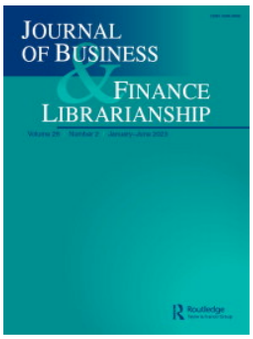

Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wbfl20

Information literacy as a learning outcome in marketing research

Eileen Bridges & Karen MacDonald

To cite this article: Eileen Bridges & Karen MacDonald (2023): Information literacy as a learning outcome in marketing research, Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship, DOI: 10.1080/08963568.2023.2213510

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/08963568.2023.2213510

JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & FINANCE LIBRARIANSHIP
https://doi.org/10.1080/08963568.2023.2213510

Information literacy as a learning outcome in marketing research

Eileen Bridges[a] and Karen MacDonald[b]

[a]Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, USA; [b]University Library, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, USA

ABSTRACT

Becoming familiar with the processes of obtaining information and applying it in new ways are important to learning how to do marketing research. This article describes an innovative approach to developing information literacy through a series of student marketing research projects developed for use in a virtual learning environment. These projects incorporate the latest ideas presented in the marketing education literature; each has clear learning goals and relates student activities to aspects of experiential learning. Thus, the project designs promote information literacy and require students to close the learning loop by communicating marketing research insights in a manner suitable for business managers. The authors recommend that students work individually, rather than in teams, to maximize flexibility and the breadth of learning. Student engagement, enhanced information literacy, and student satisfaction with interactivity and learning from project assignments offer measures of academic success.

KEYWORDS

Asynchronous online teaching; information literacy; marketing research; presentation of findings; secondary data

Introduction

This article describes student projects designed to enhance information literacy; these were developed in 2021 for a fully online, asynchronous undergraduate course in marketing research at a large state university. The course learning objectives are the same online as for the in-person course, and in both cases it is important that student projects enhance understanding of required course content. The projects offer opportunities for experiential learning and address the course objectives through effective implementation of online learning tools and student engagement.

Previous literature highlights the importance of information literacy; for instance, Strittmatter (2012) finds a significant difference between student outcomes for those who did versus did not attend a session on using library research skills before completing an assignment. To reach the goals

CONTACT Eileen Bridges ebridges@kent.edu Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship, Kent State University, 1-330-672-1260, College of Business Building, Terrace at Summit, Kent, OH 44242, USA.

of enhancing information literacy and helping students to learn the necessary marketing research content, the present authors recommend that online students make the most of the virtual environment and engage in self-directed learning. This effort to build self-efficacy in online students can pay off with increased student satisfaction as well as better retention (of both students and course material).

Several authors strongly recommend collaboration between library staff and faculty members, particularly during course development (e.g., Gareau-Brennan & Kung, 2022; Le, Graham, Walker, & Watson, 2022). Following this recommendation, the present authors collaborated to design four innovative marketing research course projects that address specific information literacy goals. These projects maximize the integration of available library resources to promote information literacy, encourage student self-direction and self-efficacy by making them personally responsible for the learning experience, and require students to communicate their project findings in PowerPoint slide decks suitable for presentation to managers. This last step is critical to closing the learning loop, as described in the education literature (Kolb, 1984).

The process used to develop the four course projects was as follows. First, a marketing professor determined the course content to be covered in each of the four projects. Then, the professor and the University business librarian collaborated to determine how library resources could be used to enhance each project and discussed what might be included in custom library websites for each project. Next, the librarian created a course homepage and project-specific websites for each of the four new course projects. (Details are provided later in the article.) Students worked individually, which allowed each of them to optimize their own use of time spent on the course. Not only did this mean they had to be self-motivated, it also permitted each of them to accomplish all of the learning goals, rather than splitting up the tasks with team members and missing the knowledge of some important topics. Finally, students had to carefully select the results from their work to present to managers and design clear and concise slides to do so.

The new course projects were first implemented during the fall semester, 2021, and student feedback (verbatim) was requested twice during the semester. The first feedback request tracked reactions to Project #1, which required students to use library resources to obtain secondary data relevant to a new product decision. In the second feedback request, open-ended questions in the student satisfaction survey provided both positive outcomes and suggestions for improvement. Several of these ideas were implemented in time for the spring semester, 2022, during which the same types of student feedback were again obtained.

This article is organized as follows: the literature review discusses published articles in library science on information literacy and provides

background from the marketing education literature regarding best practices as well as obstacles in teaching of marketing research. Next, designs are provided for the four student marketing research projects (each of which includes a targeted library website), followed by available measures of success and suggestions for improvement. Details of the student projects and links to the library websites are available for readers who are interested in using them in their own courses.

