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Carolyn Meitzner

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Rationale and Proposal for the Establishment of a Consumer-Behavior Curriculum and Research Institute at Syracuse University

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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April 2009

Honors Capstone Project in Advertising

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ABSTRACT

This thesis project was inspired by a course formerly offered by the Department of Psychology at Syracuse University, which has not been offered since at least 2006 – PSY 377: Consumer Behavior. Circumstances – including that the professor who taught the course left the university and that the Department of Psychology is uncertain about the volume of student interest in the course – led to PSY 377 being taken off the time schedule indefinitely, though it remains in the course catalog. The timing of the course’s cancellation is especially unfortunate, given that revolutionary changes in consumer behavior have occurred over the last two decades.

Preliminary ideas for possible solutions to this problem were developed, including: 1. simple reinstallation of the original course [PSY 377]; 2. altering the content of the original course so that it may be offered as a Newhouse Advertising course that fulfills the “Critical Issues” degree requirement; 3. creating an interdisciplinary, cross-listed sequence of courses that incorporates the interests of several majors in different colleges at Syracuse University; and 4. eventually establishing a consumer-behavior research institute based in the Newhouse School.

Before further developing any plans, though, several research questions surrounding the situation had to be answered in order to proceed with a solution in the most appropriate way. Why exactly is studying consumer behavior so essential to advertising, psychology, and many other disciplines? How is professional consumer-behavior research applied? How and what has changed consumer behavior over the last two decades, and how has research in the discipline responded? How is consumer behavior knowledge applied in a university setting, including at other academic institutions? A literature review was compiled to answer these questions and provide crucial background information.

Furthermore, a 22-question online survey was conducted to evaluate Syracuse University students’ interest in studying consumer behavior, interdisciplinary collaboration with faculty and students, and participating in extracurricular research. Analysis of the 139 responses to the survey concluded that the majority of students would take advantage of these opportunities, particularly given various incentives (such as extra credit and resume-building).

This research all concludes that consumer-behavior education and research are now more essential than ever, providing a rationale for the reinstallation of PSY 377 and establishment of a consumer-behavior research institute. The institute is especially the most comprehensive, ultimate solution, with immense benefits to students, faculty and professionals in a wide range of disciplines, Syracuse University, the Newhouse School, and their communities. Significant, relevant, high-quality research could be carried out with multidisciplinary input, for real-world clients, with a mission *to advance consumer-behavior knowledge in ways meaningful to marketers, inspiring to academics, and in the best interest of consumers*. Pursuing the establishment of a consumer-behavior research institute could be, in the end, an extraordinary and meaningful endeavor for Syracuse University.

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PREFACE

Over the years of my Advertising education in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, I have developed a strong personal philosophy with regards to the purpose and nature of advertising communications. First and foremost, advertising must be for the benefit of the consumer. Advertising exists to inform consumers about the products they need and want. Inherent to this is the idea that a brand can transcend the basic boundaries of need fulfillment and provide consumers with familiarity, comfort, joy, and more. In this society ruled by consumer behavior, people have a need to connect with the products they buy; from a psychological perspective, the existence of a vibrant, idea-driven society demands a vibrant, idea-inspiring marketplace of brands. Therefore, even emotional advertising has its place in fulfilling consumers' needs in product categories that are functionally neutral. What really causes a consumer choose one brand of cola over another? Chances are, it's the values and feelings associated with the brand. Advertising assists consumers in making brand decisions, and fulfilling the emotional needs that are produced by consumer behavior. As consumers' interests progress so do their behaviors.

Therein lies my passion for understanding consumers, their behavior and psychology, in ways that are persistent and transformative; furthermore, my passion for the continued existence of consumer-behavior research. Without this research, a relevant understanding of the consumer cannot exist, and advertising cannot serve its purpose. With the massive technological revolutions of the last

two decades, and new developments occurring daily, it is now more important than ever to have a deep understanding of how these changes affect consumer behavior.

Perhaps, an academic research institute can assist with this understanding? I believe there is no better place for an outstanding consumer behavior research institute than my forthcoming alma mater, Syracuse University. The realization that a consumer-behavior research institute would be an ideal addition to Syracuse University developed in a long process of discovering how a consumer-behavior course in the Department of Psychology disappeared, and gaining a greater understanding of the feasibility of different solutions to the hole this course left in the University's curriculum.

Circumstances (most notably, that the former consumer behavior professor left the University) in the last 3 years resulted in that PSY 377: Consumer Behavior was taken off the time schedule indefinitely. As an advertising major with a minor in psychology, I feel quite passionate about the importance of this coursework to both disciplines, and am disappointed that it is no longer available. Reading a description of PSY 377 in the course catalog my freshman year (after declaring my major in Advertising) is actually what led me to declare a minor in psychology, hoping these studies would well complement my major. Though my minor in Psychology has been quite useful in my understanding of advertising strategy and its effectiveness, I do still feel that a psychology course specifically addressing consumer behavior would have made my minor even more relevant and directly applicable to my major. Moreover, the course's cancellation came at

a crucial time, after the turn of the millennium, when consumer behavior has changed at a faster rate than ever.

After discussing my disappointment over the course's disappearance with my peers in both disciplines, I realized that there is still great student interest in consumer behavior, especially among Advertising majors who, like me, declared a Psychology minor because of PSY 377's listing in the course catalog. Further exploration of the matter, after considering ways consumer-behavior knowledge could be acquired through extracurricular studies, led to my finding that there are many other students who would take advantage of extracurricular research opportunities if they were aware of them.

Therefore, in addition to rationalizing the reintroduction of a consumer-behavior course in the Department of Psychology at Syracuse University, I will detail a plan for the establishment of a consumer-behavior research institute within the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications (my home college) at Syracuse University. The Honors Capstone Project, the culmination of my efforts to complete the Renee Crown University Honors Program, affords me with the perfect means of achieving this ambition; otherwise the necessary commitment of time and resources might not be feasible. The possibility of enhancing the academic and extracurricular offerings at my University – in which I hold much pride – is simply irresistible. It is with tremendous honor that I have worked intensely on developing this proposal.

Though the ultimate success of my Capstone Project would be acceptance by administrators, faculty and students, and implementation of the proposed

curriculum and eventual establishment of the institute, I feel this project is still a meaningful endeavor even if this is not achieved. I will have defined the need for active consumer-behavior knowledge at Syracuse University, and laid the groundwork for future deliberations on the matter. Above all, the completion of my Capstone Project will be the realization of an inspiration I have pondered since my declaration of a minor in Psychology three years ago. I hope to leave behind a legacy of student action with respect to progressive change at Syracuse University - invoking Mahatma Gandhi, to “*Be the change you wish to see in the world.*”

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This thesis project could not have been completed without the enduring support of many others, to whom I will be forever grateful. I say thank you...

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To the Renee Crown Honors Program, for giving me the opportunity to create a unique and significant scholarly work.

To the S.I. Newhouse School of Communications, which drew me to Syracuse University in the first place and gave me the best education possible.

To Syracuse University, my soon-to-be alma mater, for its diversity and making my college experience unforgettable.

METHODOLOGY

Phase I:

Initially, the concept of consumer behavior in an academic setting was explored to further understand its importance to studies in advertising, psychology, marketing and many other disciplines (including anthropology, economics, public relations, entrepreneurship, sociology, retail management and communication and rhetorical studies) at Syracuse University. This included defining consumer behavior, investigation of its real-world applications, and how education in consumer behavior is approached at other academic institutions. The latter also entails an argument regarding the subject's specific relevance to the situation at Syracuse University and its rich resources.

Phase II:

Next, there was primary research among students and faculty at Syracuse University to ascertain what level of demand there actually is for the coursework and independent research opportunities. This was achieved with an online survey of 139 students in a variety of majors, and in-depth interviews with pertinent faculty. The results helped determine the degree of interest and volume of potential students, and explore reasons why the course was dropped from the time schedule three years ago.

Phase III:

Hence, after the secondary and primary research was conducted, specifics for the proposed consumer behavior course and research institute were outlined. This included detailing and exploring the feasibility of a hierarchy of several solutions: the simple reintroduction of the previous course [PSY 377: Consumer Behavior]; altering the original course so that it may be offered as a Newhouse advertising course that fulfills major requirements such as the “critical issues” course requirement; the creation of an interdisciplinary sequence of courses that blends the interests of several majors in the Arts & Sciences and Public Communications colleges; and, the eventual establishment of a consumer-behavior research institute at Syracuse University.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review summarizes professional discourse on topics related to the issue of consumer-behavior education, including the significance of consumer research and its professional applications, the changing landscape of marketing disciplines and consumer-behavior information, comparison of consumer-behavior education available at similar institutions, and problems in education of marketing-related disciplines.

PROBLEMS IN DEFINITION

Perhaps the absence of a course in consumer behavior in the Department of Psychology at Syracuse University is the result of difference in opinion concerning what marketing *is* and what a comprehensive education in marketing entails. Even the American Marketing Association (AMA) admits that there are many schools of thought on what marketing is, and that the various definitions of marketing followed by these schools will simply never be agreed on. Whichever definition a school may uphold, nevertheless, consumer behavior seems to be an integral element in most (though some stress it more than others). The “commodity school” separates products into categories, with a heavy emphasis on “physical characteristics and associated buyer behavior” as key differentiators; likewise, the “managerial schools of thought focus on individual (i.e. consumer and professional) behavior,” (Ringold and Weitz 2007). Ringold and Weitz (2007), in their examination of the history of definitions of marketing, found that from 1960 on definitions of marketing increasingly became inclined to define the

field as a “societal process” and incorporate more cultural (rather than strictly business-related) characteristics (p. 253).

Therefore, despite these differences in definition, marketing is increasingly being practiced in terms of its sociological and psychological implications. The 2007 analysis (Ringold and Weitz) of the official 2004 AMA definition concludes: “From our perspective, the 2004 definition takes a broader perspective than the 1985 definition focusing on ‘processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers’ rather than making decisions about the “four Ps.” It emphasizes that marketing is a process of creating ‘value [for] customers and for managing customer relationships’ rather than stimulating transactional exchanges.” This suggests that a scholarly understanding of marketing should not be isolated to one college, but requires the involvement of many disciplines. Consequently, the increasing relevance of consumers (and their behavior) to the study of many disciplines unfolds.

The Consumer as the Defining Factor

Any marketing definition and the academic institutions that instill these definitions in future marketers *should* address the centrality of the consumer. This consumer-centric concept applies furthermore in the broader sense of application to all businesses that employ marketing techniques – virtually all goods and services. “Ultimately, customer value is the goal toward which market-oriented organizations aim, because customer value is instrumental to developing successful long-term exchange relationships” (Baker et. al. 2003).

This extends the concept's relevance even beyond the scope of marketing and advertising.

The AMA makes a somewhat startling commentary, however, on the level of disagreement between marketing academics and practitioners on how their field should be defined, referring to “disconnects between marketing thought and marketing practice,” (Ringold and Weitz 2007). This calls for a solution which not only requires more emphasis on the consumer-centric concept in academic institutions, but which reconciles the essential relationship between professionals and academics. As marketing disciplines are based in practical application (and not confined to the worlds of research and academia), an appropriate foundation for a rationale for greater focus on the consumer in education is, necessarily, an examination of current marketing practice.

REAL WORLD APPLICATION

Why Study the Consumer in Depth?

