageder et al., 2015). Firms that bear the family name not only demonstrate heightened corporate citizenship (Beck, 2016) and customer-centric orientation (Craig et al., 2008) but also exhibit a strategic focus on long-term goals and community engagement (Zellweger et al., 2012).

Family businesses face unique challenges when managing their brand identity during succession because they must strike a balance between tradition and innovation, adapt to changing market conditions, and maintain their fundamental values and traditions (Casprini, et al., 2020b). When considering the impact of non-family CEOs joining a family-run business, it is important to recognize that such leadership changes may disrupt the established trust in family brands. This is because stakeholders might draw certain inferences from the leadership transition, potentially challenging the trust previously built. While research has focused on succession and generational transitions, this author found no literature on the impact of succession regarding external CEO on family brands. However, tangential literature on succession shows that performance suffers in specific periods during succession (Yeoh, 2014) and has mixed results on innovation (Sun et al., 2023).

Consumer research on family brands, revealed via inference theory that consumers infer higher brand authenticity and trust from family business brands, leading to stronger purchase intentions (Lude & Prügl, 2018). However, their study did not consider ownership structure. In the context of family-owned B2B brands, the relationship that the family CEO maintains with customers plays a significant role in the organization's success (Arsić et al., 2018). The appointment of a new CEO from outside the company may alter the signals or impressions that customers associate with the brand. Therefore, the research question is*, How does a leadership transition to a non-family CEO in family-branded B2B firms influence brand trust and, ultimately, purchase intent?* This proposed research is based on Lude and Prügl (2018) and extends it to include the non-family CEO successor as a moderator, depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Moderated Inference Model



Note: Extension of Lude and Prügl (2018) Family Brand Impact Model with CEO Moderating Variables

This study will explore the complex landscape of family brands in B2B marketing, particularly within the context of CEO succession. It places the leadership structure into context and uses the level of professionalization as a proxy, using inference theory as a theoretical foundation. The focus will be on how the B2B brand cues change during succession and its impact on purchase brand trust and purchase intent.

In consumer behavior marketing, inference-making is a fundamental decision-making process (Kardes et al., 2004). It allows individuals to form judgments and predict outcomes based on the available cues and information. A notable cue is the communication of the family firm brand, as it has the potential to evoke memory-based inferences (Kardes et al., 2004). These memory-based inferences, in turn, influence attitude formation toward the respective brand. It will be interesting to see if consumer inference theory holds in a B2B family branded firm in succession.

The proposed hypotheses mirror Lude and Prügl (2018) and extend the model by adding the moderation variable of CEO succession. The contributions are threefold: first, exploring how the external leadership change impacts B2B customer attitudes will help family businesses in succession planning communication. Second, this research contributes to the broader literature on family business, branding, and B2B marketing. It bridges the gap between these domains and extends our knowledge of the intricate underlying relationships among them. Finally, it extends inference theory to B2B marketing. Through this exploration, this research will offer practical insights for family-owned B2B firms navigating the complexities of succession planning. Brand marketing and communication strategies can be tailored to ensure that family-focused perceptions of the company are maintained.

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PROACTIVELY LEVERAGING AI TOOLS IN MARKETING COURSES: A PROCESS FOR PROMPT ENGINEERING ASSIGNMENTS

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POSITION PAPER

"As with any new tech, AI can be scary because it's unknown. That's okay, just don't hide from it. Start learning today," advises Kanishka Bhattacharya, Senior Director of Data Science and Analytics at Publicis Sapient.

Artificial intelligence, marketing and marketing education-"Artificial intelligence" (AI) is the term posed by Professor John McCarthy in the 1950s to capture the ways machines (computer systems) can learn the way humans learn (Manning, 2020). These systems are "trained" with data much the way a human learns through repeated experiences. Prior research has highlighted the implications of AI on marketing channels, strategy, performance, and segmentation-targeting-positioning (STP) activities (Vlačić, et.al., 2021). For example, AI can be utilized to predict changing consumer tastes and identify more nuanced segmentation criteria.

The focus of this project is generative AI. Generative AI refers to deep-learning models that can generate high-quality text, images, and other content based on the data they were trained on (IBM, 2023). An individual can input a written prompt like "please build me a consumer profile for a pumpkin spice scented candle," and a relatively detailed profile is provided. Generative AI tools allow marketers to quickly brainstorm ideas, create copy, develop visuals, and even generate consumer profiles. The advancement of tools like Open AI's ChatGPT and DALL-E, Google's Gemini, and Midjourney have made the use of generative AI accessible to the broader public. While these systems "learn," the accuracy of responses varies based on how much information the generative AI has been trained on about a particular topic. However, utility and accuracy grow the more these generative AI tools are used, akin to Google's search prowess. Broad access to tools like ChatGPT rapidly disrupted various sectors, including marketing and thereby, marketing education.

Marketing educators have long integrated methods into their curriculum to allow students to build the skills necessary for the job market or further graduate study. For example, educators utilize case studies (Klebba & Hamilton 2007), simulations (Deitz et al., 2022), and debates (Roy & Macchiette, 2005) to develop writing, critical thinking, and oral communications skills. Recently, there have been calls (e.g., Ferrell and Ferrell, 2020) to thoughtfully consider the interdisciplinary nature of marketing so that courses can address industry shifts, including the widespread adoption and use of technologies like AI. Supporting students in marketing courses to learn (1) the usefulness and limitations of these tools and (2) how to leverage them is likely to become an increasingly important need.

Specific to generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT), scholars suggest considering developing methods to "train students to effectively use the tools in solving real-world marketing problems" and to consider "how prompt engineering can be taught and learned." (Peres et.al., 2023). Interviews with marketing faculty members, industry practitioners, and students suggest a need to understand how AI tools work and how they can ethically and effectively be leveraged in the classroom and in practice (Elhajjar, et.al., 2021; Guha, et.al., 2023). Building on research to date, the purpose of this project is to utilize marketers', educators', and students' perspectives to develop a prompt engineering assignment that is reflective of tasks marketers may conduct in practice and can also be easily updated as technologies and marketing functions change.

Prompt Engineering-A prompt is a statement that tells a generative AI system to perform an action. For example, an individual can write a prompt asking ChatGPT to develop a consumer profile for a particular product or product class. The more specific guidance provided in the prompt, the more detailed and accurate the generated result is likely to be. There have been many courses developed on prompt engineering that offer guidance on the best ways to write a prompt to generate accurate and precise results. However, these courses often provide guidance without allowing an iterative process whereby an individual refines a prompt several times to see this progression of superior results. Yet, to truly understand how a tool works, the process is just as important as the outcome itself. Therefore, this project aims to identify ways educators can develop prompt engineering assignments that allow students to refine their prompt engineering skills while also testing the boundary conditions of the different generative AI tools. Further, by integrating practitioner perspectives, the assignment can align with the way AI tools are being leveraged in practice.

