

# TEACHING INNOVATIONS IN MARKETING: A BRAND-BASED STUDENT-LED INQUIRY OF MARKETING CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES

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This teaching innovation is a brand-based student-led inquiry of marketing concepts and practices for an introductory marketing course. During the first week of class, teams of students (or individual students) each select a brand of interest to research and analyze throughout the course. The objective is for students to understand the practical application of the marketing concepts and practices presented in textbook readings and instructor-led teaching for the selected brand. This teaching innovation makes the material more relevant and interesting, and exposes students to the practical application of marketing on the basis of the various brands selected by the students.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

This article presents a teaching innovation for a brand-based student-led inquiry of marketing concepts and practices in an undergraduate introduction to marketing course. This innovation incorporates some of the fundamentals of a flipped classroom approach. (Brame, 2013) Students first select a brand (Keller, 2012) of interest to research and analyze throughout the course. They gain first-exposure learning of marketing concepts and practices through textbook and other assigned readings. Students use publicly available sources of data and information to study their brand. Sources may include websites, 10Ks, annual reports, articles, videos, media reports, press releases, social media, customer reviews, individual contacts, the U.S. Small Business Association ([www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)), the U.S. Census Bureau ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)), and the U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission EDGAR website (<https://www.sec.gov/investor/pubs/edgarguide.htm>). Using an assignment-based model, students complete short writing assignments applying the marketing concepts and practices to their brand in preparation for class.

Students then focus on the processing part of learning in class to promote deeper knowledge and are challenged to discuss, debate, analyze, and synthesize the

application of first-exposure learning to the their brand. Instructor-led teaching is required to facilitate student learning with this student-led approach. In-class activities include debates, small group discussions, class discussions, short written assignments, white-board exercises, and student presentations.

Evidence suggests that flipping the classroom can produce significant learning gains (DesLauriers et al., 2011) and better student-learning outcomes. (Berrett, 2012) Undergraduate marketing student perceptions of learning activities are now structured by the degree to which the activities are enjoyable, challenging, and real world. The recommendation is for marketing educators to pursue real-world, applied connections in learning activities to enhance the perceived effectiveness of learning activities. (Karns, 2005) Empowering students to study a brand of interest makes learning more personal, relevant, and individualized. (Holbrook, 1999; Moon, 2004) The teaching innovation presented in this article is based on both the flipped classroom approach and the use of real-world, applied connections by students because they select a brand to research and analyze.

## MARKETING CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

This teaching innovation supports the attainment of curriculum objectives including the effect of external forces on marketing decisions; marketing strategies; marketing aspects of business ethics and social responsibility; and global marketing.

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## THE TEACHING INNOVATION

Students self-select into teams of two to four individuals (Carnegie Mellon University, 2015) during Week 1 of class, confirming a brand of interest to research and analyze throughout the course, to which they will apply the marketing concepts and practices learned. Three important criteria in brand selection are that the brand is of interest to the student; data and information sources are publicly available; and informational content about the brand, specific to the marketing concepts and practices to be covered, is available. The instructor should review each brand to ensure it meets this criterion.

Specific learning outcomes from using this teaching innovation include the following:

- The contribution of marketing to society and organizations.
- Market segmentation and targeting.
- Positioning strategies and supporting marketing mix selection.
- The buyer decision-making process and influencers of behavior.
- Marketing research and how it used in decision-making.
- The differentiation between physical goods and services.
- The strategic planning process.
- Application of strategies related to each of the elements of the marketing mix.
- The economic, social, and environmental concerns of marketing and sustainability.

A suggested textbook for the instructor-led teaching component is *MKTG Principles of Marketing, 9th Edition* (Lamb, Hair, & McDaniel, 2015). (Lamb, Hair, & McDaniel, 2015) In preparation for each class, students are to complete textbook reading assignments, review instructor lecture slides, and research and understand the application of the marketing concepts and practices to their brand. Students should have a device with Internet access in class to look up additional brand information, if necessary.

The instructor facilitates in-class discussion and activities that require students to apply, synthesize, analyze, or explain the application of the marketing concepts and practices to their brand. An instructor is encouraged to discuss the application of the marketing concepts and practices to a specific brand on the basis of personal experience, as appropriate.

Students receive four written assignments with instructor developed questions that are based on the textbook readings and class lectures during the course. See Table 1. Students are challenged to demonstrate the application of their learning of marketing concepts and practices to their selected brand. Also, students are assigned oral presentations for two of the written assignments.

Instructor time requirements include textbook selection, lecture preparation, classroom instruction, exam preparation, written submission grading, oral presentations, and facilitating in-class activities. Student time requirements include classroom participation, homework, attendance, and exam preparation.