While studying trends and patterns of consumer behavior is most relevant to reflective disciplines (such as history and sociology), studying consumers to forecast future trends is advantageous to marketing and its more directly related disciplines (such as advertising and public relations). As Baker et. al. (2003) maintain, to be really successful, businesses must “learn about [consumers], versus from them” – that is, knowledge of consumer trends and patterns is useful, but deeper, predictive study of consumers' attitudes and unconsciously motivated

behaviors (especially with respect to specific business situations) is key to creating maximum benefits. These benefits awarded to businesses which integrate a deep understanding of their consumers into strategy are hierarchical, building from cost-efficiency and successful product launches to consumer loyalty and ultimately “superior growth,” (Baker et. al. 2003). It would be impossible for a business to be continuously successful in relying only on available information about its target consumers; as Baker and his fellow researchers note: “What customers value changes over time, because their needs change and competition is constantly present. . . To create sustainable superior value, a firm must commit to continuous learning and understand that the marketplace is dynamic” (2003). Hence, consumer research is especially integral to many practices in professional marketing and advertising.

The Account Planning Revolution

Advertising agencies have long paved the way in using marketing to connect with consumers. This approach increased during the mid-20th century, as advertising agencies and gurus began to recognize a clear need for more time spent understanding clients’ respective consumers. This realization led one of the oldest agencies, J. Walter Thompson (now JWT), to establish a new department – account planning – in 1968, to increase advertising’s relevance to consumers (JWT 2009). Stanley Pollitt (2000), one of the founders of account planning at JWT London, explained that the account planner is “charged with ensuring that all the data relevant to key advertising decisions should be properly analysed,

complemented with new research and brought to bear on judgments of the creative strategy and how the campaign should be appraised,” (p. 4). In 2006, the Martin Agency of Richmond, VA, with the pioneering ambitions of Dr. Lauren R. Tucker, created its Consumer Forensics division, which applies the tools and techniques of many disciplines to develop more insightful business ideas. This new style of account planning takes the department to a new level, incorporating cultural trend analyses, optimization modeling, and a range of other innovative tools for analysis (The Martin Agency 2009). Of course, advertising agencies are not the only professional groups that employ the power of the consumer. There are scores of research companies dedicated to consumer research, as well, and studying the consumer is of profound interest to professionals in other disciplines.

Interdisciplinary Relevance

Marketing and the research that accompanies it are inherently interdisciplinary. “Marketing is an eclectic activity studied and undertaken by people with a wide variety of skills and knowledge bases,” (Ringold and Weitz 2007). Marketing knowledge, especially that dealing with the consumer, is not only relevant and significant to other fields, but essential. In 1987, Holbrook recognized the *Journal of Consumer Research*’s acceptance of articles written in a variety of disciplines that previously were deemed unimportant to consumer research, including sociology, anthropology, even linguistics. This trend of inclusion has only intensified since Holbrook’s observation, resulting in an expansion of the relevance of consumer research beyond the scope of marketing

disciplines. According to Wilkie and Moore (2003), the early 1990s was a period of significant debate over the nature of marketing thought and study, specifically with respect to the consumer-behavior sphere of the academic community; the result was the idea that consumer behavior cannot simply be studied in terms of sellers' interests, but should "be studied as a social phenomenon unto itself."

Lars Perner, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Clinical Marketing in the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California, describes four main applications of consumer behavior knowledge:

1. marketing strategy
2. public policy
3. social marketing
4. to inform consumers to make wiser decisions (2008).

He further describes consumer psychology and behavior as "an interdisciplinary area that incorporates ideas from, among other disciplines, psychology, marketing, communications, economics, anthropology, sociology, and geography," (Perner, 2008). Thus, advances in and applications of consumer-behavior research require the involvement of several complementary disciplines. In professional research, there is particular input from psychology and anthropology.

Psychology is of course the science discipline most closely tied to methods and topics in consumer research. Psychological research of the subconscious mind helps fill gaps in the capacity of more superficial advertising research methods (such as surveys and focus groups). Perhaps the most useful

consumer-research methods are those which blend the techniques of psychology and advertising. For example, the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) technique can be employed in a focus group, but uses knowledge from research in psychology to interpret participants' responses. "Gerald Zaltman's ZMET technique (which exploits the use of metaphors and thus bypasses explicit consumer awareness) is well grounded in established cognitive, psychological, and brain sciences, having emerged from work with the MIT Brain and Behavior group. This method, and similar methods that employ known Experimental Psychology techniques, are essentially methods for 'interviewing the brain.' They are designed to tap into that hidden ninety-five percent of cognition that focus groups cannot see," (Userfocus 2009).

Furthermore, rather than being within individuals trends in consumer behavior very often result from trends in society. Therefore, cultural and social anthropologists use their own research methods to understand how consumer attitudes and beliefs "tie into larger cultural constructs" (Carton Donofrio Partners, Inc. 2008). Like psychology, the discipline even has a specialty for studying the consumer, called consumer anthropology. A smaller, emerging group, consumer anthropologists typically work at research firms, advertising agencies and academic institutions. Context-Based Research Group performs ethnographic research from a cultural anthropological perspective to help companies better understand their consumers. In fact, Context believes anthropology is inherent to marketing and communications strategies: "We. . . weave our anthropological expertise into the analysis phase drawing from cultural

anthropological theories that help to explain behaviors. The end result is a much deeper understanding of your customer, your product and brand and how these forces interact” (Context-Based Research Group 2009).

Problems Identified

The interdisciplinary nature of consumer research can sometimes be problematic for the discipline, though, particularly in recognition. According to Russell Belk (1986), due to its multidisciplinary relevance, consumer behavior should not be seen as a subgroup of any one discipline, rather “It should instead be a viable field of study, just as these other disciplines are, with some potential relevance to *each* of these constituent groups.” Holbrook (1987) suggests that the discipline advances faster when seen as separate from rather than part of other disciplines.

Another issue of discontent in consumer research is the frequent ineffectiveness of improperly conducted or analyzed focus groups. According to UserFocus, a usability consulting and training company which uses experimental psychology methods to understand its clients’ consumers:

“most conventional focus groups actually measure the wrong thing. They do not measure what people think when making a purchase. They measure what people think when participating in a focus group. The psychological, sociological, neurological, and even pecuniary factors bearing on a person’s decision making while they are participating and responding in a focus group are

not the same psychological, sociological, neurological, and pecuniary factors that bear on decision making when the same person makes an actual purchase.” (Userfocus 2009).

This common issue with focus-group interviews is worsened when multidisciplinary input is not pervasive in consumer research. However, the use of psychological and anthropological methods is increasing, and the consumer-research industry is transforming the study of consumer behavior to embrace new technology and subsequent changes in consumer behavior trends.

A CONTEMPORARY RATIONALE FOR STUDYING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

The 21st century has already seen a radical revolution of the consumer on all fronts. The American consumer – nay, now one must remember to adjust this epithet – the *global* consumer has of course always been changing; however, the last 20 years have seen what is arguably the greatest revolution in consumer behavior. Furthermore, these transformations are not likely to become more stable anytime soon. Thomas G. Feeheley, Vice President of Consumer & Market Insights and Strategy at Proteus Design, believed in May of 2008 that “as we approach the mid-point of 2008, both the American and Global consumer landscape is changing at an unprecedented rate” (Feeheley 2008). That one must now reconsider the “American” consumer to be the “global consumer” is testament to this revolution. Wilkie and Moore (2003) cite “growing globalization” as one of the three most powerful forces in modern marketing

thought. Marketers are struggling to understand what drives consumer behavior, increasing research spending from \$7.3 billion to \$12 billion between 2005 and 2007 (Lindstrom 2008). Key current stimuli to changes in consumer behavior include advances in technology, politics, environmentalism and the 'green' movement, the economy, and generational shifts.

Advances in Technology

Advances in technology (particularly the Internet and mobile technology) have significantly changed the distribution of and access to information, and this has, in turn, significantly changed consumers' habits and their relationship with marketers. "Customers today also have more knowledge, and thus power, than they ever did in the past," (Sheth, et. al. 2006). Lie and Bernoff (2008) have defined a new phenomenon: "Groundswell", a "social trend in which people use technologies to get the things they need from each other, rather than traditional institutions like corporations." According to Professor Carla V. Lloyd, Associate Professor of Advertising and Associate Dean for Creative and Scholarly Activity in the Newhouse School: "people are much more aware of how products are made and this has a significant impact on purchase decisions," and more and more the brand is owned by the consumer (C. Lloyd, personal communication, 2009).

These advances in technology and subsequent changes in consumer behavior have led to shifts from a marketing research focus on demographics to psychographics, and now to what Li and Bernoff (2008) call "Social Technographics." Advertisers must take online consumer behavior into

consideration; consumers can find information about products from an endless variety of sources independent from the companies which produce them. Urban (2005) warns academic researchers to keep in mind that “The new consumer behavior will be based on transparency and trusted advice.” This also creates word-of-mouth marketing with global reach, which can be either positive or negative but nonetheless affords consumers with immense power over advertisers (Urban 2005).

Politicization

Voters are affected by the same strategies as consumers, and so consumer behavior research is increasingly being used in political campaigns. This may seem obvious now, but it was not until recently that consumer-behavior research was a significant factor in campaign strategy. Pollster Frank Luntz is renowned for his use of consumer-research methods – particularly focus groups – in advising candidates’ campaign strategies. The weight given to consumer behavior research in strategy-making saw an enormous jump in the 2008 election, and arguably changed politics forever. Pete Snyder, founder and CEO of New Media Strategies, credits President Barack Obama’s victory in the election to his campaign’s deep understanding and recognition of how consumer behavior has changed. Snyder asserts that:

“The simple fact is that Obama and his campaign chiefs understood. . . . Due to the seismic changes in how voters get and process information that we marketers have seen for quite some

time the voter, just like the consumer, is now in control and thus would be open to making his or her voting decisions earlier than ever. . . And given the power of social media, everyone who has the interest has the ability to influence and mobilize networks of friends. . . As we marketers understand, much has changed over the past six years in how consumers, let alone voters, gather and process information and then make decisions. Voters have more access to information and more touch-points and influencers in their lives than ever before,” (Snyder 2008).

Just as consumers now have instant access to endless sources of information and opinion on the Internet, voters have access to the same about politicians and public policy issues. With the rising importance of consumer-behavior research to political strategy comes also its increasing relevance to public advocacy.

Consumer-behavior research is currently a huge factor in advocacy for one social issue in particular – efforts to reverse decades of irresponsibility and the resulting Green movement.

Environmentalism & the Green Movement

Indeed, the Green movement and environmentalism are pressing concerns and motivators for consumers. Hilary Bromberg, a former cognitive neuroscientist and current strategic director at brand communications firm Egg, summarizes the Green effect on consumer behavior:

“[Consumers have] been getting on the path for quite some time now -- buying organics, recycling, embracing responsible companies, seeking out local products, seeking less-toxic products, seeking mind-body wellness and a simpler lifestyle. These behaviors constitute sustainability. It's a psychic evolution that people go through over time, and it's difficult to go backward” (Bromberg 2009).

Bromberg also stresses that, to really understand the effect the Green movement has had on consumer behavior, one must recognize that it has deep social roots and will change consumer behavior forever. “Sustainability is not a fad or a trend. It's a seismic cultural shift, and it's here to stay” (Bromberg 2009).

Interestingly, despite the ailing economy, eighty percent of consumers still choose (usually more expensive) green products (Progressive Grocer Staff 2009). Being “green” can also mean saving money for consumers, with recycling merchandise that before would have been thrown out and purchasing longer-lasting products an enormous trend, as well. However, consumer behavior with respect to the Green movement and the economy should not be taken at face value; rather, it calls for an increase in consumer research to understand how these two trends coalesce in affecting consumer behavior and better predict how marketers should respond.