A prompt engineering assignment was pilot tested with a digital marketing class (n=18) in fall 2023. This assignment was designed based on research (e.g., Vlačić et.al., 2021) and published practitioner guidance (e.g., LinkedIn Generative AI for Marketing course). Students were asked to develop an initial prompt and then improve it for three different tasks (developing a keyword research strategy for search engine marketing, developing a consumer profile, and creating a presentation outline for a social media plan). Student reflections on the assignment were collected to get an initial baseline of students' insights on the assignment and to gather more information about the ways in which they use generative AI tools. Based on this feedback and the literature to date, the researchers are developing a survey to more deeply understand marketers', educators', and students' perspectives about generative AI tools including (1) how the tools are currently being used and expected future use, (2) the challenges with the use of generative AI, and, (3) specific to marketers, what resources (e.g., websites, content sources) educators can utilize to adapt the assignment from year to year, since periodically consulting with practitioners may not be feasible. This feedback is not only useful for revising this prompt engineering assignment but also provides educators a deeper understanding of the commonalities and differences that exist among the different groups (marketers, faculty, students) in their outlooks related to the use and challenges of generative AI tools for marketing.

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THE ROLE OF CLIENT PROJECTS IN LAUNCHING CAREERS FOR WOMEN GRADUATES

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POSITION PAPER

Women outnumber and, by most accounts, academically outperform men in college (Fry, 2022); however, when they graduate, they enter a workplace that in many ways is stacked against them. In most industries, leadership is overwhelmingly male and hence lacking in female role models and mentors (AAUW, 2020). Bias toward male leaders persists, and men tend to receive more actionable guidance and career mentorship than women (Braun et al., 2017). In addition, the qualities that lead to academic success for women may not be the same that lead to workplace success, which tends to reward displays of confidence (Nasher, 2019). The result of this environment can mean fewer women with interest or self-efficacy in leadership positions, and fewer women actually achieving these roles. Colleges and universities have an opportunity and obligation to understand the challenges facing women college graduates and to provide programs and experiences to set them up for success. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), there is a gap between recent graduates' career readiness competencies and employers' needs (Collins, 2022). In short, there is a need to better prepare students for the workplace, particularly women.

A strategy in higher education that can increase career readiness in students is course-embedded client-based projects (CBPs), a subset of experiential learning. Through working with real clients, students apply their content knowledge to actual business challenges and collaborate with peers, faculty, and external professionals, increasing their professional readiness and self-efficacy (Beaupre et al., 2023). The authors of this paper assert that CBPs can be especially effective in preparing female students to succeed in their post-college careers.

Generally, leadership is associated with traditionally masculine characteristics such as risk-taking and assertiveness (Castaño et al., 2019). A recent data analysis of nearly 30,000 employees at a large corporation found that despite receiving higher performance ratings, women were rated lower than male counterparts on their "potential," leading to slower promotions (Benson et al., 2023). Women's self-efficacy and ambition can be negatively impacted by this environment (Beaupre, 2022). Increasing women's self-efficacy could improve their early career growth and help to counter some of the biases they may face (Nasher, 2019). Young men tend to have higher self-confidence than their female counterparts, but that reverses as women gain experience (Zenger, 2019).

The authors hypothesize that female students who participate in CBPs have greater self-confidence in the job interviewing, onboarding process, and early career success. The proposed study will explore the experiences of women who graduated from college in the past two to three years and who participated in CBPs in college. This multi-method research will utilize both phenomenological qualitative and unobtrusive research techniques and will center on the importance of direct, firsthand experiences (Tuohy et al., 2013).

Unobtrusive research will include an analysis of LinkedIn profiles of female college graduates in the last one to five years, who participated in CBPs in college. This will enable the authors to gather insights, trends, or data related to various aspects such as skills, networking patterns, and career trajectories. The use of phenomenology as a method provides a profound understanding of human experiences; however, its drawbacks include issues related to subjectivity, generalizability, complexity, and resource requirements, among others.

While CBP experiences offer valuable learning opportunities, they also come with some challenges that educators must carefully consider and plan to ensure that the end result is effective and beneficial to all stakeholders. Among those challenges are aligning academic and client goals; variability in client engagement and commitment; resource constraints such as time, funding, and materials; scaffolding client projects through a curricular lens; group dynamics and team management; and assessment and grading.

Future research could investigate whether CBPs are more crucial for the success of marginalized or underrepresented populations. Future research should explore a broader range of populations, such as men, Hispanic, or first-generation graduates. This research could also be extended to other types of university graduates to determine if university size, reputation, focus, and mission affect the value of CBPs for recent graduates.

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LEADING GLOBAL BRANDS' SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

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POSITION PAPER

COVID-19 significantly impacted businesses and consumer behavior. The crucial role of social media in crisis management emerged as consumers sought information, support, and connection. Despite this, research remains limited in comprehensively examining how global businesses across different industries have responded to the consumers' various needs impacted by the crisis. Terror Management Theory (TMT) proposes that crises increase mortality awareness, which can trigger existential terror. To mitigate this terror, people develop buffering systems, such as upholding self-esteem, reinforcing cultural worldviews, and nurturing close relationships (Greenberg et al., 1997). TMT's dual-process model further explains these defense mechanisms, distinguishing between proximal defenses (conscious death awareness leading to rational strategies like health promotion or distraction) and distal defenses (unconscious death thoughts leading to value validation and meaning-seeking) (Pyszczynski et al., 1999). The COVID-19 pandemic activated proximal responses highlighting immediate safety as well as distal responses seeking self-worth and a sense of meaning and belonging. We apply TMT to examine how global brands address existential threats and manage the crisis on social media. Using thematic analysis of brands' messages on X (formally known as Twitter), we identify dominant themes that garnered significant engagement and explore how brands integrate TMT-based coping strategies in social media communications. We selected the top ten brands from Kantar BrandZ's 2020 list of most valuable global brands. We retrieved original tweets shared from March 11 to September 10, 2020. The final sample included 98 brands across 11 industries. We analyzed up to ten of the most engaging tweets from each brand, totaling 965 tweets. We found four main topics with 18 underlying themes.