My past experience with a traditional lecture approach using supporting textbook reading, online discussions, journaling, videos, and simulations were more theoretical and less dynamic. Students were not as engaged in the learning process. Fewer opportunities existed for the instructor to provide student feedback. There was a lack of a real-world application in the learning activities. The teaching innovation in this manuscript is much more applied and concrete, with the brand as a real-world application. Students expand their knowledge about various brands and how each brand applies marketing concepts and practices. Karns' multidimensional scaling approach and regression analysis examining "Comparative Perceived Effectiveness Ratings Across Studies" provides a framework for comparing past and current approaches to learning. Karns concludes that applied/specific learning is more effective than theoretical/abstract learning. Furthermore, student preference for a learning activity is less important than the activity being applied/specific. (Karns, 2005)

## RESULTS

Student survey evaluations from the Spring 2016 *Introduction to Marketing* course at the author's university underscore the effectiveness of this teaching innovation. See Figure 1. Questions 7–12 are of particular importance because they characterize the active and experiential learning environment for this teaching innovation. Mean scores are compared between the author (using this teaching innovation) and other marketing faculty teaching this course.

Both formative and summative assessment techniques are used in this class. (Angelo, 1998) Examples of formative assessments include short, independent writing assignments; concept mapping of a topic; student-led

**Table 1**  
**Spring 2016 Introduction to Marketing Student Assignment Questions**

Assignment 1	Q1: Explain if your brand has a production orientation, sales orientation or market orientation. What facts did you identify to support your explanation?
Chapter 1: Overview of Marketing	
Chapter 2: Strategic Planning	Q1: How has your brand achieved a sustainable competitive advantage, and what is it? Q2: Explain the marketing mix element most compelling for your brand's customers.
Chapter 3: Ethics and Social Responsibility	Q1: Explain which element of the marketing mix is most compelling for your brand's customers. Q2: Explain corporate social responsibility initiatives your brand has undertaken and why?
Chapter 4: Marketing Environment	Q1: Explain the external environment of marketing and how it affects your brand.
Chapter 5: Developing A Global Vision	Q1: Describe the global presence of your brand outside of the United States. If your brand does not have a global presence, explain why.
Assignment 2	Q1: Describe the global presence of your brand outside of the United States. If your brand does not have a global presence, explain why.
Chapter 6: Consumer Decision Making	Q2: Explain what cultural, social and individual factors affect the consumer buying decision for the products/services offered by your brand.
Chapter 7: Business Marketing	Q1: Explain if your brand targets business customers, consumer customers or both.
Chapter 8: Segment and Target Marketing	Q1: Create a two – axis perceptual map for your brand and its competitors. Compare your brand to its competitors based upon the criteria you believe most relevant. Q2: Explain your brand's basis for segmentation and who its target markets are.
Chapter 9: Marketing Research	Q1: Explain how marketing research can be used by your brand.
Assignment 3	Q1: How does your brand use its website to promote? Is it designed more to promote the company, its products, or both? Q2: Explain the product items, lines and mixes for your brand.
Chapter 10: Product Concepts	
Chapter 11: Developing and Managing Products	Q1: Identify two products/services marketed by your brand, and for each, which stage of the product life cycle it is in.
Chapter 14: Marketing Channels	Q1: For your brand, explain what marketing channels and channel intermediaries are utilized, and describe their functions and activities.
Assignment 4	Q1: For your brand, explain what marketing channels and channel intermediaries are utilized, and describe their functions and activities.
Chapter 16: Marketing Communications	Q2: Explain the promotional mix used by your brand for one of its products or services. Additionally, explain what the goal(s) is (are) of promoting and communicating – i.e. informing, persuading, reminding and/or connecting.
Chapter 17: Advertising, Public Relations, and Sales Promotion	Q1: Explain the promotional mix used by your brand for one of its products or services. Additionally, explain what the goal(s) is (are) of promoting and communicating – i.e. informing, persuading, reminding and/or connecting. Q2: Explain the Advertising, Public Relations and Sales Promotion tactics used by your brand. Provide examples.
Chapter 18: Personal Selling and Sales Management	Q1: Develop a list of 10 questions that a sales representative for your brand would ask a potential customer to understand his/her needs and purchase your product/service.
Chapter 19: Social Media and Marketing	Q1: Explain your brand's social media strategy, referencing the tools outlined in this chapter? Do you believe it is effective? Explain why or why not.
Chapter 20: Pricing	Q1: Explain what you believe to be the pricing objective of one of your brand's products/services. Explain the elasticity of demand for this product/service.
Chapter 21: Pricing Tactics	Q1: Explain how discounts, geographic pricing, and/or other pricing tactics can be used by one of your brand's products/services to "fine tune" the base price of the product/service.

brand-based whiteboard discussions; and brainstorming sessions. Examples of summative assessments include end-of-instructional-unit exams, written assignments, and class participation and student presentations.

Formative and summative assessments work together enabling the instructor to provide student feedback, refine the instructional approach, and drive student learning and deeper knowledge.

## LEARNING

Student brand selection must meet the criteria of student interest in the brand, availability of data and information, and availability of content for the marketing concepts and processes to be studied. Two student teams may select the same brand, presenting an opportunity for the instructor and class to analyze different points of view.