Effects of the Economy

It is no secret that consumer behavior changes with the economy, and the effects of the current recession have been of severe concern for marketers. The

aforementioned Context-Based Research Group and Carlton Donofrio Partners, Inc., used ethnography and observation “to understand the impacts and implications of the 2008 financial crisis on American culture. This anthropological research provides a path for companies to follow as they seek to understand consumer behavior in a changing economy.” (Carton Donofrio Partners, Inc. 2008). The study concluded that “it is clear that the consumer today is not the same as the consumer just a few short months ago,” and recognizes the extreme impact that economic changes in 2008 have had on consumer behavior. To continue connecting with consumers, companies must recognize the very deep implications of the economy, but more importantly the effect they have on specific consumer attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Examination of the effects on their *specific* business situations is crucial to successful use of consumer behavior research.

Wal-Mart’s outgoing CEO Lee Scott, during a question-and-answer session with National Retail Foundation President and CEO Tracy Mullin, noted “fundamental change” in consumer behavior that he predicts will last beyond the resolution of the current economic recession. According to Scott, the effects of the economy on consumer behavior will be permanent, as young people have become imbued with prudent attitudes towards spending and debt (Scott 2009). Likewise, legendary fashion forecaster David Wolfe predicts that consumers’ current resentment of over-consumption and unjustifiably expensive goods is likely to stick (D. Wolfe, personal communication, March 24, 2009).

Interestingly, Gunnar Brune, managing director for the advertising agency Lowe Deutschland, examines the relationship of consumer behavior and marketing strategy during the current economic crisis from a different perspective: that consumer behavior is being determined by marketing strategy rather than the expected vice-versa situation. In examining the most recent statistics from Germany's economic depression (which has been very similar to that in the US), he found that "internal company factors" (i.e. budget) have had greater leverage on marketing strategy than actual consumer actions. Though this may seem obvious in a time when companies are short on funds, he points out that "marketers might be unwillingly firing up consumer crisis behavior!" with such actions, and that a better understanding of consumer attitudes and intentions could reveal they are willing to spend more than marketers expect. He argues that, as prices have fallen, consumer spending in Germany during the first weeks of 2009 has gone up by 2.2%, as consumers feel more confident in the quantity of goods they can now buy with their income. Brune identifies a need for marketers to spend their dollars more efficiently, perhaps in research that better assesses what approach during a time of crisis will resonate best with their consumers. He writes: "What marketing does should relate to consumer insight and relevance. And at least today there is a great gap." (Brune). In the United States, this gap in relevance between consumers and marketing is further complicated by the rise of two distinctly influential generations: the young (who create trends and encourage new technology) and the Baby Boomers (who comprise most of the current population).

Shifting Generations

The consumer landscape is marked by an aging population, and marketers are often torn between targeting the enormous Baby Boomer population or the younger generations that drive change. It really depends, as Feeheley notes “the oft discussed but seldom acted upon aging global population. The numbers are staggering, yet many consumer product manufacturers refuse to see the effects that an aging population will have on their businesses. . . . Through a thorough and objective analysis. . . you can gain new insight into your core consumers and develop the roadmap for the future of your business,” (Feeheley 2008). Whatever the industry, though, products are moving in the direction of age-specific designs that will require consumer behavior research on how the various generations interact with their environment and the products which fill it.

CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

Certainly, now more than ever, consumer research is necessary to the survival of marketing and advertising strategies. In their book *Does Marketing Need Reform?* Sheth and Sisodia (2006) declare that marketing has fallen into a rut of relying too heavily on its “bag of tricks” and far too little on the actual thoughts and behavior of the consumer. Central to their list of three key current problems with marketing is the observation that “some marketing actions are so poorly thought out that they leave the company vulnerable to being exploited by

increasingly deal-savvy consumers,” (Sheth and Sisodia 2006, p. 4).

Furthermore, to prevent wasteful marketing, it must be remembered that “marketing ultimately comes down to a company’s attitude toward its customers,” (Sheth and Sisodia 2006). Indeed, there is a disturbing increasing trend in the planning of marketing communications: that marketers respond to consumers’ rejection of advertisements with either more or different methods of advertising that neglect a full understanding of consumers’ needs, wants, and subsequent behaviors. Advertising must fit into consumers’ lives, not intrude on them (Smith 2006). This calls for an increase in consumer research that leads to significant insights for specific target populations and business situations, rather than a simple assessment of consumers’ attitudes and behaviors.

The urgency of the situation that marketing research has fallen into is well demonstrated by the Advertising Research Foundation’s 55th Annual Convention and Expo plans for 2009; the expo is now called *Re:think 2009* and has taken a turn from past years in recognizing the importance of in-depth qualitative consumer research and an emphasis on results expressed in insights over data.

The Foundation notes in the description of the expo:

“It’s time to shift from mind-numbing numbers crunching to mind-expanding consumer listening. . . Lightspeed technology innovations are driving research transformation, yet 80% of research is spent looking backward. . . The gap between consumer connectivity and smart-power research is huge and growing. Connecting is everything, and success depends on new tools, new

technologies and new models that put the human at the center of marketing,” (Advertising Research Foundation 2009).

Though new technologies in consumer research exist, they must be used to reveal significant, deep insights for specific marketing situations, rather than generalizeable knowledge that still requires tremendous complementary research by individual marketers.

Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) is an emerging idea which focuses on the well-being of consumers. Already there has been a Transformative Consumer Research conference at Dartmouth College in 2007, attended by over 100 international scholars. Doctoral courses in TCR are already being developed, most notably by Peter Wright of the University of Oregon, and a *Handbook of Transformative Consumer Research* is in the works (Mick 2008). Strikingly evident in the efforts to formalize the Transformative Consumer Research movement is the heavy involvement and leadership of academic institutions. Mick further notes that “one of the most pleasing features of the 13 accepted articles [in this special issue] is the range of authors, from several senior researchers (inside and outside academia) to a number of junior university faculty and graduate students,” (Mick 2008). However, whether TCR or traditional consumer research, it seems that academia plays an enormous role, and that the rapidly changing times call for more emphasis in and participation by academic institutions.

RATIONALE FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING

With such an integral role played by academia in marketing theory, knowledge, and research, it is fitting that an essential part of the American Marketing Association's mission is "the teaching and study of marketing worldwide. Supporting: Being an essential resource for marketing information, education/training and relationships," (AMA 2009). Its 36,000-person membership is strongly rooted in academics, researchers and students. As mentioned before, the AMA has identified discrepancies in marketing practitioners' and educators' methods and definition of marketing and its role in society; the AMA further warns that the involvement of both parties, especially those who are "concerned with the development of knowledge about marketing, including those focusing on consumer behavior, research methods and models, and larger impacts on society," is vital to a complete understanding of marketing (Ringold and Weitz 2007).

However, the involvement of both academia and professional practice is not enough; rather, they could also consider having an open and continuous connection to recognize and exercise one another's expertise. Obviously, academics and professional practitioners in marketing disciplines cannot operate in completely separate spheres. Raju (2006) argues that graduate students, particularly Ph.D. students, of marketing are far too directed towards a career in academia, rather than actual professional practice of the discipline they have studied so extensively. He reckons the obvious fact that: "Corporations can gain if they are led by individuals who have in in-depth knowledge, and an

appreciation, of how one goes about understanding customer needs. . . and [how to] profitably satisfy such needs,” (Raju 2006). Marketing education can be easily compared to medical school, and Raju (2006) points out that “virtually all academics in medical schools spend some time taking care of patients.” This is testament to not only the need for a more cooperative relationship between the professional world and academia, but also the idea that academic institutions can play an active role in the practice (not just education) of marketing disciplines.

At universities, however, it seems that this important interaction between the academic and professional worlds of marketing knowledge is not as prevalent as it should be. David Glen Mick, Professor of Marketing at the University of Virginia’s McIntire School of Commerce and contributor to the *Journal of Consumer Research*, indicates that there is a hole in consumer research at academic institutions: “Over the years, unfortunately, the field of consumer research has generally underprioritized scholarship for alleviating problems and advancing opportunities,” (Mick 2008). James C. Tsao, Advertising Department Chair at Newhouse, has similarly recognized the potential benefits of a focus on consumer research at Syracuse University (J. Tsao, personal communication, December 11, 2008). Baumgartner and Pieters (2003) identify consumer behavior as one of five subareas of marketing thought; interestingly, this subarea is the most specialized of the five (the other four subareas being core marketing, managerial marketing, marketing applications, and marketing education). Unfortunately, marketing and psychology education, especially at the

undergraduate level, are generally not proportionately specialized in consumer behavior.

CURRICULUM REVIEW:

Undergraduate V Graduate Studies

In considering the relevance of a consumer-behavior curriculum, it is important to know which universities stand out in their education on the topic. It appears that consumer behavior is not a major focus in undergraduate studies at most universities; rather, most institutions offer an undergraduate course on consumer behavior as additional to key psychology topics (i.e. social psychology, personality psychology, brain and behavior, etc.). This is, of course, like the former situation at Syracuse University when PSY 377: Consumer Behavior was offered.

Ph.D. level studies in consumer behavior are more common than undergraduate studies, although the discipline is not a standard specialization at universities in the United States. Perner (2008) notes that, while some psychology doctoral programs have specific emphases in consumer behavior, faculty research in consumer behavior is mostly conducted by business, rather than psychology, faculty. The most common route in pursuing a Ph.D. in consumer behavior is to focus marketing or economics research on consumer behavior, however many social, industrial and organizational psychology doctoral programs allow room for focus on consumer psychology (Perner 2008). There

are a handful of consumer-behavior-specific doctoral programs in the United States, though, and these are likewise based in marketing departments. For example, the Kilts Center for Marketing at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business requires its Ph.D. candidates to specialize in either consumer behavior or econometrics and statistics (Kilts Center for Marketing 2009), and the University of California at Berkeley Haas School of Business offers a marketing doctoral seminar in consumer behavior (Haas School of Business 2009). It should be noted that, while these programs are based in marketing, general agreement among professors in the Advertising Department at Syracuse University is that this is a discipline best rooted in psychology.

How Should Education be Structured?

Ultimately, successful education in marketing disciplines (including advertising) seems to rely on faculty emphasis on and students' knowledge of the central role of the consumer. In fact, Baker et. al. (2003) assert that the only one basis for providing undergraduates with a holistic idea of what marketing disciplines entail is customer value, saying: "The concept of customer value applies to virtually all topics in various marketing courses and provides each course with a singular focus that is readily grasped and applied by students." Furthermore, Baker et. al. (2003) maintain that an understanding of the consumer is the most relevant marketing concept to both academics and practitioners.

The interdisciplinary nature of professional marketing practice is of course present in its academic representation: "Several marketing professors at leading

business schools have doctorates in economics, psychology, anthropology, statistics, and operation research, not marketing,” (Ringold and Weitz). The Association for Consumer Research fittingly has in its website’s “Links for Students” page several interdisciplinary links, including links to journals in anthropology, economics, psychology and sociology. It is therefore not surprising that several professors in the Advertising Department of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University would stress the importance of interdisciplinary involvement and perspectives in the study and research of consumer behavior.