In Topic 1, COVID-19 Communication and Initiatives, six themes emerged. Theme 1A highlighted companies' operational and adaptive strategies responding to COVID-19. Many brands (e.g., Nike, Lululemon, Adidas, Cinemark) addressed public concerns through operational changes, prioritizing safety. Hospitality brands (e.g., Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott) highlighted cleanliness protocols. Many brands (e.g., L'Oréal, Volvo, H&M) pivoted operations to produce masks and hand sanitizer, showcasing operational adaptability. Theme 1B emphasized social support and well-being. Brands (e.g., Nike, Volvo, Facebook) advocated public health messages and supported social welling (e.g., Lululemon, Facebook). Theme 1C recognized the contributions of essential workers. Brands (e.g., Volvo, Tencent Global, Kraft Heinz) expressed gratitude to healthcare and frontline workers. Theme 1D showcased brands' involvement in COVID-related relief through donations. Actions included financial contributions (e.g., Under Armour, Ralph Lauren), product donations (e.g., Alibaba, Estée Lauder, Uniqlo, McCain Foods), and resource support (e.g., Hilton, Facebook), each tailored to the brand's capabilities. Theme 1E highlighted collaborative efforts in addressing COVID-19 challenges. Adidas and Volkswagen partnered to produce protective gear, and Tencent and Fosun supplied global medical necessities, addressing pandemic challenges and safety needs. Lastly, Theme 1F focused on prompt responses to consumer concerns amid pandemic-related service changes. From a TMT perspective, aligning brand communications with consumer needs during such existential threats enhances customer relations and crisis management (Verlegh et al., 2021). Brands adopting prevention measures and promoting community values drive consumer engagement. Creating virtual communities and acknowledging essential workers cater to the consumers' connection needs. Additionally, brands participating in prosocial actions such as donations resonate with consumers seeking meaning and purpose in challenging times (Jin & Ryu, 2022).

In Topic 2**,** Social and Environmental Issues, five themes emerged. Theme 2A centered on racial and ethnic equality, with many brands supporting the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and committing to anti-racism efforts (Dove, Nike, Garnier, Hampton by Hilton). Theme 2B highlighted sustainability initiatives, focusing on climate change and net zero pledges. Brands (e.g., Unilever, Danone, Amazon, Ford, Ikea, Volvo) communicated their environmental commitments. Theme 2C showcased brands supporting a variety of other causes, including American

Cancer Society (CVS, Gilette), Accessibility Awareness (Facebook), Child Poverty/Red Nose Day (Walgreens), Youth Day (Nestle), Food Insecurity/Feeding America (Kraft Heinz), and DACA (Amazon). Theme 2D highlighted messages of inclusion and support for the LGBTQ+ community. Lastly, Theme 2E underscored support for various social and environmental issues/causes, often with donations. From a TMT perspective, by addressing important social and environmental issues and engaging in benevolent initiatives, businesses can strengthen their connection with consumers, affirming their role as valuable societal contributors during crises (Jin & Ryu, 2022).

In Topic 3, Product/Brand Promotion, five themes emerged. Theme 3A included standard product-centric promotions without specific COVID-19 reference. Many brands (e.g., Dior, Zara, Ford, Porsche) featured new launches, while media companies (e.g., Netflix, Disney) leveraged increased viewership due to stay-at-home orders. Hospitality brands (e.g., Shangrila, Hampton) promoted COVID-safe travel options. Theme 3B involved celebrity endorsements and pop culture content. Brands (e.g., Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Nike, Under Armour) featured celebrities (e.g., BTS, Harry Styles) or athletes (e.g., Tom Brady, Michael Jordan). Theme 3C covered consumer-involved promotions such as sweepstakes, contests, and giveaways (e.g., Bud Light, Toyota, Pepsi). Theme 3D focused on products and services related to the COVID-19 crisis. Many brands (e.g., Lululemon, Victoria's Secret) promoted face masks, while others (e.g., Facebook, BMW) offered products or services for connection, showing empathy, and acknowledging community needs during the difficult times. Lastly, Theme 3E highlighted collaborations for new launches, including co-branded products with designers, celebrities, and organizations (e.g., Budweiser and Messi, Estee Lauder and the Met Museum, Airbnb, and Blockbuster). In line with TMT, promotional messages provide a break from pandemic realities, offering familiarity and a sense of normality. Engaging with these messages can alleviate death fears, reinforcing cultural worldviews and enhancing self-esteem.

In Topic 4, Social Engagement, two themes emerged. Theme 4A involves engaging audiences with entertaining and relatable content. Brands (e.g., Netflix, Walmart, Dr. Pepper) used light-hearted, humorous messages to entertain rather than sell. In line with TMT, this strategy helps foster connections between brands and consumers (Greenberg et al., 1997). Theme 4B focused on informational content such as updates on earnings, profitability, and company news. This strategy can address consumers' need for continuity by offering information that signals corporate stability (Greenberg et al., 1997).

This study offers a unique contribution to the literature on crisis management and communication by identifying engaging social media communication strategies used by 98 global brands across 11 industries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Using thematic analysis on highly engaging posts, we identified four dominant topics with 18 underlying themes. Among these, product/brand promotion emerged as the most salient topic, followed by COVID-19 related communication and initiatives, social and environmental issues, and social engagements. Connection was a common theme across all topics. Our findings, framed within TMT, offer valuable guidance for organizations aiming to connect with consumers on social media during crises, helping them respond to consumer concerns and maintain engagement amid heightened mortality saliences.

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AI AND MARKETING ENVIRONMENT IN 2028-2033 -- OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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POSITION PAPER

In the realm of technological innovation, a radical phenomenon has gained raging attention. Artificial intelligence (AI) is redefining human interactions with machines. This is a groundbreaking concept which involves the development of computer systems that possess the ability to expand the human intelligence. These systems can process data, identify various patterns, make decisions, and also perform tasks that were cognitive to humans alone (Kumar, 2023). Artificial Intelligence is the revolution, which continually pushes its boundaries of what machines can achieve and it is developing a future where technology and human intelligence is integrated. Among a very long list of applications, for example, AI is used in healthcare (Paul et al., 2020), finance (DMahbub, 2023), transportation (Frank & Frank, 2023), entertainment, manufacturing, and lots more (Simplilearn, 2023). Artificial intelligence has significant impact on numerous facets of corporate operations and strategy (Ditty, 2023), innovation and product development, decision-making and insights-seeking (Haleem et al., 2021), customer engagement (Rafalski & Netguru, 2023), and market position, positioning and competitiveness (AI-powered Marketing, 2023). The product life cycle of offerings will highly likely be shortened significantly.

In addition, AI provides opportunities for enhanced quality of life (Ali et al., 2022), augmented decision-making (Gülen, 2022), economic growth (The Economic Potential, 2023), socio-economic development (Atske, 2022), global competency, and fosters conservation and sustainability. Artificial intelligence creates challenges too. Automation leads to job displacement. AI automates normal and repetitive operations, displacing workers in industries such as manufacturing, data input, and customer support. Predictive maintenance powered by artificial intelligence eliminates the need for human inspections and maintenance chores, affecting jobs in conventional maintenance industries (Bangalore, 2023). If potential customers do not have adequate income, market size can dwindle. After all, a prospective customer needs to be aware of the product, prefer the product, and most importantly have the financial resources to buy the product.

