

Team Case Study in Exploring Practical Problems in Undergraduate Marketing Education

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This paper explores the teaching reform method of incorporating team case studies into undergraduate marketing education. Team case studies provide a platform for students to engage with authentic marketing scenarios, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. Additionally, such studies can bridge theory and practice, enabling students to apply their knowledge to real-world problems in a collaborative setting. Through case analysis, students can understand brands' marketing strategies and their effects, master the skills of market research and analysis, and be able to accurately evaluate consumer needs and the strengths and weaknesses of competitors. This paper discusses the current status of undergraduate marketing education, explores the benefits of team case studies, and proposes strategies for effectively integrating them into marketing curricula.

Keywords: team case study, marketing education, undergraduate, teaching reform

INTRODUCTION

In marketing education, undergraduate programs play a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of marketing professionals (Bridges, 2020; Elam & Spotts, 2004). However, a critical analysis of the current status of undergraduate marketing education reveals several areas of concern that hinder the effective acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge (e.g., Bridges, 2020; Jiang et al., 2024). This paper aims to explore these issues and propose utilizing team case studies as a potential solution to addressing these challenges.

The curriculum and teaching methods in undergraduate marketing education are often characterized by simplicity. Traditional classroom lectures form the backbone of most programs, leaving little room for practical operations and the cultivation of hands-on skills (Farashahi & Tajeddin, 2018). This approach fails to foster a deep understanding of marketing theory and its application in real-world scenarios, thus impeding students' ability to adapt to the rapidly evolving demands of the industry.

The lack of practical teaching is a significant obstacle in undergraduate marketing education (Cadotte, 2016; Duffy & Ney, 2015; Lange et al., 2018). Due to the resource-intensive nature of practical teaching, coupled with the lack of robust cooperation mechanisms between educational institutions and businesses, implementing practical sessions is often inadequate (Billore, 2021). This could deprive students of the opportunity to engage with real-world marketing cases and operations, resulting in a deficit in practical experience and problem-solving capabilities.

The lack of practical teaching experience among faculty members compounds the issues above. Many teachers in undergraduate marketing education lack extensive marketing experience, which hinders their

ability to effectively illustrate marketing theory and practical applications in the classroom. This, in turn, limits their capacity to guide students in conducting meaningful case analyses and applying theoretical knowledge to practical problems.

The cultivation of students' comprehensive qualities is absent in many undergraduate marketing programs. Marketing education is about imparting knowledge of marketing theory and practical skills and fostering students' comprehensive qualities, such as teamwork, communication skills, and innovative thinking (Bridges, 2020). However, current undergraduate marketing education often overlooks this aspect, focusing primarily on knowledge transmission, thereby negatively affecting students' future career development and social adaptability.

In summary, undergraduate marketing education faces several challenges, including the simplicity of curriculum and teaching methods, the lack of practical teaching, the limited practical experience of teachers, and the absence of comprehensive quality training for students. These issues collectively hinder students' ability to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for success in the modern marketing industry.

Given these challenges, this paper argues that incorporating team case studies into undergraduate marketing education can address these shortcomings. Team case studies provide a platform for students to engage with authentic marketing scenarios, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. Additionally, such studies can bridge theory and practice, enabling students to apply their knowledge to real-world problems in a collaborative setting.

In the following sections, this paper will delve deeper into the current status of undergraduate marketing education, explore the benefits of team case studies, and propose strategies for effectively integrating them into marketing curricula.

TEAM CASE STUDIES IN UNDERGRADUATE MARKETING EDUCATION

This paper proposes to introduce the team case study method to undergraduate marketing education to explore and solve practical problems. This method not only enables students to understand and master marketing theory and practical knowledge but also helps students cultivate practical operation and application ability, teamwork, and communication skills (Uslay, 2007).

Advantages of Team Case Study in Undergraduate Marketing Education

Enhanced Engagement and Interest

Working in teams on a real-world case makes students more likely to be engaged and interested in learning. The collaborative nature of teamwork encourages active participation and discussion, creating a more dynamic and engaging learning environment (Chad, 2012; Harding, 2018).

Practical Application of Theory

Team case studies allow students to apply the marketing theory they have learned in class to practical scenarios. This hands-on experience helps solidify their understanding of the theory and prepares them for real-world challenges.