There is especially resounding opinion in the Newhouse School Advertising Department regarding the importance of the psychological perspective in consumer behavior studies. According to Brian Sheehan, Associate Professor of Advertising, (whose opinion echoes the sentiments the other faculty in the department) a course in consumer behavior is extremely useful to many disciplines, but most useful when kept in the psychology department; the subject is more fascinating in the psychology department and has the ability to elaborate on topics taught in the advertising research course (B. Sheehan, personal communication, December 10, 2008). Associate Professor of Advertising Kevin O’Neill remarked: “Good [advertising] creatives *are* psychologists;” for example consumer behavior is an important consideration in copywriting (K. O’Neill, personal communication, December 11, 2008). With all this in mind, a consumer-behavior course is best taught from a psychology perspective, which bolsters its complementary function to other disciplines. Using psychology to understand

consumers, and applying this knowledge to other disciplines (especially marketing and advertising) appears to be the best use of consumer behavior in academics. The structure of consumer-behavior curricula is made stronger by the use of research and application to real-world situations.

How Are Consumer Behavior Curricula Structured?

According to Baker et. al. (2003), a framework of research and information acquisition must be at the foundation of education related to consumers and their behaviors and attitudes. Baker et. al. (2003) found in their curriculum review that typical underpinning topics “include data gathering, data analysis, presentation of information, data base creation and use.” More specific courses in this first tier of knowledge exist at some universities; for example, the marketing department at Bowling Green State University features a course in “hands-on study of database marketing, including topics of data warehousing and data mining,” (Baker et. al. 2003). Similarly, the S.I. Newhouse School of Communications at Syracuse University offers an Advertising Research course in fundamental consumer-research techniques that includes training in SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). However, the research focus of these courses is in surveying and studying consumers’ *attitudes*, and actual study of *behaviors* is far less prominent.

Students’ need to understand the usefulness of such data is addressed in a second tier of courses related to consumer concepts (such as segmentation and buyer decision making), which address actual customer analysis. The same

curriculum review by Baker et. al. (2003) reveals that specific course offerings at many universities do, indeed, include consumer-behavior courses, in addition to “business-to-business marketing research, brand management, and promotions management.” Finally, a top tier of courses includes capstone marketing and advertising requirements (for example at Syracuse University, EEE 457:Strategic and Entrepreneurial Management and ADV 425: Advertising Campaigns) emphasizing the use of consumer knowledge and research methods in determination of marketing strategy (Baker et. al. 2003). It should be noted that, in this common design for education paths in marketing disciplines, courses specifically addressing consumer *behavior* typically play a small part in a larger framework of courses that continuously addresses consumer concepts.

However, as Baker et. al. (2003) discusses, there is still a need to better highlight this overall central role of the consumer in marketing education in order to unify students’ academic experiences. According to a survey of students in marketing disciplines (Baker et. al. 2003), students generally do not use consumer concepts to describe their knowledge of marketing, despite their actual ability to understand marketing and its basic concepts. This is startling, indeed. Perhaps this discrepancy in knowledge and description is due to a lack of practical application of consumer research.

Already in 1977, Stephen J. Arnold, a professor in the School of Business at Queen’s University, recognized the relevance and helpfulness of real-world applications incorporated into consumer behavior course content. His approach to teaching consumer behavior involved a specific objective that: “By the end of the

course, the student with minimum information about a consumer problem should nonetheless be able to generate, first, a series of hypotheses about action the consumer might take in order to solve his problem, and second, approaches that a decision maker might take in order to help the consumer while at the same time meet the decision maker's own objectives," (Arnold 1977). Though his treatise "Problem Solving Through Model Application: One Approach to Teaching Consumer Behavior" is over thirty years old, its relevance has only increased since then, and still serves as a notable example to future consumer-behavior education.

PROGRAM REVIEW

Research Centers and Institutes at Other Universities

There are many research centers and institutes tied to marketing and marketing-related disciplines at universities in the United States, though none focus specifically on consumer-behavior. These programs seem to be especially successful when research conducted is tied to real business problems outside of academia.

Case Study: University of Alabama

In 1983, the University of Alabama's School of Business industrial marketing program launched a joint program between the university community and the local business community to assist local industries, but more importantly, to afford students with "the hands-on experience and

realism that are often missing from the business school curriculum,” (Mason and Allaway 1986). According to Mason and Allaway’s (1986) account of the program, client-sponsored joint venture project topics which would benefit the client in some way and could be completed by students over the course of a semester were selected for study. Though many clients and overarching topics lingered over several semesters, larger projects were broken into phases to be completed by groups of students and faculty one semester at a time. This way, the projects were manageable for student participation, yet still fulfilled clients’ needs. Involved clients benefited from the university’s resources (such as library facilities and research sources that would be considerably costly for clients to use on their own), and students and faculty benefited from the accomplishment of research objectives relevant to real world situations that made for impressive career-building.

Though this specific program no longer seems to exist, the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s School of Business has carried on this legacy of business outreach, including several topic-oriented centers and a Business Analysis Laboratory. The School of Business boasts that, “the chance for students to serve as community leaders and network within their industries of choice boosts their already notable classroom experiences,” (University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Business 2009). The problems students encounter in these programs are real world, and, as Mason and Allaway (1986) note, “early exposure to such reality

can make them more valuable future employees.” Importantly for the current situation at Syracuse University, Mason and Allaway (1986) note that the University of Alabama program concept “can be implemented readily on other campuses.”

Student response to the extracurricular business outreach program was consistently resounding. Student commentary on the 1980s joint industrial marketing program at the University of Alabama included the following statements:

- “all courses should try to use real world projects”
- “the projects make students aware of the types of work they will actually have to do”
- “I feel that that was an important factor in getting me my job”
- “the most valuable experience I had in four years at the University.”

The beneficial effects of the program seem to be unstoppable, as students in the program were afforded with “unique insights otherwise unavailable in a classroom context,” (Mason and Allaway 1986).

The Fuqua School of Business (ranked in the top five business schools worldwide) at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, similarly engages students in seven research centers that link academia with professional practice: “The centers draw on faculty from across Fuqua's academic areas, experienced

practitioners, and students to address current business problems with rigorous research” (Fuqua School of Business 2009). The marketing department in Fuqua furthermore proclaims itself to be “The Most Honored For Our Research,” claiming to have won the most awards for published research among marketing departments (Fuqua School of Business 2009). Likewise, the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs, based in the Manship School of Mass Communications at Louisiana State University, researches political communications for paying, real-world clients. The renowned Center has built up its resources, including a Media Effects Lab with the technology for researchers to measure how people physically and attitudinally react to media messages (Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs 2009).

Urban (2005) notes that the “new consumer behavior” resulting from consumers’ use of the Internet for product information and shopping requires more understanding and sufficient response by advertisers; furthermore, he believes scholarly researchers must adapt their strategies to this changing marketing philosophy. Urban (2005) identifies three especially constructive research questions that take modern technology into consideration:

1. What are the most effective ways for companies to build trust with consumers?
2. Which marketing strategies position companies as “trusted advisors” that consumers can rely on for help in decision making?

3. How can companies “optimize marketing resource allocations” in product improvement and new, trusted communication channels to be in a position to advocate consumers?

Urban (2005) sees “customer advocacy” as the most promising new marketing philosophy, and strongly encourages further research on its marketing and societal benefits. Keeping Urban’s (2005) stress of the consumer-centric concept in mind, there are other lessons to be gleaned from the aforementioned extracurricular research programs.

Lessons Learned

Student and faculty involved in such (extracurricular) programs must do so voluntarily to ensure that clients are adequately served with the enthusiasm and attention to detail they expect (and need). Furthermore, deadlines must be set to create a real world environment (for real world projects!) and allow clients to plan on incorporating results into their business strategies. University and client representatives for the program initiatives should agree in some sort of formal document on methodology and expectations; this prevents conflict and “assure[s] continuity” (Mason and Allaway 1986). Moreover, topics of study must be “of sufficient complexity and comprehensiveness to justify their role” in practical application programs (Mason and Allaway 1986).

“Strong support for joint venture participation when salary, promotion, and tenure decisions are made must be apparent” (Mason and Allaway 1986). Otherwise, faculty may hesitate to become involved in a program because it

would take time away from other responsibilities (namely, research and teaching) that promote career advancement. Furthermore, that faculty can be “comfortable in knowing that such activities are an important measure in evaluating instructor effectiveness and will be positively viewed by all levels of the administration” promotes enthusiastic involvement in the program (Mason and Allaway 1986). Resolution of faculty concerns over the commitment involved, as will be seen, is crucial to success.

TRENDS - AND PROBLEMS - WITH MARKETING EDUCATION

There is an increasing need for undergraduate students to be as best professionally prepared as possible to compete with seasoned members of the workforce upon graduation day. However, employers’ need for higher levels of more specified knowledge in entry-level positions does not always match the curricula and extracurricular activities available at universities, even those with highly regarded marketing and advertising programs (i.e. Syracuse University). Furthermore, educators’ often have difficulty balancing teaching, research, and service obligations, which can sometimes be obstacles to the creation of extracurricular programs.

Real World Relevance

A major trend in education in marketing disciplines and its relevance to professional practice is the complaint that “many undergraduates lack the

necessary skills to apply the theoretical concepts and abstract knowledge [taught at higher education institutions] in practical marketing situations,” (Roach et. al. 1993). Raju (2006) likewise expresses great concern that there is too much emphasis (in marketing education) on breadth over depth, and that this issue is prominently manifested in educators’ inability to adequately integrate teaching, research and real-world knowledge. Bacon and Stewart (2006) similarly recommend that faculty “sacrifice breadth for depth,” as specialized knowledge is retained better by students than completely generalized learning. However, educators at universities are so pressured to cover everything that students of marketing (and related subjects, i.e. advertising) typically graduate with general, undirected knowledge (Raju 2006).

James C. Tsao, Advertising Department Chair, Newhouse School, has recognized this same issue in the advertising program. While the program prepares students well for immediate, professional work in the discipline upon graduation, the need to cover everything and consequential lack of individualized specialties creates a program that is not completely optimized in the students’ – or the industry’s – interest. Tsao is currently working on a reorganization of the advertising major that allows for students to choose a focus in account planning and consumer behavior (among other topics), and graduate with specialties under their belts (J. Tsao, personal communication, December 11, 2008). This is certainly a major step towards increasing the real-world relevance of advertising students’ education at Syracuse University. All majors in the Martin J. Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University already have to complete a

capstone project in EEE 457: Strategic and Entrepreneurial Management, in which students collaborate to create a plan for a new business venture or non-profit idea. Many of these student teams already incorporate consumer-research into their planning, and the real-world pressure is certainly felt when the teams present to actual investors at the end of the semester. Thus, Syracuse University is moving in the direction of increasing the real-world relevance of its academic programs, which could be greatly enhanced by professional-quality consumer research.

Student-Faculty Interaction

In keeping with the demand for more real-world relevance and application, marketing education – like most other disciplines – has seen an increasing trend towards more active student participation and personal interaction between students and professors. Outside criticism of marketing educators in general has included complaints that they spend less time with students than they should, and too much time on research and outside consulting activities (Smart, et.al. 1999). It should furthermore be noted that “individual students have different learning styles” (Van Doren 2006); to fully engage all of their students, faculty must employ a variety of techniques for reinforcing lecture material.

A study conducted a little under a decade ago by Smart et.al. (1999) among 107 top marketing academics revealed that faculty are more actively soliciting student involvement in lectures (which are increasingly becoming more

discussion-oriented), and emphasizing students' decision-making skills much more so than the previous decade. Likewise, "application-based questions, hands-on and field projects, group/team assignments, and cases" are being progressively more integrated into curriculum requirements (Smart et. al. 1999). In fact, further examination of the issue in 2003 led Smart et. al. to assert that passionate encouragement of student involvement is a characteristic of "master teachers," which they describe as "highly effective professionals who have a burning desire to be the best teachers they can be." Such master teachers are at the forefront of changes in marketing education.