Literature review

Two important literature streams provide background for the present article. The first comes from library and information science, and examines how library materials (especially large databases) can be used to characterize marketplaces and design marketing research studies. It is in this literature that the conceptual development and application of information literacy are found. The second stream is based in the marketing education literature, and focuses on pedagogy for marketing research. Many improvements have been recommended for the marketing research course over the years, but to date few authors have published reports of marketing research courses that directly incorporated the topic of information literacy or using library resources to better understand potential customers, competitors, and environmental issues. The present work addresses the information literacy gap by proposing marketing research course projects combined with dedicated library websites to help students develop necessary information literacy skills and complete course learning objectives.

Efforts to promote business information literacy

The American Libraries Association defines information literacy as a set of skills that include recognizing what information is needed and having the ability to "locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, 2000, p. 2). In the current knowledge-based economy, the right information can establish a strategic marketing advantage; thus, information literacy skills—particularly business information literacy skills—are critically important.

Academic librarians in particular promote information literacy, which is a primary professional objective and the subject of much academic research. In a review of evidence-based research studies published between 1980 and 2009, Fiegen (2011) compiled a list of best practices for business information literacy. She concluded that "collaborative planning with business faculty is critical to identify learning objectives, (obtain) adequate resources, and to scale appropriate activities to the introductory, capstone, or graduate level that will ensure preparation for the successful completion

of the assignment" (Fiegen, 2011, p. 287). In another broad review of the literature on business information literacy, Houlihan, Click, and Wiley (2020) examined 135 peer-reviewed articles published in leading library and information science journals during the years 2000–2019. The publications that provided recommendations for practice were "most frequently related to collaboration and faculty partnerships, teaching methods and strategies, assessment, information literacy skills, information-seeking behavior, and online tutorials" (Houlihan et al., 2020, p. 133). Thus, academics in library science strongly support collaboration between business and library faculty to develop courses that best prepare students for career success.

Unfortunately, such collaboration has not received strong support from business faculty. Based on a study at Pennsylvania State University, Dewald (2005) reported that business faculty do not typically work with librarians to enhance students' understanding and use of library materials. Instead, most permit students to use online search engines to locate information. However, Wu and Lee Kendall (2006, p. 90) surveyed faculty at San Jose State University and discovered that business faculty do expect students "to use library research for their assignments." Furthermore, in a separate survey of librarians at AACSB-accredited colleges and schools of business, Cooney (2005) reported that collaboration between librarians and classroom faculty is rare and called for increased effort in this area. Because librarians are practitioners as well as academics, they frequently write about practical teaching applications that can be useful to faculty (Houlihan et al., 2020). The present article argues that collaboration with librarians can offer substantial benefits to business faculty and students, and provides practical suggestions for doing this.

Depending on course or curriculum requirements, librarians can provide business faculty with customized support ranging from topic-specific library research guides to online learning modules. (1) Librarians can help business faculty develop teaching materials, select and acquire databases, and successfully integrate their use into course materials (Atwong & Heichman Taylor, 2008). Atwong and Heichman Taylor (2008, p. 439) reported that "cooperation between librarian and faculty member was able to give students a realistic expectation of how to use the database while exploring the type of intervention that marketing professionals undertake when employing quantitative measures to predict consumer behavior, define a target market, design advertising campaigns, and create business plans." (2) Collaboration between faculty and business librarians can result in "improvement in the quality of students' research" (Campbell & Cook, 2010, p. 176). (3) Information literacy skills can be successfully incorporated into a business course, according to Price, Becker, Clark,

and Collins (2011). Price et al. (2011, p. 707) observed that librarian–faculty collaboration builds critical information literacy skills, stating "the discipline-specific knowledge of the faculty and the library staff's knowledge of information literacy support and interventions can be brought together to the benefit of students." (4) Finally, Feekery, Chisholm, Jeffrey, and Diesch (2021) engaged collaboration between academic faculty and business librarians to create an online learning module promoting professional information literacy. These authors reported that the combined experience and expertise produced a learning resource that successfully encouraged students to identify relevant information sources and evaluate their quality. Of course, students must also learn to cite their sources.

Although not described here in detail, there are additional articles available in the business education literature that highlight the dual topics of information literacy and use of secondary data in business courses. For instance, Schuster, Anderson, and Brodowsky (2014) recommended using specific questions in secondary data assignments so that students have some direction as to what information to seek. Gil (2019) indicated that information literacy is important in developing a promotional budget. Fowler and Bridges (2017), Fowler, Thomas, and Saenger (2019), and Clarke III and Flaherty (2007) suggested that marketing students read business publications to enhance information literacy. Ashley (2019) used gamification to encourage information literacy in marketing. Neilson (2009) advised faculty to collaborate with a business librarian for a session on new technology-based marketing tools. Finally, Sterngold and Hurlbert (1998) indicated that marketing students need technical, reflective, and professional information literacy skills.