AI needs workforce upskilling and reskilling to adapt to new tasks that require digital literacy, data analysis, and AI-related knowledge (Elephant, 2023). Automation and robotics are reshaping manufacturing jobs, with an emphasis on AI monitoring and maintenance (Bajwa et al., 2021). To prepare the workforce for AI-related professions, governments and companies should engage in education and training programs. To address the changing nature of employment and preserve employees' rights in the AI era, appropriate labor rules and regulations must develop. AI is highly likely to cause job displacement (Brookings, 2022), ethical concerns (Brookings, 2023), excess dependency on AI and destruction of individual critical skills (Marr, 2023), economic disparity between countries (IMF, 2020), and security risks such as hacking and stealing of confidential information.

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AN OUTLOOK INTO DESIGNING RENEWABLE AND SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS TO FULFILL TRANSPORTATION ENERGY NEEDS

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POSITION PAPER

In recent decades, the extensive utilization of fossil fuels, especially in transportation, has raised significant concerns about energy security and the environment. This is primarily due to the non-renewable nature of fossil fuels and the considerable emissions of greenhouse gases they produce. Consequently, nations worldwide have been actively seeking alternative, renewable energy sources to complement traditional fossil fuels in the transportation sector. Biofuels, produced from various biomasses including first, second, and third-generation sources, have gained acceptance as a short-term transitional solution toward renewable and sustainable options for conventional vehicles. For a more enduring transition, electric vehicles powered by electricity derived from renewable and sustainable sources have gained widespread global acceptance.

Despite the emergence of various alternatives in recent years, uncertainties persist regarding the economic, environmental, and social benefits associated with these options. Therefore, the objective of this proposal is to identify numerous energy alternatives for transportation and understand their supply chain intricacies. It will provide literature insights on supply chain configurations, incorporating relevant and current strategies and tactics such as industrial symbiosis, circular economy, and operational hedging. Furthermore, the study will explore the impacts of sustainability policies and supply chain risks associated with energy supply chains. Various methodologies for evaluating and optimizing supply chains necessary for producing transportation fuel, along with considerations of sustainability trade-offs, will also be discussed.

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NAVIGATING COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF IN-STORE SHOPPING PREFERENCES OF BLACK CONSUMERS AT BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES

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POSITION PAPER

Black-owned businesses play a significant role in their communities, but they face unique challenges and opportunities in attracting and retaining Black consumers (Fairlie & Robb, 2008; Leppert, 2023; Perry et al., 2022). The historical and socio-economic context of Black-owned businesses in the US is complex and deeply intertwined with issues of racial equity and community development (Cox & Edwards, 2022). While there is a growing body of literature examining entrepreneurship among Black business owners, there remains a gap in understanding the consumer behavior of Black shoppers within these establishments (Bates & Robb, 2014). Despite shifts in the retail landscape, fueled by the surge of online shopping, in-store experiences remain crucial for many consumers. Black-owned businesses often serve as cultural and economic anchors in their communities (Bates & Robb, 2014; Leppert, 2023; Perry et al., 2022). Understanding the shopping preferences of Black consumers at these businesses can provide insights into how these enterprises can thrive.

Previous research has indicated that consumer behavior is often driven by cultural identity and the desire to support businesses that align with personal and community values (Thomas & Carpenter, 2013). For Black consumers, this may include a preference for products that cater to their needs and a shopping environment that reflects their cultural heritage (Harris-Lacewell, 2004). Despite the importance of Black-owned businesses, there is limited research on the in-store shopping preferences of Black consumers within these spaces (Washington, 2018). These studies focus on quantitative data regarding shopping experiences and what consumers are looking for, but there is a gap in understanding the nuanced, qualitative aspects of Black consumers' shopping experiences, specifically at Black-owned businesses. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing a deeper understanding of the qualitative factors that influence Black consumers' choices and satisfaction when shopping at Black-owned businesses.

The research is expected to reveal key insights into the shopping preferences of Black consumers at Black-owned businesses. It will identify the elements of the in-store experience that are most valued by this demographic group, including aspects related to customer service, product assortment, cultural relevance, and store ambiance. Insights that could help Black entrepreneurs and Black-owned businesses enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty when targeting the Black consumer market would also be captured in this study.

The findings of this study will be valuable for Black-owned businesses seeking to improve their in-store experience and align their services with the expectations of their target market. Additionally, the research will contribute to the broader understanding of Black consumer behavior within the context of Black entrepreneurship and Black business ownership, potentially informing future studies and business strategies.

The shopping preferences of Black consumers at Black-owned businesses reflect cultural, economic, and social dynamics. Understanding these preferences is crucial for Black entrepreneurs, policymakers, and marketers aiming to create more inclusive economic growth. This literature review explores the themes that have emerged in the literature, including cultural relevance and identity, customer service, product assortment, store environment, community engagement.

Several studies have emphasized the importance of cultural relevance in attracting minority consumers (Darko et al,, 2022; Seock, 2009). In a report conducted by partners at the McKinsey Institute for Black Economic Mobility, Aboagye, Burns, Lyn, Muvezwa, Prince, and Sibanda (2023) found that Black shoppers are more likely to patronize stores that reflect their cultural identity and offer products that cater to their specific needs. Similarly, Burns, Darko, Luckie, Stewart III, and Zegeye (2023) highlighted that the cultural connection between Black consumers and Black-owned businesses can foster a sense of community and loyalty.

The quality of customer service is a significant factor in the shopping preferences of Black consumers. Noel, Prince, Providence, Stewart III, Rikuda, and Zegeye (2021) revealed that personalized and respectful customer service is highly valued and can play a role in the decision to shop online instead. Moreover, Pittman (2020) noted that Black consumers often seek a shopping environment where they feel welcomed, valued, and understood, which can be more prevalent in Black-owned businesses.

Product assortment is another critical aspect of in-store shopping preferences. Burns et al. (2023) found that Black consumers prefer stores that offer a wide range of products that cater to their specific preferences, including hair care, beauty, and fashion items that are culturally relevant. This preference underscores the need for Black-owned businesses to carefully curate their product offerings to meet the expectations of their clientele.

The ambiance and layout of the store can also play a role in attracting Black consumers. Although research on Black American consumers is limited in this area, previous research such as studies conducted by Dabija and Babut (2014) identified that a well-organized, and aesthetically pleasing store environment is important to shoppers. Additionally, the inclusion of cultural elements in the store design can enhance the shopping experience and create a welcoming atmosphere.

Black consumers often view their patronage of Black-owned businesses as a form of community support. Burns et al. (2023) and Darko et al. (2022) found that consumers are more likely to shop at businesses that actively engage with and give back to the local community. This engagement can take various forms, including hosting community events, supporting local causes, and providing a platform for local artists and entrepreneurs.

The literature suggests that Black consumers have distinct in-store shopping preferences when it comes to Black-owned businesses. Cultural relevance, customer service, product assortment, store environment, and community engagement are key factors that influence their shopping behavior. However, the existing research examines this from the context of quantitative data. Qualitative studies that examine shopping preferences of Black consumers, such as Pittman (2020), do not include Black-owned businesses and address the shopping experience from a discriminatory context. These preferences are not merely a reflection of consumer behavior trends that span across different demographics but are distinct and require a nuanced approach to be effectively addressed by Black-owned businesses. The position advocated here is that Black-owned businesses need qualitative research to uncover these preferences and implement strategies that resonate with the Black community to foster a supportive and loyal customer base.