**Figure 1**  
**Student Comments—Introduction to Marketing**

Instructor Questions	SD	Responses			Case Author N	Mean	All Faculty Mean
		D	A	SA			
Q1: My instructor explains difficult materials clearly.	1	1	3	24	29	3.7	3.4
Q2: My instructor communicates at a level that I can understand.	1	0	3	25	29	3.8	3.5
Q3: My instructor makes requirements clear.	1	0	6	22	29	3.7	3.4
Q4: My instructor identifies relationships between and among topics.	1	0	4	24	29	3.8	3.5
Q5: My instructor establishes a climate of respect.	0	0	3	26	29	3.9	3.5
Q6: My instructor is available to me on matters pertaining	0	0	4	25	29	3.9	3.6
Q7: My instructor respects diverse talents.	0	0	4	25	29	3.9	3.5
Q8: My instructor creates an atmosphere in which ideas can be exchanged freely.	0	1	2	26	29	3.9	3.5
Q9: My instructor gives assignments that are	1	1	8	19	29	3.6	3.2
Q10: My instructor encourages me to develop new viewpoints.	1	1	5	22	29	3.7	3.4
Q11: My instructor arouses my curiosity.	1	1	6	21	29	3.6	3.3
Q12: My instructor stimulates my creativity.	1	1	7	19	28	3.6	3.3
Responses: [SD] Strongly Disagree=1 [D] Disagree=2 [A] Agree=3 [SA] Strongly Agree=4							
Source: Spring 2016 Introduction to Marketing Student Course Evaluations - Case Author's University							

Selected Student Comments:

- “I really liked the way the class was set-up in regards to picking our groups and companies and then relating the course to those particular companies. I enjoyed going to class every day. I liked learning the different aspects of everyone’s companies as well as the up-to-date news.”
- “Great idea to have us pick a brand and stick with it throughout the entire semester. I learned a lot this way and it was a great way to relate to real life.”
- “Great class structure, picking a company for the semester makes the class fun.”
- “I really enjoyed learning about the course content through our brands of choice.”
- “I really liked how we got to choose our own company and focus on them for the semester as well!”

Students are encouraged to work in teams of two to four individuals. Working as a team, students have the opportunity to explain ideas to each other, listen to alternative ideas and perspectives, reach consensus, coordinate efforts, resolve conflicts, and integrate the contributions of multiple team members. Reading assignments and oftentimes researching the brand are

completed independently of the team. If the class has 20 or fewer students, the instructor may elect to have each student select a brand and work independently on all activities throughout the course.

I recommend that one 3–4-page single-spaced written assignment is submitted per team, for each of the four assignments. The submission is to represent the collective

**Figure 2**  
**Written Submission Rubric (Summarized)**

Rubric: 0 to 100 Points for Each Written Submission					
I. Format & Organization (20%)		100-90	89-80	79-70	0
Title Page	Title page with student names; student team name; organization name; MKT 333; and submission due date.	All criteria is present but not in the correct order and/or in an eye pleasing manner.	Some of the criteria is missing.	No title page.	
Format	Business report format with headings and sub-headings differentiated; use of paragraphs with no indents; charts, graphs and pages numbered correctly; APA references format.	Business report format with most headings and sub-heading differentiated; use of paragraphs with no indents; charts, graphs and pages numbered correctly; APA references format.	Business report format lacking one or more of the criteria; references not in APA format.	Did not follow instructions.	
Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation	Error - free document.	Few errors.	Many errors throughout.	Could not read.	
II. Content (80%)		100-90	89-80	79-70	0
Responses to Questions	Thorough responses demonstrating mastery of marketing concepts and practices specific to the brand; detailed analysis with substantiation; sources cited. Recommendations follow from analysis and assumptions.	Thorough responses demonstrating mastery of marketing concepts and practices specific to the brand; some lacking in analysis with substantiation; some sources not cited. Relationship between analysis and recommendation may be unclear.	Lack of thoroughness in responses and failure to demonstrate mastery of marketing concepts and practices specific to the brand; poor analysis and substantiation; sources not cited.	One or more questions are unanswered and/or instructions were not followed.	

thinking of the team. The submission may include graphs, tables, or visuals. Past experience indicates this is an appropriate length, ensuring students answer questions thoroughly using professional business writing skills. See [Figure 2](#) for a Written Submission Rubric. The instructor determines the assignment questions on the basis of the marketing concepts and practices to be studied. Questions should be worded to be inclusive of all types of brands (e.g. for profit, nonprofit). Speaking roles

for the oral presentations should be equitably assigned by the students and supported with a power point presentation. Assignments are recommended to be weighted as 25% of the final grade.

The instructor is responsible for facilitating class participation and ensuring attendance. This is recommended to be weighted as 15% of the final grade.

Three exams plus a comprehensive final exam cover textbook readings, lectures, class discussions, student

presentations, assignments and other in-class activities. Each exam is recommended to be weighted as 15% of the final grade.

### ADAPTABILITY

I successfully used this brand-based student-led inquiry of marketing practices and concepts on three occasions for two types of marketing courses over the past 3 years: twice for an introduction to marketing course and once for a branding and advertising course. Variables facilitating the adoption of this teaching innovation include textbook selection, development of assignment questions, brands selected by the students and instructor preparedness.

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