Literature on teaching of topics in undergraduate marketing research

The present article develops innovative student project ideas that make use of library resources to encourage information literacy and bring realism to important course topics in marketing research. Prior literature in marketing was examined to better understand how the marketing research course has evolved over time. The earliest work found on teaching of marketing research dates back nearly 75 years. Luck (1949) interviewed practitioners to identify important course content, finding that the most important skills included: (1) recognizing and defining problems, (2) preparing a good questionnaire, (3) analyzing and interpreting data, (4) correctly performing sampling and statistics, (5) making appropriate use of marketing research methods and techniques, and (6) clearly presenting results. These topics continue to be important to the present day; background on important content areas follows.

Secondary data

Information literacy received an early introduction into marketing research pedagogy: Sparkman (1980) offered a specific project design with learning goals related to locating, assessing, and using secondary data. This author also recommended working with a reference librarian to help students find and analyze relevant data.

During the subsequent two decades, there were only a handful of published articles on marketing research pedagogy, but a large portion of these focused on use of secondary data. For instance, Burger and Schmidt (1987) provided an example of how information literacy and use of secondary data might be incorporated into a student project. They indicated this is important because, although a great deal of information is available, business managers do not know how to choose the best information or integrate it usefully. Hawbaker and Littlejohn (1988) also suggested a secondary research project; their information literacy goals were "to provide not only exposure to the vast array of material available, but also to provide experience in developing a research strategy and practice in following it through with a manageable exercise" (p. 52). These authors observed that skill is required to extract and use pertinent information: for instance, data may be provided at too high a level of aggregation, and students must be able to figure out how to solve such problems. By doing these types of tasks, student use of library resources resulted in greater engagement and sustained learning. Lesch and Hazeltine (1990) asserted that students receive insufficient training in use of secondary data, and suggested a systematic, structured approach in which student perceptions of their own secondary research competencies were measured before and after executing a secondary research project. The findings indicated significant increases in self-perceptions of both familiarity with secondary data sources and use of knowledge.

A subsequent study on use of secondary data in marketing research (Castleberry, 2001) was able to make use of internet-based tools unavailable to earlier authors. Castleberry (2001) recommended a student project to develop information literacy, including skills related to both traditional offline sources and web-based sources. He observed that "the projects assigned either result in too much data to look at or too little data that are helpful…Yet that is exactly how it is in the real world. Students must learn to carefully and methodically sift through the pile of data in the first instance or be persistent and patient in looking for information in the second instance" (Castleberry, 2001, p. 197).

Thus, a number of authors have expressed the importance of including secondary data skills in the marketing research course and suggested that students complete projects requiring them to assess the potential market, competition, and environmental issues in an example industry. Project #1,

described in the present article, relates to use of online tools and databases available in the university library, to help students acquire the necessary information literacy skills to use secondary data.

Qualitative marketing research

The importance of qualitative research skills has been mentioned in the marketing education literature occasionally for over three decades. For instance, Saegert (1991, p. 266) concluded that contemporary marketing research textbook authors erroneously "assign qualitative research to a secondary role" and describe only focus groups, neglecting other essential methods. Other authors have supported increased coverage of qualitative techniques in the marketing research course; for instance, Bridges (1999) recommended teaching specific skills including development of a discussion guide, interviewing, and analysis of qualitative data. Freeman and Spanjaard (2012) found seven times as much quantitative content compared to qualitative content in contemporary marketing research syllabi, and argued for substantially more coverage of qualitative methods.

Student projects can be used to increase coverage of qualitative content, according to Clayton and Hettche (2012). These authors assigned marketing research students to work in pairs to qualitatively evaluate website designs: one used a website and interactively responded to open-ended questions from the other, who used a discussion guide. Thyroff (2019) also observed that qualitative research works well for purposes of experiential learning in the marketing research course. She indicated that there should be more coverage of this important topic and careful training for students, because businesses are making greater use of qualitative research and expertise is needed.

Thus, a number of authors have expressed the importance of developing qualitative research skills in the marketing research course and suggested that students complete projects requiring them to ask open-ended questions to help them better understand customer needs and experiences, and the feelings that go along with them. Project #2, described in the present article, requires students to perform an in-depth interview with a respondent from the target market of interest, and to use appropriate techniques for analysis of the data.

Quantitative marketing research

All of the marketing research syllabi and textbooks examined by Freeman and Spanjaard (2012) included topics related to design of measurement scales and questionnaires, and sampling methods. These topics are at the core of marketing research course objectives, and they offer excellent experiential learning opportunities. For instance, Sun and Ganesh (2014)

suggested a project where a student works with an actual client, including data collection using an online survey and presentation of the findings. Reavey, Zahay, and Rosenbloom (2021) examined job postings for marketing students, finding that such basic research tasks were required along with other responsibilities in 88% of the posts. They concluded that students must learn to identify a research question, write a survey, take a sample and collect data, perform statistical analyses, and interpret and present the results. Peterson (2021) also supported use of student projects for experiential learning; he stated that students need to demonstrate conceptual, empirical, and analytical rigor.