Intensification of Employer Expectations

Much of this emphasis on greater student-educator interaction is a consequence of the mounting expectations marketing professionals have of newly graduated students (Smart et. al. 1999). Rather than providing the broad, theoretical curriculum of the past, marketing educators are feeling greater pressure to prepare students with more specific knowledge that is of greater value to prospective employers. A longitudinal study of students' retention of knowledge acquired in consumer behavior coursework revealed that "knowledge that is not quickly refreshed in the workplace will soon be forgotten and consequently lost forever," (Bacon et. al. 1995). This indicates a strong need for more real-world relevance and transference of knowledge from university to office.

One faculty member in the Smart et. al. (1999) study answered the question “What are the greatest challenges that marketing education faces in the next 10 years?” with the following: “We train students for jobs. Much of marketing education is being taken over by people who have lost that focus and are trying to make this discipline into something it’s not – a liberal art. Universities should do more to promote industry interaction with faculty.” This faculty member was not alone in his answer and, interestingly, many of the faculty members responding to the study cited this same fear that education in marketing disciplines is losing the real-world focus that is necessary for students to succeed after graduation. Smart et. al. (2003) even go so far as to remark that “today’s marketing students must be. . . analytically mature beyond their years.” To improve the situation, Bacon and Stewart (2006) suggest that marketing educators (especially in consumer behavior courses) focus on teaching concepts and actual skills that students can employ in entry-level positions after graduation.

Need for More Than Just Curricula

However, despite efforts to rejuvenate education in marketing disciplines, the sentiment exists that simple changes in curricula are not enough. Smart et. al. (1999) remark that “looking forward, the prognosis is not encouraging, in large part because institutions of higher education tend to respond [to industry needs] in slow, methodical, and conservative ways.” Moreover, the variety of teaching styles that marketing educators employ, though great, seems to have no effect on students’ success after graduation (Roach et. al. 1993); rather, post-graduation

success has more to do with marketing-related extracurricular opportunities offered at universities and the efforts students make to participate in them. However, such opportunities may no longer be as numerous or as profound as students (and their impending careers) require: Smart et. al. (1999) note that the 21st century will see “an increasingly demanding student body that does not fit traditional and established conventions.” Roach et. al. (1993) similarly asserts that, in addition to improving past teaching methodologies, “the discipline needs to learn new instructional techniques.” Likewise, Baker et. al. (2003) question students’ ability to assimilate knowledge acquired in marketing courses into a cohesive tool for actual practical application.

Faculty Dilemma: Teaching V Research

Furthermore, in addition to sometimes ineffective improvements to marketing education, educators’ (highly criticized) conflict between teaching and research has the potential to grow and become an even larger obstacle to the quality of marketing education in the future. The aforementioned study by Smart et. al. (1999) chronicled educators’ concerns that the “rising costs and shrinking budgets” at their respective institutions would require them to teach more and larger courses, taking time away from their required and desired research objectives. A subsequent study by Smart et. al. (2003) revealed that, four years later, this tension had not been alleviated; rather, faculty have instead begun to worry further that their inability to exceed (or in some cases, simply fulfill) the teaching and research obligations conferred upon them by their respective

institutions would additionally affect the future of their own careers. Smart et. al. (2003) note that “earning tenure promotion, and above-average merit pay requires excellences in both domains.” Moreover, despite “rules of thumb” and knowledge of general expectations, “many assistant professors do not clearly know how much time to put into their teaching,” (Smart et. al. 2003). The irony is that faculty research is what connects academic institutions to real-world practitioners, a relationship that has been identified as needing strengthening, and yet such research must be neglected in lieu of preparing more students for their post-graduate careers.

What Can Be Done?

These sentiments are well expressed by Joseph F. Hair Jr. (1995), chair of marketing at Louisiana State University, who predicted that marketing education will necessitate a closer relationship with professional practice, require interdisciplinary contributions for well-roundedness, and force academics to cope with the divergence of research and teaching responsibilities. There must, however, exist solutions that resolve issues for both faculty (such as the conflict between teaching and research) and students (such as the need for additional real world experience before entering the job market); Arnold (1977) suggests that faculty use examples from their own research to illustrate lectures, particularly in consumer behavior courses. This is now frequent practice, yet the dilemma remains.

In the past there have been some suggestions that real-world experience guided by academic institutions (in addition to outside internships) could help solve these dilemmas in marketing education. Roach et. al. (1993) already recognized, over a decade and a half ago, that “interaction with local businesses involves marketing students with the business community and gives students a taste of ‘real world’ situations that they are likely to encounter upon graduation.” This is currently accomplished in some capacity at many universities (for example, the joint venture program at the University of Alabama, or The NewHouse, a student-run advertising agency at Syracuse University that serves real clients); however, such programs and courses are typically not required or even used by most students to which they are available. Furthermore, application is stressed above deep research.

It appears that academic institutions which do encourage students’ involvement in specific, real-world situations are significantly beneficial to the quantity and quality of marketing knowledge that students translate from education to career. Bacon and Stewart (2006) conducted a longitudinal study to evaluate how much and what kind of knowledge students retain from coursework in consumer behavior. Surprisingly, it was discovered that, despite the fact that application of consumer-behavior knowledge revolves much around common sense, “most of the knowledge gained in the course is lost within 2 years,” (Bacon et. al. 1995). The study further notes that most students have very “limited exposure” to consumer behavior, a condition that prevents active reinforcement of this essential knowledge. In general, “if a student has only one course on the

subject, the knowledge is not retained for more than a few years.” (Bacon et. al. 1995).

The Bacon and Stewart (2006) study concludes that hope for student retention of knowledge (and, specifically, consumer behavior knowledge) was only improved by active learning beyond a single course, which affords students with “complex knowledge structures that they will retain for years to come.” Arnold (1977) already asserted that student research in consumer behavior “should be more oriented to the testing of specific questions than to the rediscovery or the basics of consumer behavior.” This idea, coupled with Bacon et. al.’s (1995) suggestion that academic institutions “develop a pedagogy that requires deep learning,” is strong motivation for greater student involvement in practical applications and research.

However, suggestions such as Arnold’s (1977), Roach et. al.’s (1993) and Bacon et. al.’s (1995) have perhaps not garnered enough attention to be implemented, at least in terms of consumer research at Syracuse University. Accordingly, in her guide for “Designing a New Special Topics Marketing Course” Dr. Doris Van Doren (2006), a marketing professor at Loyola College in Maryland, notes that “responsibility for the quality and variety of the marketing courses rests with the highly autonomous professors;” this is absolutely true of the Consumer Behavior course situation at Syracuse University. Changes in curriculum traditionally come from faculty proposals.

Steps are being made, though; as mentioned, the current chair of the Advertising Department at Syracuse University (James C. Tsao) is committed to a

future of greater student involvement in real world applications of research course material, especially with respect to consumer research. Tsao and Associate Professor of Advertising Edward Russell have already implemented a real world client situation as the overarching topic of study for students in the Advertising Research (ADV 509) course. However, this change in focus may be largely due to Tsao's strong background in consumer research, in keeping with Van Doren's (2006) commentary.

WHY DOES IT ALL MATTER?

This review of available literature and discourse on trends in marketing disciplines, especially consumer behavior and advertising, and corresponding academic programs is truly telling of a need for something more in academia. The paradox exists: marketing professionals want and need more from marketing academics, but academics' efforts (especially curriculum changes and greater attention paid to students) cannot seem to keep up; rather, the criticisms of education in marketing disciplines (including advertising) continue. This situation is exacerbated by frequent faculty conflicts between teaching and research responsibilities. To address this paradox, and for the benefit of the school and university which I am so immensely proud to attend, I have detailed the following recommendations which I feel are a solid foundation for building the relationship between the professional world and the rich academic world at Syracuse University with respect to consumer behavior.

ORIGINAL RESEARCH & ARGUMENTS

INVESTIGATION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION AT SU

Whereas the foregoing literature review touched upon the basic situation facing Syracuse University (that PSY 377: Consumer Behavior has not been offered in several years), an investigation of the circumstances leading up to this situation is necessary to fully understand the problem. With an understanding of the cause of its absence, consumer-behavior education can be better planned for, and solutions (most prominently, putting PSY 377 back on the time schedule or establishing a consumer-behavior research institute) can be appropriately evaluated.

Syracuse University's Department of Psychology in the College of Arts & Sciences provides its undergraduate majors with education in the basics of psychology, with more intense, specialized programs for graduate majors in clinical, experimental, school and social psychology. In the past, a specialized undergraduate course in consumer behavior [PSY 377: Consumer Behavior] was offered once a year. As of Spring 2009, it is still listed in the course catalog (although now renamed "Consumer Psychology"). This perhaps indicates that the Department of Psychology might be open to the idea of bringing back the course; this is a sentiment which administrators in the department confirmed, though they cited time, financial constraints and lack of student interest as obstacles to offering the course.

Therefore, circumstances culminated in the unfortunate result that this course is no longer offered, and has not been since at least Fall 2006. According

to the Department of Psychology, the professor who specialized in the topic left the university, and the department decided against replacing him due to uncertainty of student interest and the cost of hiring a professor for a course offered one semester per year. The other professors in the department – whose research interests have a heavy focus on health psychology – do not have specific expertise in consumer behavior; moreover, even if the department sought a professor specializing in consumer behavior, one might not be available for hire. However, there has been discussion among undergraduate students, particularly Newhouse Advertising majors with minors in Psychology, that the course might appear once again before their graduation. The exact number of students who would take the course is unknown, though, and only a few have actually voiced their concerns directly to the Department of Psychology.

Therefore, an essential factor in this discrepancy between students and administration lies in that the Department of Psychology is unaware of the number of students who would love to see PSY 377 back on the schedule, and the topic's inherent significance to many disciplines outside of the department. Likewise, students have not fully voiced their opinion about the issue. Due to the course's three-year absence from the time schedule, many are unaware it was ever an option at all. Moreover, many students lack an understanding of independent-study options available to them should they decide to pursue studies in consumer behavior anyway.

Syracuse University's Department of Psychology, its faculty and courses by nature emphasize social psychology which, interestingly, encompasses

consumer behavior; therefore, it seems that there would be no better place for a consumer-behavior course than the Department of Psychology. Doris Van Doren's aforementioned point reflects the consumer-behavior course-offering situation at Syracuse University. Which courses are offered and which are discontinued depends heavily on the availability and research specialties of the University's faculty. When the former Consumer Behavior professor left the University, the course was discontinued. Faculty outside the department expressed concern, yet the situation remained. Whether more concrete plans for the re-installation of PSY 377 exist in the future is unknown; its re-listing in the course catalog under the title "Consumer Psychology" is encouraging, but according to administrators in the department there are no current plans to offer the course.

From the perspective of a student outside the department, though, the situation is discouraging. For example, anecdotal discussions with Newhouse Advertising majors revealed that many selected the Psychology minor with intentions to take PSY 377. Moreover, other courses in the Department of Psychology do not focus at all on consumer behavior, and courses in other disciplines do not appear to address the topic either, despite the subject's multidisciplinary relevance. In the Advertising major, there is a research course (ADV 509: Advertising Research), but the limited time of just one semester constrains professors to covering basic quantitative and qualitative research methods. Real-world situations involving the study of consumer groups are also present in the major, in ADV 509 and ADV 425: Campaigns. In ADV 425,

students create a campaign from top to bottom for a real client, but designing entire campaigns in a few short months means limited room for consumer research. Students gain valuable experience creating campaigns, and must, of course, do research to create them; but truly in-depth consumer-behavior theory and research is simply not feasible given the other demands of the course. Students seeking an even deeper understanding of consumer behavior have no academic options; this major limitation was the impetus for this thesis.