The study will employ a qualitative research design, using semi-structured interviews and focus groups to collect data from Black consumers. Participants will be recruited through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of Black consumers in terms of age, gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with approximately participants to gain in-depth insights into individual experiences and preferences. Focus groups will be organized with 4-5 groups of 8-10 participants to facilitate discussions and identify common themes and differences in opinions among Black consumers. Thematic analysis will be used to analyze the data. This will involve coding the data, identifying patterns, and grouping codes into themes that emerge from the interviews and focus groups.

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AI IN SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: EXPANDING INTO STRATEGIC APPLICATIONS

Ursula Sullivan, Northern Illinois University

PANEL POSITION PAPER

In this panel presentation, I consider the various applications that AI seems to be assisting supply chain management beyond the realm of routine. While some of the applications in routine matters—including identifying sources of supply, executing on contractual terms, and supplier updates—have proven to be quite extensive, the real value comes in the form of strategic assessment of the full supply chain. I examine a couple of cases of corporate use of AI in conducting strategic evaluation of the supply chain and offer a research agenda for empirically testing the adoption of AI across industries.

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BRAND SPONSORSHIP AND THE ISSUES SURROUNDING WOMEN ONLY LEAGUES IN BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP IN ESPORTS: A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE ON PROFESSIONAL ESPORTS

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

Esports, or competitive video gaming, has seen a meteoric rise in popularity over the past decade. The economic success of esports represents more than a billion dollars in 2022 for various stakeholders in the ecosystem (Statista, 2023). The esports industry is booming, with millions of viewers worldwide and multi-million-dollar prize pools. Despite its global growth, the professional esports scene is predominantly male. This gender disparity raises important questions about inclusivity and equality in this rapidly growing industry. Successfully marketing a brand in esports presents a distinctive set of issues that demand a clear understanding of the ecosystem and requires targeted strategic approach. The intersection of technology, culture, and a diverse audience poses both challenges and opportunities for brands seeking to establish a foothold within the esports industry. One of the suggested strategies to improve diversity is for brands to sponsor women only leagues (Nordland, 2023; Saskia, 2023; Shames, 2021). Sponsors should be aware that, while women only leagues play an important role in promoting female participation in esports, they do not necessarily resolve gender inequality.

Women remain underrepresented at the highest levels of esports competition. Women make up less than 1% of professional players and women in the workforce is estimated to be around 5%. (Esports, 2024). This disparity is not due to a lack of interest or skill. Gender based physical differences are not prevalent in esports, unlike many traditional sports (Rogstad, 2021). Women are just as capable and passionate about gaming as their male counterparts. It is reported that females make up 46% of gamers (Clement, 2023).

One of the main barriers is the hostile environment women encounter in the gaming community (Khundrakpam & Sarmah, 2023). Harassment, sexism, and discrimination are common experiences for many female gamers. This toxicity can deter women from pursuing a career in esports. Moreover, the lack of representation and visibility of women in esports perpetuates a vicious cycle. The absence of female role models in the scene can discourage aspiring female gamers from pursuing esports professionally. Stereotypes play a significant role in the gender inequity in esports. The stereotype that gaming is a "male hobby" is still prevalent. This leads to the marginalization of female gamers and contributes to the gender disparity in professional esports. Finally, the media often portrays female gamers in a stereotypical or sexualized manner, which can further alienate women from the esports community. These stereotypes not only discourage women from participating but also trivialize their skills and contributions.

Women only leagues in professional esports have emerged as a response to the underrepresentation and marginalization of women in this rapidly growing industry. These leagues aim to provide a safe and supportive environment for female players, free from harassment and toxicity often encountered in mixed-gender leagues. They also seek to highlight the skills and capabilities of female players, challenging the stereotype that women are inherently less skilled at esports than men. However, the establishment of women only leagues can inadvertently reinforce gender segregation and the notion of esports as a male-dominated field. By segregating female players into separate leagues, the underlying message could be interpreted that women are not capable of competing at the same level as men. This segregation can limit the visibility of female players in mainstream esports and restrict their opportunities for advancement. Moreover, women-only leagues can inadvertently contribute to the "othering" of female players. By distinguishing between "regular" (implicitly male) esports leagues and "women's" leagues, female players are marked as the "other," reinforcing the notion of male players as the norm. This can perpetuate stereotypes about the abilities of female players and reinforce the gender hierarchy in esports. Furthermore, women-only leagues do not address the root causes of gender inequality in esports, such as gender bias, harassment, and the lack of institutional support for female players. Without addressing these underlying issues, women only leagues can only provide a temporary solution. To achieve true gender equality in esports, it is crucial to address the root causes of gender inequality and promote inclusivity at all levels of the industry. This includes implementing strict anti-harassment policies, promoting equal opportunities, and challenging gender stereotypes.

In conclusion, the dilemma for brands is whether they should focus their sponsorships on women only leagues or on the teams that include women in their rosters. Addressing gender inequity in esports is not just a social issue, but a business one. Brands that recognize this and take steps to promote gender equity in their esports sponsorships stand to benefit in terms of their image, market reach, and long-term sustainability.

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THE EFFECT OF AGE OF THE PRODUCT ON ONLINE OPINION

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

More than a quarter of all American adults post online ratings of products in diverse categories like consumer-packaged goods, books, movies and automobiles. Not surprisingly, the large volume and diversity of online ratings has attracted the attention of marketing scholars (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006, Chintagunta et al., 2010, Dellarocas & Narayanan, 2006, Liu, 2006, Zhu & Zhang, 2010). Most of the research has focused on online consumer ratings of products such as books, movies and personal care items where the product is fully consumed within a short period. For instance, a typical movie may be fully watched within a two to three hour or even shorter period. Similarly, a book may be read in a few days or, possibly, few weeks or months. Consumers' evaluations of such products are, therefore, likely to be based on having consumed the entire product and experienced most or all of its attributes.

In contrast to categories consumed within a short period, products like automobiles and appliances are used over many years and "their consumption unfolds over time." As a result, depending on when they rate the product, consumers may or may not have had the opportunities to fully learn about all of its attributes. How consumers rate the product, whether they consider some or all of its attributes in their ratings, and the roles that the attributes play in the ratings, may therefore be affected by when the product was launched and when it is rated, and how frequently they have been exposed to various attributes before they give their rating. If the product is rated when it is new, for instance, the ratings may be based on its design and visual appeal because the raters would not have had the opportunities to learn about its durability and quality. On the other hand, if the product is rated after they have used the product for some time, raters may also consider additional information that they acquired since the product was first introduced, for instance, regarding its durability and quality.