Thus, quantitative research skills are a critical outcome of a course in marketing research. Students need to be able to design suitable questions and measurement scales, to create a questionnaire, and to utilize the resulting quantitative data. Project #3, described in the present article, is both important and ubiquitous: it requires students to design a complete questionnaire that will obtain quantitative results suitable for data analysis and managerial decision making.

Analyzing data and communicating the findings

In a special issue of the *Journal of Marketing Education*, Mills and Hair (2021, p. 279) described the marketing research course as dry and anxiety-inducing, and therefore in need of "structural improvement." Their specific suggestions included increasing the focus on customer insights, emphasizing findings leading to insights, and using data to solve marketing problems.

These recommendations are consistent with those of many earlier authors who called for student projects using data analysis skills to find answers to specific marketing research questions and then clearly presenting the results in formats appropriate for marketing managers (e.g., Burger & Schmidt, 1987; Luck, 1949, 1952; Malhotra, 1992; Malhotra, Tashchian, & Jam, 1989; Perreault, 1992; Peterson, 2021; Ramocki, 1987). As a part of this process, students need to be capable of dealing with ambiguity and complexity, according to Karns (2005). Ramocki (1987) adds that projects offer positive cognitive and behavioral impacts and have a profound effect on student learning; furthermore, presentations of the results are an important part of the learning process.

The ability to analyze data and obtain managerially useful results is an important skill in marketing research. Furthermore, students must be able to present their relevant findings in a manner suitable for use in marketing decision making. Therefore, Project #4, described in this article, includes use of statistical software (SPSS) to analyze quantitative data and a presentation aimed at a marketing manager to summarize the resulting

recommendations. It effectively closes the learning loop by providing the opportunity to draw data-based conclusions and show their impact on managerial decisions.

The next section describes how the four student projects were developed to meet the goals described above. The designs are grounded in insights from the marketing education literature (e.g., Fowler & Bridges, 2012), conversations with faculty and students, and research in library science on information literacy. They also address the four steps needed in experiential learning, according to Kolb (1984).

Design approach

The goal was to design and test four marketing research course projects, one to cover each of the four key topic areas: use of secondary data, qualitative research, quantitative research, and data analysis and communicating the findings. These projects should build information literacy and provide for engaged, experiential learning based on the four steps recommended by Kolb (1984). Specifically, experiential learning and retention best occur if all four steps (in no particular order) are encountered, including concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation, and active testing. Concrete experience requires acquisition of information through direct experience, whereas abstract conceptualization acquires new information indirectly, through structured thought processes. Reflective observation integrates observed information to draw deductive conclusions, whereas active experimentation transforms information inductively, through direct interaction with the environment.

Three to four weeks were allocated for students to complete each of the four projects. The schedule provided for slightly more coverage of secondary data usage and qualitative research methods than is common in marketing research course designs. It did not allow time for hands-on collection of quantitative survey data, but saved time for other learning activities and avoided reinforcing the misperception of many students that a convenience sample is somehow representative of a population. The four project topics included the four major content areas covered in the course: Project #1: Evaluation & Use of Secondary Data, Project #2: Qualitative Marketing Research, Project #3: Quantitative Marketing Research, and Project #4: Data Analysis & Communicating Insights. In addition to covering these topics, each project works to build information literacy and active, engaged learning.

Project #1 – Evaluation & use of secondary data

The first project is perhaps most important to developing information literacy, as it requires students to become familiar with library resources,

find secondary data, and use it to make managerial recommendations. This project provided the inspiration for the library website dedicated to the course; the webpage dedicated to Project #1 may be reached through the following link: https://libguides.library.kent.edu/c.php?g=1127919&p=8415933.

The learning goals for this project include defining a marketing research question, describing a preliminary study design, and engaging in a detailed examination of available secondary data to determine what information is already known. This helps to develop information literacy, which includes finding appropriate information, using it to assess current knowledge, and identifying what remains to be discovered. The deliverable is a scaled-down research proposal presented in a PowerPoint slide deck, which includes a problem statement, research objectives, and situational analysis (potential customers, competitors, and environmental issues) based on secondary information. A complete list of references is also required.

This project provides for experiential learning by making use of Kolb's (1984) four steps as follows. It requires concrete experience; students must acquire information through direct experience, by locating it in the library materials. Students engage in abstract conceptualization, because they use structured thought processes to figure out what they are finding and how it might be useful. Reflective observation integrates the observed information and draws deductive conclusions. Active experimentation may occur if students try using the information they find in different configurations before settling on how it can best be used to address the key marketing research questions. Thus, this project requires active learning processes to strengthen understanding of marketing research concepts related to secondary data, and also increases students' information literacy.