Cultivation of Soft Skills

In addition to marketing knowledge, team case studies foster soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. These skills are crucial for success in the marketing industry and beyond (Di Gregorio et al., 2019; Lancellotti & Boyd, 2008), especially for those entry-level business jobs (Schlee & Harich, 2010; Schlee & Karns, 2017; Staton, 2016).

Enhanced Critical Thinking

Students develop critical thinking skills by analyzing and discussing complex marketing cases (Deitz, Fox, & Fox, 2021). They learn to identify essential issues, evaluate options, and make informed decisions.

Preparation for the Workplace

Team case studies provide a bridge between the classroom and the workplace. By simulating real-world marketing challenges, they prepare students for the demands of a marketing career.

Strategies for Implementing Team Case Studies in Undergraduate Marketing Education

Selecting Relevant and Authentic Cases

It is essential to choose cases that are relevant to the marketing curriculum and reflect real-world marketing challenges. Relevant and authentic cases give students a sense of immersion and make learning more meaningful (e.g., Johnson & Helms, 2008).

Forming Heterogeneous Teams

Forming teams with diverse backgrounds and skills can foster creativity and encourage different perspectives. Heterogeneous teams also help students develop their ability to work with diverse individuals.

Providing Adequate Guidance and Support

Teachers should provide students with guidance and support throughout the case study process. This includes clarifying the objectives, facilitating discussions, and offering feedback on their analysis and recommendations.

Integrating Case Studies into the Curriculum

Case studies should be integrated into the curriculum to complement and enhance the theoretical knowledge being taught. This helps students see the connection between theory and practice.

Assessing Performance Based on Multiple Criteria

Performance should be evaluated based on multiple criteria, including individual contribution, teamwork, critical thinking, and the quality of the final case study report. This ensures that all aspects of the learning process are valued.

Summary of Team Case Study in Undergraduate Marketing Education

Therefore, team case studies have the potential to revolutionize undergraduate marketing education by providing a practical, engaging, and collaborative learning experience. By implementing the abovementioned strategies, educators can effectively integrate team case studies into their marketing curricula and help students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for success in the modern marketing industry.

APPLYING TEAM CASE STUDY IN THE “MARKETING MANAGEMENT” COURSE: A TEACHING REFORM

The Urgency of Reforming the Teaching of “Marketing Management” Course

The current approach to marketing management education often exhibits a significant imbalance in focus. While considerable attention is paid to teaching theoretical knowledge, the cultivation of practical operation and application ability is usually neglected. This “paper talk” teaching method frequently poses difficulties for students in truly understanding and mastering marketing theory and practical knowledge, rendering it challenging for them to adapt to the demands of enterprise practice. The question of enabling students to grasp the essence of integrated marketing strategy and develop strong application abilities has consistently been a vexing issue in teaching the “Marketing Management” course.

Concurrently, proficiency in effective collaboration, work, and operational skills is paramount in business and marketing. However, this skill set is frequently challenging to enhance through traditional teaching methods. Conventional teaching methods tend to emphasize the imparting of knowledge, overlooking the fostering of practical operations and skills, thereby hindering students’ ability to genuinely grasp the essence and application of marketing management.

This research aims to conduct a teaching reform centered around the undergraduate course of Marketing Management to address these issues. It involves conducting team case studies to explore practical problems. Within the framework of this teaching reform, students apply the theoretical knowledge acquired from textbooks and classrooms to real-world marketing situations through team case studies. They collaborate with peers from diverse professional and cultural backgrounds, enhancing their marketing planning abilities, interpersonal skills, and experiencing the fundamental model of team operation. This methodology holds greater educational value compared to traditional classroom lectures and aligns more closely with the scientific laws of teaching.

Reform Contents

The teaching reform goal of Marketing Management is to be guided by team case discussion and collaboration and to carry out reforms in two aspects: teaching and brand display. The specific reform contents are as follows:

Multiple Class Group Discussions and Sharing Sessions Arranged During the Course

Each time, the teacher proposes a case scenario and a problem to be solved. Students form groups of 3-5 people on the spot to discuss for 10-15 minutes and give specific solutions. This can encourage students to actively participate in the class, exert their initiative and creativity, and find solutions to problems through teamwork. Participation in the class group case discussion is included in the semester score, accounting for about 10% of the total score.