In this research, we investigate whether a durable good's age, i.e., the number of days since its launch to when it is rated, affects how it is rated by its owners. Additionally, we examine if age affects which of the good's attributes have a bigger role in how it is rated. The specific focus of our investigation is online ratings of automobiles by owners and how the roles of design and quality in those ratings evolve over the age of the car. These are critical questions for the auto industry for two reasons. First, most buyers of new cars today consider reviews and ratings of other consumers as important to their purchase decision. For instance, the research firm, J. D. Power and Associates reports that "79 percent of new-vehicle buyers use the Internet" to research models and that most of them do so for "reading vehicle ratings and reviews". It is therefore important for auto manufacturers to understand how the ratings for their products evolve as they age and how product attributes affect owner ratings.

Overall, we expect the automobile models to be rated lower as they age since owners would have had opportunities to learn more about their quality, reliability or durability and also because, owners may experience some problems with their cars as they age. Additionally, we anticipate the role of design in ratings to be stronger when a car is new but decrease as it ages. In contrast, quality should have a weaker role on ratings for new cars but gain prominence as they get older. Our results suggest that an increase in the age of cars does lead to lower ratings. Additionally, we find that the relative influence of design and quality indeed follow the expected pattern – while design has a larger effect on consumers' online ratings during the early years of the cars, quality plays a bigger role as the cars age.

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TEACHING DIGITAL MARKETING ANALYTICS AND ARTIFICIAL INTILLIGENCE

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PANEL POSITION PAPER

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into digital marketing education heralds a pivotal transformation in teaching methodologies, compelling educators to embrace innovative instructional strategies that mirror the rapid evolutions within the digital domain. This paradigm shift underscores the critical need for a curriculum that transcends traditional theoretical frameworks to incorporate practical, hands-on experiences with AI tools. As noted by Smith and Jones (2020), the effective incorporation of AI technologies in education not only enhances learning outcomes but also equips students with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the digital marketing landscape. The urgency for such an educational overhaul is further amplified by the burgeoning demand for professionals adept at leveraging AI for strategic marketing decision-making.

The digital marketing sphere is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by AI's capabilities to process and analyze data at unprecedented scales. Data is at the heart of modern digital marketing, and AI's ability to process and analyze large datasets has revolutionized this domain. In teaching digital marketing, there's now a strong emphasis on data literacy. Students learn how to interpret and utilize data to inform marketing strategies, understanding how AI algorithms can identify patterns, trends, and insights from vast amounts of information. Courses now often include modules on using AI for customer segmentation, where AI helps in breaking down a large customer base into specific groups based on various criteria like behavior, demographics, and purchase history. This segmentation allows for more targeted and effective marketing efforts. Additionally, predictive analytics, a key application of AI, is taught to forecast future trends and customer behaviors, enabling proactive rather than reactive marketing strategies. This revolution necessitates a marketing workforce proficient in AI technologies; however, there exists a conspicuous educational gap. Many academic institutions continue to offer curricula that emphasize theoretical knowledge, with minimal exposure to the practical application of AI tools. This disconnect between academic preparation and industry requirements poses significant challenges for graduates entering the workforce. As highlighted by Johnson et al. (2021), bridging this gap is imperative for developing a cadre of marketing professionals capable of employing AI tools for data-driven strategies, customer segmentation, and predictive analytics.

To bridge this gap, the curriculum should be designed to offer practical, hands-on experience with AI tools such as CRM systems, programmatic advertising platforms, and AI-driven social media analytics tools. For instance, students learn to use AI for crafting personalized marketing campaigns, where AI algorithms analyze customer data to tailor messages to individual preferences. They also get to work with AI-powered content creation tools that can generate basic marketing copy or suggest content improvements. This hands-on approach not only familiarizes students with the tools themselves but also with the underlying principles of AI that drive these technologies, such as machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics. This involves not only teaching the technical aspects of these tools but also embedding ethical considerations and privacy concerns into the curriculum to prepare students for the complexities of modern digital marketing practices.

Several challenges arise in the integration of AI into digital marketing education, including keeping the curriculum updated with the latest AI advancements, ensuring students have access to the necessary tools and technologies, and addressing the ethical implications of AI in marketing. Additionally, fostering a classroom environment that encourages experimentation and innovation while navigating these complex tools and concepts presents a significant pedagogical challenge.

Future research should explore effective strategies for integrating AI tools into digital marketing curricula in ways that are both engaging and informative. This includes investigating the pedagogical approaches that best facilitate hands-on learning and the development of ethical reasoning skills among students. Furthermore, research could examine how to effectively address the challenges of access to technology and keeping course content current with the fast-paced evolution of AI in marketing.

With the power of AI comes great responsibility, especially in terms of ethics and privacy. Digital marketing classes now dedicate significant time to these topics, teaching students about the ethical implications of using AI in marketing. This includes discussions on topics such as the potential biases in AI algorithms, the importance of using data ethically, and the need to respect consumer privacy. Courses also delve into the legal aspects, covering regulations like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union, and other similar laws worldwide that impact how marketers can use AI and data. Students are taught to critically analyze the ethical considerations of marketing campaigns and to develop strategies that are not only effective but also respectful of consumer rights and ethical standards. This focus is preparing a new generation of marketers who are not only skilled in using AI but are also aware of the broader implications of their work.

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SCANDINAVIAN SUSTAINABILITY: A TEACHING MOMENT

Dennis Sandler, Pace University
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PANEL POSITION PAPER

Sustainability is a topic receiving increased attention both in the academic world and in business organizations. (Haidar 2021). Starting in the 1960s with stand-alone financial reports to stakeholders, increased regulations and social sensibilities have resulted in more elaborate reporting and corporate activities. Universities have also increased sustainability topics in course offerings. This paper reports on one university's attempt to give students a first-hand perspective on foreign sustainability thoughts and activities in the Scandinavian countries of Denmark and Sweden.

One widely accepted definition of sustainability outlined in the 1987 Brundtland report is "development focused on meeting present needs without compromising the inherent ability to meet the future needs of future generations." In 1997 the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) created rules and regulations for reporting, The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility transitioned to sustainability (Watts and Holme, 1999). In 2015 the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), along with the 2023 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Pace University is a large, urban university with a diverse student body. It offers several study-abroad options, one of which is a faculty-led Field Trip. It also has a Center for Sustainable Business. The authors led a group of students on a 12-day Field Trip to Denmark and Sweden, following classroom sessions and a visit to the Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce in New York. Corporate and government websites were reviewed before travel to examine sustainability information.

Visits in Denmark included the Copenhagen Business School's Center for Sustainability, Maersk (the largest shipping company), and Copenhagen Capacity (an economic development group). In Sweden, Electrolux, SEBank, Sandvik (a B-to-B engineering firm), and Vattenfall (an energy company) were among the visits. Discussions included Vattenfall prioritizing 6 SDG goals, the bank encouraging sustainable entrepreneurship, and Electrolux reimagining the kitchen for more sustainable eating.