Project #2 – Qualitative marketing research

This project gives students the opportunity to perform their own qualitative marketing research for a service product category by designing an interview guide and interviewing a member of the target market. Each student conducts a substantial recorded interview, transcribes it, and codes it using appropriate qualitative techniques. After analyzing the results, students assemble a PowerPoint slide deck that briefly describes the study and summarizes key categories of results that reflect how the interviewee(s) thinks/feels about the service. This summary should include guidance for design of a quantitative survey as a follow-up study and must include references.

The following link reaches https://libguides.library.kent.edu/c.php?g=1127919&p=8469945, the webpage for Project #2, which offers guidance on analysis of qualitative data. Down the page, there are several recent articles on the topic of using artificial intelligence to code qualitative data.

Experiential learning is front and center in this project. The student acquires information through direct experience by conducting an interview; this is concrete experience. Abstract conceptualization occurs as the student thinks about the results of the interview, most likely during transcription. This conceptualization helps the student to structure and integrate the observed information to draw potential conclusions, in reflective observation. Finally, active experimentation may occur either during or after the interview, to transform the information and inductively pursue conclusive thoughts.

Project #3 – Quantitative marketing research

The goal of this assignment is to design a complete questionnaire that could be used in a representative survey. Students are asked to place questions in correct order, to include proper use of various response scales (with coding), and to explain how the findings will help to address a marketing research problem. In addition, they are required to describe how to draw a sample of respondents from a target market and to include references.

The library webpage for Project #3 offers information about survey design and sampling and includes a link to a video that helps students visualize topics related to statistics and sampling (This webpage may be reached through the following link: https://libguides.library.kent.edu/c.php?g=1127919&p=8472238).

This project offers concrete experience through application of learning about questionnaire design. If additional direct experience is desired, this project could also include practice with data collection. Abstract conceptualization (i.e., acquiring new information indirectly through structured thought processes) may occur through using the course website to find and learn from relevant materials. Reflective observation (i.e., integrating observed information to draw deductive conclusions) may occur when using the learning materials to better understand the reasoning behind questionnaire design and sample selection. Explaining how the data resulting from use of the questionnaire could address marketing decision making provides active experimentation learning, by interacting with the environment.

Project #4 – Analyzing data and communicating insights

Project #4 requires students to use statistical software (SPSS) to analyze survey data from an actual marketing research study (done by others) and then to present findings in a manner suitable for use by managers. Thus, students need to figure out how to interpret the results, and how to present findings in understandable formats.

The library webpage for this project may be reached using the following link: https://libguides.library.kent.edu/c.php?g=1127919&p=8501703. Because students must learn to perform data analyses in SPSS, the library website offers extensive materials for this purpose. Of course, students must reference the learning materials that they use. The project requires students to address a dozen questions from a hypothetical marketing manager based on analysis of the data. The project deliverable is a PowerPoint slide deck providing findings from data analyses that respond to the manager's concerns.

This project offers concrete experience through application of learning about SPSS to analyze survey data. Abstract conceptualization would most likely come first, however, because this learning step allows students to acquire new information indirectly through structured thought processes. This occurs when students use the library materials to learn the basics of using SPSS. Integrating observed information would occur when students examine the results of data analyses to understand what is going on in the marketplace, so this provides reflective observation. Finally, active experimentation could occur when students try different data analysis arrangements to examine different ways of viewing issues in the data set.

Results/findings

To evaluate the success of the four projects in terms of increasing information literacy, several assessments were undertaken. First, student usage of the dedicated library websites for each project was measured and examined. Second, students were asked to respond to an open-ended survey question after completing Project #1 about learning from secondary data, and they received course credit for providing a response. In particular, they were asked about their reactions to the library website for Project #1. Third, student engagement in the projects was assessed, based on the amount of project-related interaction with the instructor both in terms of email volume and (virtual) face-to-face meetings. Finally, students received course credit for providing both compliments and suggestions for improvement in the projects at the end of the course. Details regarding specific assessments of success are provided in this section.

Measures of student usage of the dedicated library websites for the course projects are enlightening. In Project #1, students were required to use library resources to obtain secondary data about the market for a particular type of service. Possibly because of this requirement, 40 out of 53 students (75%) demonstrated use of library databases in their completed projects. This offers a clear indicator of this project's success at enhancing information literacy. On the other hand, for Project #2 there were helpful but not required materials available in the course website, and in this

case, only 10 out of 55 students (18%) used information from the library website in their work. Project outcomes would have been better if more students had made use of materials from the library, especially on topics related to coding of qualitative data.