Improve the Participation of All Students

In the group discussion and sharing sessions, students must cooperate with classmates from different majors and cultural backgrounds to discuss and solve problems. This can cultivate students' teamwork and communication skills and, at the same time, improve their learning effects and overall quality. For each group's sharing, add classroom discussion and debate sections so that each student can not only passively listen but also actively raise questions, thereby improving the overall participation in classroom learning.

Team Building Carried Out With Brand Display Tasks as the Guide

At the beginning of the semester, the specific tasks will be notified to the students who have chosen the course, and the project requirements will be explained in detail. Students will freely form a project team of about 4-6 people. To reduce the "free riding" phenomenon in the team, the team building is completed by students recommending themselves as team leaders and the two-way selection between team leaders and team members.

Students Are Encouraged to Conduct Active Learning in an Exploratory Manner as a Group

Focusing on integrating and applying marketing theory and interdisciplinary knowledge, brands of common interest to the group are selected as research and analysis objects. During the analysis process, students can collect primary and secondary data by themselves, or refer to the literature in marketing academic journals for analysis. Students are encouraged to select emerging brands in development for analysis to enhance the experience and real-time sense of brand development. In the analysis, each project team needs to cover the market environment of the brand and the current marketing status, compare the advantages and disadvantages with similar brands or comprehensively compare the marketing strategies, and design a set of integrated marketing strategies for the brand from at least four aspects: product, price, publicity and promotion, and channel.

Multi-Dimensional Display and Evaluation of Group Project Results

Starting from the mid-way through the course, a group presentation and analysis will be conducted every week, and the team learning results of exploring practical problems will be presented in a 25-minute speech. PowerPoint presentation files will be submitted at the end of the semester. The evaluation of this

group project covers the classroom presentation and PPT content, accounting for 35% of the total score in the semester.

Teachers should increase ideological and political education in classroom discussions and team presentation guidance, focusing on two aspects: First, adhere to moral education and cultivate students' values and sense of responsibility to benefit the people and strengthen the country through hard work. When summarizing the classroom team discussion, emphasize that we must abide by morality and ethics in life and business operations and guide students to establish a good outlook on life, and values. Second, always encourage students to start from marketing practice, focus on developing emerging brands in group presentations, think about the contribution of their marketing experience to the world, and reflect their culture in global economic growth.

GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

This teaching reform has the following proposed impacts: In terms of course level impact, after the teaching reform of the undergraduate course "Marketing Management," students are encouraged to discuss in groups, integrate everyone's views, and propose unique, novel, valuable and suitable solutions to challenges and opportunities for practical problems such as pricing, customer communication, and positioning point establishment currently faced by enterprises. It is expected that each student who chooses this course will learn to study the marketing status of real-world brands, compare the strengths and weaknesses of major competitors, and design integrated marketing strategies for brands from at least four aspects: products, prices, promotions, and channels. Through case analysis, students will understand the brand's marketing strategy and its effects, master the skills of market research and analysis, and be able to accurately evaluate consumer needs and the strengths and weaknesses of competitors.

At the student capability level, team discussion and sharing can enhance the problem orientation of students who choose this course when solving real-life problems. By studying the marketing status of real-life brands, comparing the strengths and weaknesses of major competitors, and designing integrated marketing strategies for brands, students can be more capable of dealing with uncertain situations and solving problems. At the same time, it broadens students' thinking. It makes them future-oriented so that when they encounter challenging topics in the future, they can integrate and analyze the current environment and strategies and improve their creativity, critical thinking, cooperation, communication, and other skills. At the same time, it guides students to establish a reasonable worldview, outlook on life, and values and think about the contribution of marketing experience to the global economy.

At the university level, the source composition of undergraduate students has changed significantly in recent years. As more and more college students from different social levels, cultural backgrounds, and nationalities enter the classroom, their attention to new marketing phenomena and new brands is also increasing. To adapt to this change and meet students' demand for high-level education, the teaching reform of this course is imperative. The teaching reform of this course explores practical problems and is committed to promoting the advancement of marketing teaching. It pays close attention to new marketing trends in the digital age and focuses on cultivating students' knowledge, abilities, and qualities. At the same time, we can use the experience of curriculum construction and teaching reform to add innovative discoveries to educational theory.

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