Acquiring the knowledge outside the course at the E.S. Bird Library on campus has its limits, as well; a review of the materials available on the topic at the library reveals that it consists mostly of outdated textbooks written in the 1950s to 80s. This is quite disconcerting, considering that books on consumer behavior written in the pre-Millennium decades are in many cases irrelevant (except for some theoretical treatises) due to revolutions in technology and the distribution of information. The global consumer revolution that has occurred over the last two decades cannot be understood with information from the preceding three decades. The outdated books might very well be a sign of consumer behavior's presence as a discipline fading at Syracuse University.

WHY CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AT SU?

Of course, no university can teach everything to everyone, and consumer-behavior education may have simply been passed over for more pressing topics; however, consumer behavior is rising to a more prominent level of need because

of its increasing versatility and multi-disciplinary relevance. As consumers become increasingly affected by more than just media touch-points and advertising gimmicks, a thorough understanding of them and their behaviors requires deeper research (for example, input from anthropologists and psychologists).

The development of the professional field of consumer-behavior research as interdisciplinary makes the idea of consumer-behavior education at Syracuse University even more compelling. The field has become more complex in recent years, and, therefore, education in consumer behavior is all the more necessary for students to be on par with knowledge of consumer-behavior trends upon graduation. Here, the reputation of the Newhouse School comes into play; the school is known for state-of-the-art facilities and exceptionally professional undergraduate programs. Students especially in the communications industry need an understanding of consumers to work successfully in advertising, public relations, journalism, graphic arts, and television, radio and film professions.

This all begs the question: is the reintroduction of PSY 377 to the Department of Psychology time schedule enough? Given the Baker et. al (2003) conclusion that students retain little from consumer-behavior courses without active, practical application within a year or two, providing students with a means of carrying out research and applying consumer-behavior theories to real-world situations is a more effective means of giving students more enduring experience in this crucial topic. Therefore, in addition to validating the need for PSY 377 to

be offered again, the following provides a plan to establish a consumer-behavior research institute at Syracuse University.

Why the Institute?

With consumer behavior being the most specialized “subarea” of marketing thought, it deserves equal specialized attention. Bringing consumer-behavior theory and practice to Syracuse University could help mend the disconnect between approaches to marketing in the academic and professional worlds. Stronger research on how consumer behavior affects marketing decisions naturally guides how marketing should be defined and practiced; executing such research in an academic setting – but on pressing real-world topics – can bridge this gap efficiently in a way that both parties (the academic and the professional) can benefit immensely. Encouraging faculty participation in research that will more directly impact the professional practice of marketing and students’ undergraduate experience also follows the current trend of increased student interaction with professors. Perhaps, to a certain degree, educators in interdisciplinary marketing-communications-related fields at SU feel dual pressure from the research and student-oriented parts of their careers. Instead, there would be a venue for them to not only interact more with students, but to fulfill their own research objectives, as well. This would also give students the opportunity to participate in ground-breaking research not only makes for impressive credentials upon graduation, but (more importantly) sends the newest professionals into entry-level work with professional-level knowledge.

Allowing undergraduates to participate in consumer-behavior research could also prevent them from making common mistakes in research after graduation. Common problems in how consumer-behavior research is conducted and analyzed can be recognized and subsequently averted if the newest entrants to the real-world workforce are trained properly. For example, Gross's asserted chronic problems in the (mis)use of focus groups – the most commonly used consumer-research method – can be avoided if students (the future researchers) become more experienced in the most appropriate techniques. Schools like Newhouse instruct advertising and marketing students in the basics of focus-group research, but completely educating students on the full scale of potential misuse of it is impossible to fit all into one research course. A supplementary institution or course option could ensure that students who do show a particular interest in consumer research or are pursuing a career in research are well-rounded in their knowledge of its proper use. Real-world consumer behavior research (and complementary academic options) at Syracuse University can help bridge the recognized gap between academics and practitioners, and prepare students' expectations for what they will experience and be expected to deliver after graduation.

New graduates will be better prepared to take on the responsibilities associated with consumer research because they will have already encountered those same responsibilities in real-world situations during their undergraduate participation in the research institute. These students will have a greater potential to emerge as proficient in consumer-behavior theory and research techniques.

Syracuse University and the S.I. Newhouse School of Communications have an opportunity to be at the forefront of consumer-behavior research and further a reputation of excellence. Newhouse especially could be more active in the latest developments in communications industries – which are tied directly to marketing communications. For example, Dartmouth College and the University of Oregon are pioneering the Transformative Consumer Research movement not only in academia, but in professional practice, as well. An advanced consumer-research institute in Newhouse will enhance the school’s reputation as a leader in communications education, and increase its presence in developing the crucial field of consumer behavior. The idea of a consumer-behavior research institute based in the Newhouse School begs the question: are Syracuse University students interested in consumer behavior and extracurricular research?

PRIMARY RESEARCH ANALYSIS: ONLINE SURVEY OF STUDENTS

Research Objectives and Questions

Knowing whether or not students would take advantage of consumer-behavior curricular and research opportunities is essential in evaluating the feasibility of reactivating PSY 377 and establishing a research institute at Syracuse University. Therefore, a research study was designed with the following objectives:

1. Evaluate students’ awareness of and interest in consumer behavior;

2. Quantify how many students are actually interested in studying consumer behavior and have been previously interested in PSY 377;
3. Understand Syracuse University students' awareness of course offerings;
4. Measure Syracuse University students' interest in extracurricular research;
5. Explore motives and incentives for Syracuse University students to participate in extracurricular research opportunities.

To assess Syracuse University students' interest in studying consumer behavior and likelihood of participating in extracurricular research opportunities, a survey was conducted online via SurveyMonkey.com from February to March 2009.

The twenty-one questions in the survey were designed with the following research questions in mind:

- Do Syracuse University students understand consumer behavior as an academic field of study and professional discipline?
- Do Syracuse University students find consumer behavior relevant to their majors and minors?
- What previous knowledge of PSY 377 do Syracuse University students have?
- How do students use the Syracuse University Course Catalog?
- Is relevancy to their majors and minors a significant factor in selecting courses in addition to degree requirements?
- Are Syracuse University students interested in extracurricular research?

- What are motivations for Syracuse University students to participate in extracurricular research?
- What incentives are most compelling for students to participate in extracurricular research opportunities?

[To view the questions asked in the online survey, and a summary of participants' responses, please refer to Appendix B.] In addition to questions designed to fulfill the above research objectives, respondents were also asked for information regarding their age, student status (undergraduate v graduate), class year, home college, majors and minors.

Method

After appropriate approval by the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the online survey was distributed to undergraduate students attending Syracuse University as of Spring 2009. The survey was voluntarily taken by 139 students, with 127 (91.4%) of them completing the survey in its entirety. It was distributed via email, Facebook.com, Blackboard.com, and various student organizations' listservs. An analysis of respondents' class years, home colleges, and major and minor fields of study is detailed below.

Limitations

Participants for the online survey were contacted via convenience sampling (that is, the majority of respondents were friends, classmates and friends-of-friends of the researcher). Respondents' demographic information was

skewed by class year and home college (see below). A greater number of respondents would have been ideal, however, due to constraints on time and access to potential participants this was not possible.

Respondent Analysis

Though the breakdown of the 139 online survey respondents by class year, home college, major and minor shows skewed results, these percentages are not such that they make the respondents less relevant to the topic of study (a consumer-behavior course and extracurricular research opportunities). The breakdown of survey participants by class year was as follows:

- 38.8% Seniors
- 18.7% Juniors
- 24.5% Sophomores
- 15.8% Freshmen

Though respondents were weighted more towards seniors, this gives the survey results a more reflective quality and allows for more students with the full scope of their experience at Syracuse University to provide insightful commentary. Also, responses were received from students in each class year to ensure some level of comprehensiveness with regards to experience.

Respondents were more heavily skewed by home college, though, with 31.7% based in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and 30.9% based in the College of Arts & Sciences. Respectively, 11.5% and 10.1% of respondents were from the Martin J. Whitman School of Management and the

College of Visual & Performing Arts. However, the proportion of respondents' home colleges is relevant to the purpose of this study; the disciplines whose students would benefit most from a consumer-behavior course or institute are mostly in:

- S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications (Advertising, Public Relations and Journalism)
- Arts & Sciences (Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology)
- Martin J. Whitman School of Management (Marketing, Entrepreneurship)
- Visual & Performing Arts (Advertising and Communications Design, Communication and Rhetorical Studies)

Therefore, the concentration of respondents in these colleges is relevant to their potential interest in consumer behavior. This is likewise reflected in the percentages of respondents' major fields of study: 16.5% Advertising, 11.5% Psychology, 10.8% Public Relations, 7.2% Journalism (Magazine, Newspaper and Broadcast), and 4.3% Marketing. Minor fields of study, noted by 66.2% of respondents, were also in some cases significant: 12.2% Psychology, 5.7% Marketing and 3.5% Sociology.

Awareness of Course Offerings

When asked about how much they explore the course catalog before registering for classes, 52.8% responded "I look at a few other disciplines, but most seriously at those which fulfill requirements for my major/degree." About a

quarter of students are more thorough in their use of the course catalog, as 26.8% of respondents selected “I browse courses offered in almost every discipline.” Another 20.5% selected “I only look for courses which fulfill my college or major/minor requirements.” Though the majority of respondents only seem to explore the course catalog in a limited fashion, most students do seek out courses in the course catalog that are from disciplines complementary to their main field(s) of study, as 89% of students said they did this either often, always or sometimes.

However, only 66.1% were satisfied with the quantity of courses at Syracuse University which complement their main field(s) of study. When asked to list any topics they wish the university offered courses (or more courses) in, 50 respondents listed a wide range of topics, with one student specifically answering “Consumer Behavior.” A number of students, rather than listing topics, expressed other concerns with course content:

- “courses that simulate a professional workplace”
- “i’m (sic) more concerned by the lack of collaboration (sic) and encouragement to venture outside your home college.. there are classes I (sic) would like to take, that exist, that i (sic) simply can't for one reason or another (restrictions, closed class, not allowed to due to requirements)”
- “more hands-on classes”
- “It would be appropriate if students were given the opportunity to take transdisciplinary (sic) course work that was coordinated by several

faculty from different departments. As of now the only way a student can do this is by taking a collection of classes that they hope will overlap and create an opportunity for unique and provocative research.”

These comments indicate that students are seeking more collaboration, participation and professional-level work from courses at Syracuse University, and are especially relevant to the concept of a consumer-behavior research institute. It should be noted that one student, unprompted, even identified the benefits of interdisciplinary cooperation in multi-functional topics – an inherent quality of consumer behavior.

Awareness and Interest in Consumer Behavior

When asked if they had ever heard of consumer behavior or consumer psychology as disciplines of study or professional fields, 61.4% of respondents replied “Yes.” This number is not surprisingly high, though, as almost the same percentage of the respondents have majors relevant to consumer behavior. However, this does demonstrate an encouraging degree of awareness of consumer behavior among Syracuse University students.