The websites for Project #3 and Project #4 attracted slightly more interest from students. In Project #3, 12 out of 57 students (21%) used information from the library website in their questionnaire design and sampling work. These topics were also adequately covered in the textbook, so it was not necessary to access library materials to complete the project. Finally, for Project #4, 15 out of 55 students (27%) used information from the library website. Project #4 required students to learn to use SPSS if they had not already done so, and the majority of the materials they referenced were helpful in learning to analyze data using SPSS. These results suggest that student usage of the course project library websites was directly related to their perceived amount of need to do so.

Student responses to open-ended questions about the course projects were obtained at two different time points. Students first answered a survey question immediately after completing Project #1 ("What is the most interesting thing you learned about the market for hotels while working on Project #1?"), addressing what they learned from secondary data. Also, students were asked another survey question in regard to the course projects at the end of the semester ("Please offer a specific compliment and a specific suggestion for improvement"). Finally, student interaction with the instructor increased substantially compared to earlier semesters. Students emailed the instructor with questions approximately once a week, on average. However, there were only a few student inquiries directly to the librarian.

Student responses regarding what they learned in Project #1 from using library resources, both the project website and the secondary databases available through the library, are informative about their contribution to enhancing information literacy. Students expressed self-efficacy with using new skill sets to determine what primary marketing research is needed to address a particular question and how to frame that research. In particular, students reported realizing the value of finding out what information is available in secondary data before starting to collect new primary data. They observed the difficulty of selecting a target market, and commented that secondary data can help by characterizing the potential market and providing information useful for segmentation. This suggests that both course learning objectives and information literacy goals are met.

Examples of student comments on learning from secondary data related to learning about customers, competitors, service operations and the environment are provided in the following bullet points.

Examples of what students said about learning from customer data:

- (I realized) the importance of using secondary information first; I was just amazed at how much you can really find on the subject matter
- It is extremely important to pinpoint an audience when marketing
- Domestic leisure travelers brought the most amount of revenue to the hotels
- Travel for business is one of the main target markets that hotels try to cater to
- 4/5 travelers are leisure travelers compared to business travelers
- Many hotels, especially in areas where tourism isn't big, rely on corporate travelers to make their money
- I did not think that many customers within the target market cared about the eco-friendly environment of the hotel
- (I realized) how important customer feedback is for this type of business
- A positive review/experience not only can gain a potential loyal customer, but can also attract future customers who are looking for a place to stay

Examples of what students said about learning from data on competitors:

- It is hard to find a competitive advantage in this industry!
- I didn't realize how difficult it would be to start a new hotel, especially when you are competing with worldwide chains like Hilton and Marriot
- (I realized) the sizes of all the hotel companies and how many branches they actually own
- The "minor" players in the market, meaning the independent hotels, accounted for 80% of the market share
- Over 89 percent of hotels and motels have less than 50 employees
- Franchised locations do not count when considering market share, so even the largest companies have less than a 1 percent market share
- There aren't any true industry leaders
- There were more smaller hotels, AirBnBs, lodges, and cabins than big hotel chains
- AirBnB has become hotel companies' #1 competitor

Examples of what students learned about operational and environmental issues:

- The hotel industry keeps growing and growing
- (I realized) how much money the hotel industry runs through it

- (I realized) the stresses of operating hotels and keeping them at enough capacity
- The hotel industry always is changing technology to keep up with demand
- (I realized) how much the technology industry really impacts the hotel business
- I never would have thought that things like politics and environmental issues would affect hotels as much as they do
- They have to worry about the environment and external factors that can affect customers
- The economic environment was so drastically shifted over the past 1 & 1/2 - 2 years due to COVID-19
- (I realized) how much the industry was affected by covid and how many jobs were lost

Responses to open-ended questions at the end of the course about the student projects were not as specific. That said, students appear to value the learning experience created by the individual project work. Also, they praised the instructor's interactivity, including quick responses to email and the helpfulness of one-on-one virtual meetings, especially while working on the projects.

Examples of student comments related to the projects:

- The projects really pushed me to think deeply and understand the concepts of each module
- The projects were hard
- (The instructor) made me think about situations I never would have during our project assignments
- (The instructor) challenged me to think through multiple projects
- Very challenging projects
- In order to do the projects I have to read the lecture and book to understand everything
- The topics of the class made me think
- The projects forced me to apply the information from the module to real world situations
- The projects were very thought provoking
- The projects are very difficult and I have to work really hard to understand
- The projects were engaging and well thought out

Examples of student comments regarding project-related interactivity:

- When I spoke with (the instructor) 1-on-1 very helpful and gave me a better understanding

- Meeting with (the instructor) was always a pleasure; passion is infectious
- (The instructor was) polite in emails and answered questions in a short period of time
- (The instructor) created an environment for mutual respect by being engaged with students and allowing us to reach out when needed
- (The instructor) was extremely reachable, and always responded to emails in a timely manner
- (The instructor was) very good with responding to questions via email
- (The instructor) provided feedback and gave notes to what needed to be done properly
- (The instructor) responded to emails to answer questions
- (The instructor) would email right away to make sure I could fix exactly what I needed help with.
- (The instructor) was always willing to meet with me and talk about upcoming projects
- I believe the lectures were helpful and projects made us think!