A wrap-up class session was held upon return to the university. A final paper was due discussing the themes of the course.

Questions for discussion: How are we teaching about sustainability? How does the US compare with other countries with respect to sustainability? Will the world political situation divert attention from sustainable development? Experiences outside the classroom, especially foreign travel, enhance student's learning. Further research on student learning and satisfaction would be appropriate.

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BEYOND THE GAME: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF MARKETING, SPORT, AND WELLNESS

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SPECIAL SESSION POSITION PAPER

More than a decade has come and gone since Fullerton & Merz (2008) stated that "there is no consensus as to exactly what is meant by the term sports marketing" (p.90), most sport scholars would still believe this to be true. Sport marketing is a vast and complex segment within the sport industry, and therefore scholars have continued to create longer and more comprehensive definitions. No matter which definition of sport marketing you subscribe to, at the intersection of marketing and sport we generally always find two paths. The first is the marketing *of* sport and the second is marketing *through* sport. Both paths have been "well-traveled" for the last 100 years and have continued to evolve and gain momentum as an important and lucrative industry.

[1] Sport itself is a unique and distinct industry. Some key characteristics that make sport a unique product include but are not limited to sport being intangible & ephemeral, involving strong emotions, being subjective and heterogeneous, generally socially consumed, inconsistent and unpredictable, and being perishable (Dees et al., 2022). As such, psychographic segmentation is often used by sport marketers. Sport teams, sport products, and even participation in sport and fitness oftentimes become a major part of an individual's identity. There are few if any other industries where individuals experience such strong levels of identification and loyalty to a product or organization. While consumers of sport, as participants or spectators, generally both exhibit strong emotional and psychological connections to their team/sport, it's important to remember that their motivations for watching or participating in those sports tend to vary vastly. Therefore, just as with any type of marketing, sport marketers need to understand current and future consumer behavior to better develop marketing strategies.

From trending data, the health-conscious consumer can be characterized by middle to high socio-economic classifications, predominantly female, and college-educated (Clarke et al., 2015). Their consumption behavior is targeted toward the health effects of food or products, activities or products that increase the quality of life (e.g., reduce time or stress), and result in a positive feeling (e.g., pride) (Hayakawa, 2017). American culture has normalized the recreational athlete (Harrison & Smith, 2016). With the growing adult population increasing activity behaviors, trends emerged in holistically healthy behaviors such as nutrition and stress management (Clarke et al., 2015). Consequently, the health-conscious consumer emerged with increasing trends in exercise, nutrition, and holistic health.

Educational institutions must adapt and integrate their curricula to explore sport marketing, health promotion, and consumer behavior. Practical experiences such as internships with sport teams, fitness companies, or marketing agencies specializing in wellness can offer valuable real-world insights and skill development. As technology continues to play a crucial role in these industries, incorporating courses on digital marketing strategies, data analytics, and emerging technologies can ensure that students are equipped with the latest tools and techniques. By embracing the interdisciplinary nature of marketing, sport, and wellness, universities can better prepare students to thrive in careers that span these exciting fields.

At a regional state university in the Midwest, students enrolled in integrated marketing communications, sport marketing, or graphic design collaborated on an integrated marketing communications plan for the 2024 USTAF State and Regional Meet. Logistically, coordinating schedules, aligning goals, and facilitating communication between the classes and the client was essential. Students were able to gain real-world experience and develop teamwork and collaboration skills. The diverse skill sets brought by each discipline resulted in comprehensive integrated marketing communications plans that addressed various aspects of promotion, event planning, and design. That said, managing expectations, balancing the workload across the classes, and ensuring consistent messaging and visual identity throughout the project was challenging.

An ongoing example includes the implementation of a new Sports Media Minor through the collaboration of the university's Art/Digital Media program with the Sports Sciences department. Part of this includes the design of a new prototype Video Journalism & Sports Webcasting/Streaming course which consists of establishing different frameworks for different types of time-based media productions while allowing students the freedom to select and produce content within these formats. The goal is to make the course 100% student-run and produced. This curriculum has resulted in continued student production of the *Wolves Pregame* TV show, aired at the start of every home football and basketball live stream, which reviews prior university sporting events. Additionally, the *Behind the Pack* podcast, currently published via Spotify and YouTube, provides weekly interviews with current university athletes. This prototype course also incorporates video field journalism as individual assignments that cover athletics and general news both on campus and across the community. These news stories make up a more extensive television newscast, segmented by commercial breaks consisting of students' video advertising and promotional spot assignments. The professor and students anticipate adding multi-camera sportscasts of university home soccer events.

The intersection of marketing, sport, and wellness brings both opportunities and challenges. Brands can leverage the aspirational nature of sport and wellness to inspire and motivate consumers toward healthier lifestyles. Advancements in technology provide innovative ways to track, measure, and personalize marketing efforts, enhancing consumer experiences. Overall, effective marketing at this intersection requires a deep understanding of consumer behavior and a willingness to embrace innovation. One challenge is navigating the diverse consumer landscape, where individuals have varying fitness goals, interests in sport, and wellness preferences. Crafting targeted messaging that resonates with these different segments while maintaining authenticity is key. Additionally, the fast-paced nature of sport and wellness trends requires marketers to stay agile and adaptive to remain relevant.

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CULTIVATING CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS IN MULTICULTURAL MARKETING: LET'S CONTINUE

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SPECIAL SESSION POSITION PAPER

In 2021 we started a conversation at the Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Conference focused on our responsibility in business school classrooms to facilitate crucial conversations related to diversity and inclusion in the marketplace with and amongst our students. It is through these conversations that we can raise awareness, grow, and become better leaders. Using Procter & Gamble's model of challenging everyday citizens to engage in conversation about difficult topics, we understand our role as educators is to create environments where students can learn to appreciate diversity in the marketplace. It is my hope to continue these conversations at the spring 2024 Marketing Management Association conference.

While we have offered the Multicultural Marketing course in the Terry College of Business at UGA for almost ten years, it was not until this semester fall 2023 that we took the step toward officially opening the course to non-business majors. In addition, this semester we proposed that the course be added to both the Terry College of Business and UGA Cultural Diversity course lists. The Multicultural Marketing course that I teach is designed such that there are two main growth opportunities: 1) an initiative led by me, as the professor, to ensure students are aware of key issues related to diversity in the marketplace (e.g., discrimination in housing, the "model minority", targeting of vice products, etc.), and 2) an initiative led by each student to choose and take ownership of a diversity-related topic that he/she is interested in. To this day, student-led discussions remain a highlight of the course as there are many issues in which peer-to-peer interaction helps facilitate personal growth. I have observed that students are increasingly open to this type of learning, especially students who have had limited exposure to multicultural issues. These discussions that are initiated and led by students result in personal awakening and growth. A part of my role as instructor is to set the tone in the classroom such that each student's opinion is valued. At the start of the semester, we talk about the importance of mutual respect in the classroom, especially given the sensitive topics that we will discuss. We understand that we will not all agree on topics that we discuss. When we disagree, it is grounds for fruitful discussion, so we are mindful to show respect while holding a differing viewpoint.