The online survey also asked participants to rate their interest in the course catalog’s current description of PSY 377 [“The psychological study of consumer behavior; the role of awareness, beliefs, associations, feelings and desires, intentions and behaviors.”]. 50.4% responded as “Interested,” 19.7% “Very Interested,” and 19.7% “Neutral.” Only 9.4% responded as “Not Interested,” and

only one respondent chose “Not Interested At All.” These responses, definitely, demonstrate pervasive student interest in PSY 377. Furthermore, when asked how relevant they found the course description to their main field(s) of study, 34.6% said “Very Relevant” and an additional 33.9% said “Somewhat Relevant.” These percentages add up to roughly the same proportion of respondents whose majors or minors are relevant to consumer behavior, anyway; however, their recognition of its relevance is promising to their likeliness of taking the course when offered.

Accordingly, to determine exactly how likely the respondents were to take the course, the online survey asked “*How likely are you to consider taking this course if it were offered at SU?*” 46.5% responded that they “would consider taking this course,” and 17.3% “would definitely take the course.” An additional 16.5% of respondents were neutral on the issue, and only 1.6% (2 respondents) said they would definitely not sign up for PSY 377. Students were also allowed to comment on this question, and among a handful of more arbitrary comments one student remarked: “I’m about to graduate, but it would have definitely complemented me as an Advertising major. Just like my Sociology minor does, I think consumer psych would help out a lot.”

A final comment box in the online survey allowed students to comment specifically on wanting to take PSY 377 in the past but have been unable to for any reason. Five students responded, and provided the following statements:

- “I had actually seen it in the course book and called the Psych department to see if it was offered that semester, and they said it hadn't been for some time.”
- “If I remember correctly, it was always listed in the main list of classes with descriptors, but never actually offered. I constantly looked for it because it complemented both my advertising major and psych minor.”
- “I actually saw it in a course catalog but it was not offered the semester I had room in my schedule to take it.”
- “They never offer it!”
- “I am a psychology minor because it complements my advertising major. I believe that the understanding of consumer psych would help me in my advertising curriculum and future career.”

That five students (3.6%) decided to comment on frustrations over wanting to take the course in the past is indicative that students, albeit a small percentage of them, are very eager to take PSY 377. This small group of students with specific experience with the situation, when coupled with other results (such as the 63.8% that expressed some level of specific interest in taking the course) is compelling evidence that there is sufficient student interest for the Department of Psychology to put the course back on the time schedule. However, in the meantime, extracurricular options may be more feasible for the department, and the survey participants were positively responsive to these options, as well.

Extracurricular Research

The online survey results do show that a majority of students would take advantage of extracurricular research opportunities (for example, independent-study credit or participation on a research team) if such opportunities are feasible and deliver measurable results. When asked “*Have you ever wanted to explore a topic in more depth, but didn't have the time or resources to research it?*” 83.6% of the respondents answered “Yes.” This demonstrates that most students desire to learn more than they do from their classes, and develop specific research interests.

Moreover, 62.7% of respondents expressed interest in collaborating with students from other majors and colleges in extra-curricular projects or research studies, with 41.8% responding as “Interested,” and 20.9% “Very Interested.” Slightly fewer respondents (58.2%) were interested in collaborating with outside institutions and professors on extracurricular projects or research studies, with 41.8% saying they are “Interested” and 16.4% saying they are “Very Interested.” However, respondents’ interest in these opportunities, as many clearly stated in free commentary spaces, depends heavily on the amount of time they need to devote on other coursework, and on incentives for participating.

Incentives

To examine what incentives are most appealing to students for participation in consumer-behavior research that is in addition to their degree requirements, another set of questions on the online survey probed for time and

motivation considerations. The majority of respondents (79.9%) said they would consider working on an extracurricular research team for academic credit, and the average number of weekly hours respondents said they would spend on an extracurricular research team was 5.6. Although, it is important to note that many students commented on this question stating that the number of hours would depend greatly on other course requirements to be fulfilled during the semester, and how interested that they are in the topic being researched.

The respondents were asked to choose the three most compelling incentives to contribute to extracurricular projects or research studies from the following list:

- Extra credit
- Personal fulfillment
- Resume-building
- Exploration of personal interests
- Establishing an academic reputation
- Working directly with faculty
- Other (please specify)

Among the 139 students responding to the survey, the top three ranked incentives were “resume-building” (85.5%), “extra credit” (63.4%), and “exploration of personal interests” (50.4%). Therefore, it appears that the most important goal of students when considering extracurricular opportunities is how the experience will enhance their resumes – quite a legitimate concern for students looking to work after graduation. However, it should be kept in mind that, with 38.8% of the respondents being seniors, careers are an especially present consideration for

many of the online survey participants. Likewise, grades are a major concern for students at all levels, and this is reflected in the large number (63.4%) seeking extra credit opportunities. Nevertheless, a little over half of the respondents chose “exploration of personal interests” as a top three incentive, demonstrating that many students do have a desire to grow academically, as well.

Conclusions

Despite its limitations, the online survey nevertheless indicates that students do, indeed, have significant interest in studying consumer-behavior and taking advantage of extracurricular research opportunities. Given the 61.4% of respondents who have heard of consumer behavior or consumer psychology, and the majority of students who show some degree of interest in taking PSY 377, the results of the online survey suggest that Syracuse University students do understand the importance of the discipline. The survey revealed that Syracuse University students of a variety of majors and minors do, indeed, find consumer behavior relevant to their studies; in fact, five students felt so strongly about it that they commented specifically on wanting to take PSY 377 in the past. Furthermore, the survey revealed that many (33.9%) of students are unsatisfied with course offerings at Syracuse University, and collaboration on professional-quality projects is of especial interest with regard to future opportunities.

The quantity of Syracuse University students interested in exploring extracurricular topics – 83.6% – is remarkable. Respondents were most interested in collaborating with students from other fields of study in extracurricular

projects, and collaborating on research with outside institutions and professors was also interesting to the majority of respondents. However, it appears that potential participation in extracurricular research depends heavily on motives (exploration of personal interests, free time to fill) and compelling incentives. Encouraging students to participate in an extracurricular research institute will invariably entail emphasis on benefits to students' careers ("resume-building") and grades ("extra-credit"). Nevertheless, the volume of student interest in consumer behavior and related extracurricular research opportunities is promising.

A HIERARCHY OF ACTION

Consideration of the literature review and online survey analysis reveals the potential for a hierarchy of action to resolve the issue of re-implementing consumer-behavior education at Syracuse University:

1. Simple reinstallation of original course [PSY 377]
2. Altering the original course so that it may be offered as a Newhouse advertising course that fulfills the "Critical Issues" degree requirement
3. Creation of an interdisciplinary, cross-listed sequence of courses that incorporates the interests of several majors in different colleges at Syracuse University
4. Eventual establishment of a consumer-behavior research institute at SU

The realistic implications of these solutions will now be examined.

FEASIBILITY OF OPTIONS

Simple Reinstallation of PSY 377

The current research course in the advertising major (ADV 509: Advertising Research) teaches methods of studying consumers' attitudes, rather than behaviors. This course is already overwhelmed with topics to cover, and so adding consumer behavior to the advertising course's mix of topics is neither fair to students nor feasible to professors. With the absence of a course in consumer behavior, students are learning only half the research battle, with methods that allow students only to make assumptions about consumers' behavior rather than knowing in theory what is actually happening. Furthermore, the online survey demonstrates that there is significant student interest in PSY 377. An interesting point in convincing the Department of Psychology to offer the course again is the proof that students from other schools would take it, as this would bring more money to the school as per the university's budgeting process.

It is not recommended, however, that the course syllabus remain as it were three years ago. As the literature review bore out, there is considerable need to make changes to old content in light of the influence of revolutionary new technology and incorporation of key influences on current consumer behavior (advances in technology, politics, the economy, environmentalism, and generational shifts).

“Critical Issues?”

Another idea originally was to alter the current consumer-behavior course so that it may be offered as a Newhouse Advertising course that fulfills the school’s “Critical Issues” degree requirement. This would essentially mean approaching consumer behavior from a critical perspective, for example discussion of consumers with regards to limited access to various products/information because of gender, single-parent status, age, etc. However this would mean less emphasis on the psychological perspective which is so integral in comprehensive study of the topic and separating the discipline from advertising research. Moreover, these topics overlap considerably with other courses already offered (for example, the critical issues option COM 456: Race, Gender and Media).

Interdisciplinary, Cross-Listed Sequence

A way to expand on the original course and increase its relevance to more disciplines is the creation of an interdisciplinary, cross-listed sequence of courses that incorporates the interests of several majors in different colleges (especially Arts & Sciences, Public Communications and Management) at Syracuse University. This would be innovative in that it cross-lists a course between two colleges (which has not been done before at Syracuse University) and more strongly connects students from the two schools.

However this might decrease the influence of the psychological perspective, which Syracuse University faculty have stressed as essential to truly

studying consumer behavior. Also, a key reason that the Department of Psychology has not already offered a course in consumer behavior again is the matter of finding and hiring a professor who specializes in this area. Certainly, finding professors to teach an entire sequence of courses would not be any easier. Moreover, cross-listing between colleges would be a logistic and accounting nightmare, endangering the Newhouse school's accreditation. The gain for individual schools involved is not compelling enough to take on such a weighty idea.

However, the basic idea of expanding beyond the singular course offering (PSY 377) and providing students and faculty from a variety of disciplines to collaborate on studies and research in consumer behavior is still important to consider. Not only does this present opportunities for student and faculty growth and innovative research, but students (in responding to the online survey) have requested such an opportunity. Emphasis programs are in the works for Advertising majors, so interdisciplinary input to marketing studies will happen in the future. However, another idea stands out as a resolution to the consumer-behavior issue at Syracuse University: the establishment of a consumer-behavior research institute.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONSUMER-BEHAVIOR RESEARCH INSTITUTE

This is, of course, the most far-reaching goal in the hierarchy, but also the most comprehensive, logical solution with the most benefits. The institute would

enhance participating students' post-graduate success, and resolve teaching, research and service issues for faculty involved. Moreover, little needs to be done (or spent) in altering the Newhouse School's facilities to accommodate such an institute; with the addition of Newhouse 3 in Fall 2007, state-of-the-art research facilities were installed, especially for advertising needs. The new I3 Research Center, which boasts several research rooms (including a double-mirrored focus group room) and various equipment (such as a Perceptual Analyzer, which facilitates measurement of participants' reactions to messages, products, etc., and an eye-tracking machine), would certainly be put to good use.

Indeed, the Newhouse School is the perfect home for a consumer-behavior research institute at Syracuse University. In addition to its resources, the school includes a variety of communications disciplines, most of which are extremely relevant to consumer behavior (most notably, advertising and public relations). Moreover, Syracuse University has an exceptional School of Management, home to ambitious marketing students. The faculty in both of these colleges are all outstanding, as well. With the space and facilities for an institute, and plenty of motivated students and faculty to participate, the university would need little additional monetary or administrative preparation to host a consumer-behavior research institute. In fact, the institute may eventually bring in additional profit to the Newhouse School and Syracuse University, with paying clients or donations from interested parties. Indeed, this is a perfect way to use these plentiful resources in a way that benefits the university and community.

Syracuse University's proximity to New York City and the presence of a number of local advertising agencies provides the opportunity for real-world clients to commission work at the institute. The institute could create relationships between local clients and the university, improving the university's involvement in and image among the surrounding city of Syracuse community. The participation of local advertising and public relations agencies and marketing firms in the institute's research may even encourage more students to seek employment in Syracuse after graduation – a current goal of the Syracuse Convention & Visitors' Bureau.