Conclusions/recommendations

This article describes four innovative student project designs for use in an undergraduate marketing research course. These designs are intended to enhance information literacy and to provide opportunities for experiential learning of specific topics described in the course learning objectives. One of the differences between the projects suggested here and typical marketing research course projects is that the present project designs are intended as individual projects, whereas team projects are much more common in the course. Students often complain about working in teams, and many feel that they can learn more and earn better grades working independently. Student self-direction also offers more flexibility and encourages learning about all aspects of each project, which promotes both information literacy and self-efficacy. As an example of how working independently helps a student to learn all aspects of a project, consider Project #2. This project requires each student to carry out an in-depth interview with a member of a particular target market. Each student learns how to design an interview guide, analyze qualitative content by completing appropriate coding of their findings, and present potential relationships between constructs in a manner appropriate for sharing with managers.

The course project designs described have been somewhat successful, both in terms of student learning and also popularity. They were shown to enhance

information literacy when use of the library's project-specific websites were required to successfully complete the project. A recommendation for improvement would be to revise the projects to increase interaction with the library websites and require use of relevant library materials. The project designs were successful at conveying the course material, and they resulted in student satisfaction with both course interactivity and learning from project assignments.

Disclosure statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

ORCID

Eileen Bridges http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7274-3020

References

Ashley, C. (2019). Improving information literacy through gamification: fantasy brand leagues. *Marketing Education Review*, *29*(2), 107–112. doi:10.1080/10528008.2019.1610332

Atwong, C. T., & Heichman Taylor, L. J. (2008). Integrating information literacy into business education: A successful case of faculty-librarian collaboration. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, *13*(4), 433–448. doi:10.1080/08963560802202227

Bridges, E. (1999). Experiential learning and customer needs in the undergraduate marketing research course. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *21*(1), 51–59. doi:10.1177/0273475399211007

Burger, K. J., & Schmidt, S. L. (1987). Integrating information management skills into the marketing curriculum: An example using the marketing research course. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *9*(1), 12–18. doi:10.1177/027347538700900103

Campbell, D. K., & Cook, R. G. (2010). An experiential market research analysis: A partnership between teaching and library faculty. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, *15*(3–4), 171–178. doi:10.1080/08963568.2010.487433

Castleberry, S. B. (2001). Using secondary data in marketing research: A project that melds web and off-web sources. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *23*(3), 195–203. doi:10.1177/0273475301233005

Clarke, I., III, & Flaherty, T. B. (2007). Fostering information literacy in the marketing curriculum by engaging students with print marketing resources. *Marketing Education Review*, *17*(1), 79–85. doi:10.1080/10528008.2007.11488991

Clayton, M. J., & Hettche, M. (2012). From the field and into the classroom: Information architecture assessment and website usability tests. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *34*(1), 30–43. doi:10.1177/0273475311420244

Cooney, M. (2005). Business information literacy instruction: A survey and progress report. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, *11*(1), 3–25. doi:10.1300/J109v11n01_02

Dewald, N. H. (2005). What do they tell their students? Business faculty acceptance of the web and library databases for student research. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *31*(3), 209–215. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2005.01.002

Feekery, A. J., Chisholm, K., Jeffrey, C., & Diesch, F. (2021). Enhancing students' professional information literacy. *Journal of Information Literacy*, *15*(2), 150–165. doi:10.11645/15.2.2856

Fiegen, A. M. (2011). Business information literacy: A synthesis for best practices. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, *16*(4), 267–288. doi:10.1080/08963568.2011.606095

Fowler, K., & Bridges, E. (2012). An experiential exercise in service environment design. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *34*(2), 156–164. doi:10.1177/0273475312450386

Fowler, K., & Bridges, E. (2017). Business news as a source of information literacy in marketing. *Marketing Education Review*, *27*(2), 97–103. doi:10.1080/10528008.2017.1309980

Fowler, K., Thomas, V., & Saenger, C. (2019). Enhancing students' marketing information literacy. *Marketing Education Review*, *29*(1), 52–64. doi:10.1080/10528008.2018.1461570

Freeman, L., & Spanjaard, D. (2012). Bridging the gap: The case for expanding ethnographic techniques in the marketing research curriculum. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *34*(3), 238–250. doi:10.1177/0273475312455334