I have increasingly found that students continue to have a desire to understand, empathize, and advocate for diversity and inclusion. The conversations that were amped up post the social unrest of 2020 must not stop. It is up to us as educators to create spaces where we allow our future leaders to grow, stretch, and learn. This means that we must continue to immerse ourselves in conversations where we will not have all the answers. When we listen, learn, and grow alongside our students, we put ourselves in a vulnerable position. The resulting impact on the classroom atmosphere is powerful, as it signals to the students that we are in this community-building process together. Let us continue to push the boundaries as educators. Students' increasing awareness of these issues challenges us to ask ourselves what our continued role is in making changes to benefit the next generation. Complacency is not an option. We must continue to create spaces to engage in the necessary conversations where we push beyond our comfort zones. As we do, we take another step toward a just and more inclusive society.

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TOTAL ECLIPSE OF MARKETING: A BRIGHT JOURNEY INTO IMMERSIVE EDUCATION

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SPECIAL SESSION POSITION PAPER

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital marketing, the need for experiential learning has never been more pronounced. Traditional classroom settings often struggle to adequately prepare students for the dynamic challenges and whirlwind scenarios they will face in the real world. Immersive learning, particularly through capstone courses, presents a profound opportunity for students to consolidate theoretical knowledge into tangible projects with real-world implications and client deliverables. As the culmination of their academic journey, capstone projects serve as a bridge between classroom learning and professional application, offering students a platform to demonstrate their critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Engaging in such immersive experiences enables students to confront the complexities and ambiguities inherent in project management, collaboration, and client interaction.

Moreover, the capstone journey is not always linear; it often involves unforeseen challenges, setbacks, and pivots. By navigating the project trajectory with both the client's objectives and learning outcomes in mind, students can thrive, innovate, and emerge as proficient professionals equipped to tackle real-world challenges head-on.

The development of the digital marketing minor program at Ball State University represents a strategic response to the evolving landscape of marketing in the digital age. At the pinnacle of this program stands the MKG 490 Digital Marketing Immersive Capstone course, meticulously crafted to serve as the culminating experience for students. Designed to integrate seamlessly with the preceding four classes in the program, the capstone course provides a unique opportunity for students to scaffold their learning process and apply acquired knowledge in a practical, real-world context. Throughout the minor program, students delve into fundamental concepts, tools, and strategies across various facets of digital marketing, including social media, content creation, analytics, and digital advertising. As they progress through each course, they not only expand their theoretical understanding but also develop hands-on skills through practical assignments and projects. The capstone course serves as the nexus where theoretical foundations converge with applied experiences, empowering students to conceptualize, plan, execute, and evaluate comprehensive digital marketing campaigns. By synthesizing and building upon their accumulated knowledge and experiences, students emerge from the capstone course not only with a robust portfolio of digital marketing expertise but also with the confidence and agility to navigate the complexities of the contemporary marketing landscape. Thus, the Digital Marketing Immersive Capstone course epitomizes the program's commitment to fostering holistic and experiential learning, preparing students to excel as dynamic and adept professionals in the ever-evolving digital marketplace.

We delve into the transformative potential of immersive digital marketing education by presenting a case study of a recent Digital Marketing Capstone project, a student-led promotion of the 2024 eclipse viewing in collaboration with a Main Street Inc. organization. The course, initially designed as a digital marketing class, evolved into a dynamic experience where students actively engaged with the community in promoting a large-scale event expected to draw 20,000 attendees.

The session will provide an overview of the course design, detailing the progression from a traditional digital marketing class to an immersive experience centered around the 2024 eclipse viewing. The shift towards community engagement and event promotion will be discussed, highlighting the collaboration with the Main Street Inc. organization as a pivotal element in providing students with a real-world marketing challenge.

The special session will showcase the management of a 20-student class engaged in hands-on marketing activities for a large-scale event. Attendees will gain valuable insights into the outcomes achieved by students, not just in terms of technical skills but also in terms of project management, teamwork, and community interaction. It will also explore the challenges encountered and lessons learned, understanding the student experience in a high-impact, community-focused learning environment.

Building an immersive class on the fly amidst changing client demands posed a series of formidable challenges throughout the semester. Initially conceived to develop digital assets for small businesses, the project's trajectory shifted abruptly towards promoting the solar eclipse, only to oscillate back to digital assets before ultimately refocusing entirely on the eclipse midway through the semester. This dynamic evolution tested the resilience and adaptability of both students and instructors, as they navigated the turbulent waters of uncertainty and shifting priorities. Amidst the flux, maintaining student organization, ensuring educational value, and managing community partner expectations emerged as paramount concerns. Striving to provide a cohesive learning experience amidst the flux of project iterations, educators grappled with the task of synthesizing diverse concepts and experiences into a cohesive educational framework. Moreover, managing community partner expectations became increasingly challenging as project scopes fluctuated, necessitating clear communication, flexibility, and mutual understanding to sustain collaborative momentum and deliver impactful outcomes. Despite the tumultuous journey, the class served as a testament to the transformative potential of immersive learning, fostering resilience, adaptability, and collaborative problem-solving skills essential for navigating the complexities of real-world projects These challenges will also be explored during the session.

By drawing on the example of this immersive class, we aim to provide educators with insights into the integration of High Impact Practices (HIPs) in higher education. Participants will explore how experiential learning, community partnerships, and project-based assignments can be strategically woven into a course, enriching the educational experience, and preparing students for real-world challenges.

The anticipated outcomes of this special session include a discussion of the benefits and challenges associated with immersive digital marketing education, particularly when applied to community engagement and large-scale event promotion. Educators will leave with practical insights on implementing similar high-impact practices in their courses, fostering a dynamic and experiential approach to digital marketing education.

The impact of learning from a large-scale immersive learning project extends far beyond the confines of the classroom, offering invaluable insights and opportunities for future research. Through hands-on engagement with complex, real-world projects, students gain a nuanced understanding of the inherent flexibility and fluidity required in project management. They learn firsthand that large projects often entail nebulous, hard-to-define deliverables, necessitating adaptability, creativity, and effective communication to navigate uncertainties and achieve desired outcomes. Moreover, the success of a capstone digital marketing course underscores the efficacy of immersive learning in bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application. However, as enrollment in such courses grows, it is imperative to anticipate and address potential challenges, such as scalability issues, resource constraints, and maintaining educational quality amidst increased demand. Future research in this domain should explore strategies for optimizing course design, scaling immersive learning experiences, and leveraging technology to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. By interrogating these complex dynamics and iteratively refining best practices, educators can ensure that immersive learning remains a dynamic and transformative force in higher education, empowering students to thrive in an ever-evolving professional landscape.

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