Gareau-Brennan, C., & Kung, J. Y. (2022). Systematic review of effective library instruction for business students. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, *27*(2), 81–103. doi:10.1080/08963568.2021.2015849

Gil, E. L. (2019). Introducing information literacy into a marketing budget class assignment: A case study. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, *24*(1–2), 1–16. doi:10.1080/08963568.2019.1632646

Hawbaker, A. C., & Littlejohn, A. C. (1988). Improving library instruction in marketing research: A model. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *10*(2), 52–62. doi:10.1177/027347538801000210

Houlihan, M., Click, A. B., & Wiley, C. W. (2020). Twenty years of business information literacy research: A scoping review. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, *15*(4), 124–163. doi:10.18438/eblip29745

Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. (2000). Retrieved from https://alair.ala.org/bitstream/handle/11213/7668/ACRL%20Information%20Literacy%20Competency%20Standards%20for%20Higher%20Education.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Karns, G. L. (2005). An update of marketing student perceptions of learning activities: structure, preferences, and effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *27*(2), 163–171. doi:10.1177/0273475305276641

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Le, D., Graham, A., Walker, J., & Watson, M.-L. (2022). The effects of information literacy instruction on business students' job readiness. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, *27*(3), 195–214. doi:10.1080/08963568.2022.2073418

Lesch, W. C., & Hazeltine, J. E. (1990). Secondary research, new product screening, and the marketing research course: An experiment in structured decision making. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *12*(1), 30–39. doi:10.1177/027347539001200105

Luck, D. J. (1949). Education for marketing research. *Journal of Marketing*, *14*(3), 385–390. doi:10.2307/1248192

Luck, D. J. (1952). Supplementary materials for marketing research courses. *Journal of Marketing*, *16*(4), 454–458. doi:10.2307/1246984

Malhotra, N. K. (1992). Shifting perspective on the shifting paradigm in marketing research: A new paradigm in marketing research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *20*(4), 379–387. doi:10.1007/BF02725216

Malhotra, N. K., Tashchian, A., & Jam, A. K. (1989). The project method approach: An integrated teaching tool in marketing research. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *11*(2), 32–40. doi:10.1177/027347538901100206

Mills, A. J., & Hair, J. H.Jr (2021). Consumer insights: A turning point for marketing research education. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *43*(3), 279–284. doi:10.1177/02734753211046448

Neilson, L. C. (2009). The new tools briefing: Teaching new marketing practices and technology to students. *Marketing Education Review*, *19*(1), 43–47. doi:10.1080/10528008.2009.11489059

Perreault, W. D., Jr. (1992). The shifting paradigm in marketing research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *20*(4), 367–375. doi:10.1007/BF02725214

Peterson, M. (2021). Teaching the online marketing research course for MBA students. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *43*(3), 371–385. doi:10.1177/02734753211001422

Price, R., Becker, K., Clark, L., & Collins, S. (2011). Embedding information literacy in a first-year business undergraduate course. *Studies in Higher Education*, *36*(6), 705–718. doi:10.1080/03075071003725350

Ramocki, S. P. (1987). Measured effectiveness of client-sponsored consulting projects in the marketing research course. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *9*(1), 24–30. doi:10.1177/027347538700900105

Reavey, B., Zahay, D., & Rosenbloom, A. (2021). Updating the marketing research course to prepare the marketing generalist. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *43*(3), 333–353. doi:10.1177/02734753211043925

Saegert, J. (1991). Qualitative research in the textbooks: A review. *Advances in Consumer Research*, *18*(1), 262–270.

Schuster, C. P., Anderson, B., & Brodowsky, G. (2014). Secondary data: Collection and analysis - classroom activities for learning. *Journal of the Academy of Business Education*, *15*(Spring), 97–118.

Sparkman, R. M., Jr. (1980). An experiential method for teaching secondary research. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *2*(2), 74–77. doi:10.1177/027347538000200212

Sterngold, A. H., & Hurlbert, J. M. (1998). Information literacy and the marketing curriculum: A multidimensional definition and practical application. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *20*(3), 244–249. doi:10.1177/027347539802000308

Strittmatter, C. (2012). Developing and assessing a library instruction module for a core business class. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, *17*(1), 95–105. doi:10.1080/08963568.2012.630645

Sun, Q., & Ganesh, G. (2014). Developing and teaching an online MBA marketing research class: Implications for online learning effectiveness. *Journal of Education for Business*, *89*(7), 337–345. doi:10.1080/08832323.2013.806885

Thyroff, A. (2019). Teaching qualitative marketing research: An experiential approach. *Marketing Education Review*, *29*(1), 75–87. doi:10.1080/10528008.2018.1514979

Wu, Y. D., & Lee Kendall, S. (2006). Teaching faculty's perspectives on business information literacy. *Reference Services Review*, *34*(1), 86–96. doi:10.1108/00907320610648789