Since PSY 377 has been off the time schedule for three years now, demand for consumer-behavior studies at Syracuse University increases every day. This was evident in many of the online survey respondents' comments and expressions of interest in studying consumer behavior. Most of the students participating in the survey were also interested in pursuing extracurricular research opportunities. Therefore, the degree of interest and volume of potential students to be involved in the institute would be enough to sustain its research.

Discussion with faculty in the Advertising Department of the Newhouse School revealed several points in favor of the institute. According to Associate Professor of Advertising Brian Sheehan, progressive topics of study at a consumer-behavior research institute could help increase the school's relevance to new media; this is increasingly important with new technological developments and the media field being increasingly creative in strategy (B. Sheehan, personal communication, December 10, 2008). Likewise, Advertising Department Chair

James C. Tsao recognized that the Advertising Department is seeking more emphasis on interactive advertising and account planning skills (J. Tsao, personal communication, December 11, 2008). The speed of changes in consumer behavior may be outpacing university research, as well; Sheehan noted that the growth of consumer control of media has led to more interest in consumer behavior as advertisers struggle to understand how consumers react to technological developments. Despite the institute's great relevance to communications fields, though, the Advertising Department's aforementioned resounding opinion that the psychological perspective is very important to consumer behavior must be kept in mind; participation by students and faculty from many disciplines (including psychology) outside the Newhouse School, despite the institute's basis in Public Communications, ensures that this aspect of studying consumer behavior will not be lost. Collaboration among Advertising students and students in other disciplines involved in professional consumer-behavior research (especially psychology and anthropology) would make the institute's degree of authority comprehensive.

Content and Focus

Though students would be assisting with (and even initiating) research in the institute, the caliber of work carried out must be of professional significance, of course. This is accomplished by faculty supervision, but the institute could and (eventually) should additionally take on a consulting role in the industries it serves. That is, the results of research taken on by the institute should not always

be generalizable, but rather relevant to specific advertising and marketing problems which cannot be completely solved by the busy professional world. In this way, the institute would eventually become developed enough to be “hired” by real-world clients. The need for such specialized research became evident in the previous literature review, which included commentary on disconnect between marketing strategy and consumer insight.

Accordingly, discovering functional consumer insights will be key to the relevance and purpose of the institute’s research. Due to the need for more consumer insights in marketing strategy and less basic assessment of consumer behavior and attitudes, as highlighted by Smith (2006), a consumer-behavior research institute in the Newhouse School requires emphasis on the “Big Idea” coming forth from research carried out for clients. That is, what is the main revelation about consumers for clients to absorb into successful marketing strategy? Conveniently, the recently appointed Advertising Department Chair James C. Tsao (who already works with students on extracurricular research studies) specializes in consumer research, has had studies published in numerous trade journals (including the *Journal of Advertising Research*), and demonstrates a passion for infusing his students with the essential role of consumer insight. Likewise, other professors in the Advertising Department, including Associate Professor of Advertising Edward Russell, infuse their students with the “Big Idea” concept and stress thoughtful, meaningful advertising strategy. For the purposes and goals of a consumer-behavior research institute based in the Newhouse School, the following mission statement can be applied:

To advance consumer-behavior knowledge in ways meaningful to marketers, inspiring to academics, and in the best interest of consumers.

A Feasible Plan

Although the Newhouse School already has most of the necessary resources to found a consumer-behavior research institute, such an ambitious endeavor cannot happen overnight, of course. A feasible plan must be constructed to develop a successful research institute. Given that a handful of undergraduate students already work on special topics research projects with faculty in the Newhouse School, the establishment of a research institute most realistically begins with founding a team of students and faculty to take on a large-scale research project. To ensure quality of work and enthusiasm of the team, student members with above-average academic performance and genuine interest in the proposed research study should be selected by the involved faculty. Independent study credit should be offered for significant participation; as the online survey revealed, academic credit is a major incentive for participation in activities that are additional to degree requirements. Naturally, faculty and student assistants on the team would need to come from multiple disciplines, so recruitment of team members must extend outside of the Newhouse School.

The team concept builds on the independent study efforts and research relationships with faculty that some students already decide to take on, and allows for the institute to develop organically. High-quality, published research results

will allow the team to gain monetary grants and develop the program further. With enough dedication and passion on the team, it may be possible over the course of two years to build the team's size and credibility enough to officially establish the institute.

Funding

Eventually, the institute would have the potential to be self-sustainable and not require any outside donations or funding from the Newhouse school to operate. In the meantime, though, any necessary funds can be acquired from a variety of sources. Though some of the work would be pro bono, it is likely that these clients would be willing to cover the costs associated with the commissioned research or make a subsequent donation to the institute, the Newhouse School, or Syracuse University. Perhaps Alpha Delta Sigma (ADS), the American Advertising Federation (AAF)-sponsored national honor society, which "recognizes and encourages scholastic achievement in advertising studies," would provide some level of monetary assistance (American Advertising Federation 2009). The Association for Consumer Research recommends several research funding sources: FundSource ("designed to help behavioral and social scientists find research funding"); American Psychological Association grants; the Institute for the Study of Business Markets; the Marketing Science Institute; the National Science Foundation; and the American Academy of Advertising (Association for Consumer Research 2009). Moreover, there are surely alumni and fans of the Newhouse School who would be willing to contribute to such a

worthy endeavor; if necessary, a special fund could even be established to sustain a consumer-behavior research institute. A namesake sponsor for the institute would especially generate publicity, enhance its image, and provide substantial funds for its establishment.

Benefits to Students

A consumer-behavior research institute at Syracuse University will, certainly, positively benefit all parties involved. The benefits to students are priceless. Not only will they have a new way of thinking about consumer behavior, but they will be at the forefront of the discipline's newest discoveries. Undergraduates will especially benefit from achieving impressive research before graduation. The institute can furthermore serve as a research base for students already seeking independent study credit, especially those working on theses for completion of the Renée Crown Honors Program. For example, biology students in the Honors Program use the distinction program in their major and associated involvement in faculty's research as a means of acquiring the research needed to complete their Capstone Thesis. The institute in Newhouse would serve a similar function, affording non-science major students with the same support for their theses. Likewise, graduate students can use the institute in carrying out their Master's and Ph.D. research. Moreover, though the Newhouse School Ph.D. program is currently very small, it could be expanded and made stronger through the institute.

These benefits to students will be multi-disciplinary, as well. As discussed in the Literature Review, the consumer is not merely an audience to be persuaded, but a social class, a phenomenon of modern society, a feature of the human mind, a sociological force, driver of the economy, and so on. A compelling product of a consumer-behavior research institute in the Newhouse School is knowledge that can be used by most academic departments at Syracuse University. Much of the content of a consumer-behavior course (i.e. PSY 377) exists elsewhere in other courses, but it is unrealistic for students to take the initiative in seeking out all of these courses and fitting them into already-heavy degree requirements. Participation in an extracurricular research institute will not only help students acquire consumer-behavior knowledge in addition to other studies, but communicate the relevance of this knowledge through practical application (which, as found by Bacon and Stewart (2006), is the best means of retaining consumer-behavior knowledge). The comprehensive spectrum of majors at this large university provides so many opportunities for relevant consumer-research topics.

The benefit to Advertising and Public Relations students is a given. Students will of course be better professionals in understanding where the research they employ in a career comes from. Consumer behavior is the basis of the insights that drive advertising campaign ideas, and knowledge of the latest trends is especially important to students pursuing careers in Account Planning. Students in the Advertising Creative Track benefit, too; understanding how consumers behave with and feel about various media aids in the creation of

optimal advertising executions. The same goes for Public Relations students, who can create more effective strategies with knowledge of consumer behavior in mind. Other Newhouse majors can incorporate consumer behavior in their practice, as well. Journalism students can better understand the behaviors, motivations and interests of their constituents. Students pursuing careers in Graphic Arts and Photography would have the opportunity to see first-hand how consumers interact with visual messages. Television, Radio and Film students can create content that is most relevant, useful and interesting to consumers.

Likewise, a consumer-behavior research institute is of interest and advantage to students in the College of Visual & Performing Arts (VPA). Like majors in the Newhouse School, studies in Advertising Design and Communications Design inherently involve knowledge of consumer behavior. In fact, in the online survey, one respondent commented when asked about interest in PSY 377: “as an illustrator, I am always interested in learning about what attracts people to certain images, products, etc.”

Another VPA discipline, Communication and Rhetorical Studies (CRS), is of especial relevance to consumer behavior. Studies in rhetoric naturally involve audience – the consumers – of messages. The basic tenets of rhetoric – pathos, ethos and logos – are the basic foundations of message positioning. Though education in CRS tends to have a more theoretical focus, the field also aims to construct effective messages, as well. This is especially true in public advocacy, a function of CRS. Public advocacy is essentially marketing with the goal of influencing public opinion, knowledge and policy. Because communication and

rhetorical studies has this intrinsic interest in it, consumer behavior is not just relevant but essential to studying and practicing rhetoric. In fact, a student taking introductory courses in both Advertising and Communication and Rhetorical Studies would find the content and theories discussed strikingly similar.

The Communication and Rhetorical Studies graduate program at Syracuse University is in an especially intriguing position for participation in a consumer-behavior research institute at the University. Clearly, the discipline necessitates consumer-behavior research, and (like Newhouse) the department is home to extremely distinguished faculty. However, there has been little (if any at all) interaction between students in the program and students, faculty and resources in complementary colleges (i.e. the Newhouse School or Whitman School of Management). A panel discussion with several CRS graduate students (Personal Communication, 2009) revealed that, though they were aware of topics being studied by students in the other colleges and recognized that the University as a whole has very strong research capabilities, they were unaware of the state-of-the-art I3 Research Center in the Newhouse School. The I3 Research Center could be very useful to their graduate research – for example, use of the double-mirrored focus group room – and yet they had never heard of it. Furthermore, once provided with an explanation of its resources, all of the graduate students involved in the discussion expressed surprise and interest in the I3 Center. Syracuse University's undergraduates provide a good base for interaction between CRS and Newhouse students; underclassmen in Newhouse frequently take two CRS courses in particular [CRS 225: Public Advocacy and CRS 325:

Presentation Speaking] to fulfill the college's Additional Skills requirement. This valuable interaction between VPA and Newhouse would be made stronger by the presence of a consumer-behavior research institute.

In this way, the Newhouse School can also foster a closer relationship with the Martin J. Whitman School of Management, especially its Marketing Management program. Studies in consumer behavior are often based in marketing schools, and input from Whitman Marketing Management students and faculty is an important element for a consumer-behavior research institute. Marketing students require some level of understanding of consumer behavior to create effective strategy, which in turn incorporates advertising and public relations. Entrepreneurship & Emerging Enterprises (EEE) students also must know how to attract consumers to their business; for entrepreneurs, consumer behavior is a fundamental business issue. Students in the Retail Management program might also be interested in consumer-behavior research, as retailers need knowledge of consumers' shopping patterns and trends.

Consumer-behavior research is intrinsic to the studies of students in several College of Arts & Sciences disciplines, as well. Psychology students, lacking PSY 377, can still acquire knowledge of the attitudes and behaviors that result from consumers' mental processes. Moreover, their participation in the consumer-behavior research institute is essential to the concept's success. The institute will give Psychology students more opportunities to apply concepts in psychology to actions; for example, a Psychology student who understands the psychology of impulses can apply this concept to consumers' purchase decision-

making. This bolsters students' master of practical applications of psychology concepts. In this way, Psychology majors can delve deeper into the basic psychology concepts learned in class. Graduate-level Psychology students can likewise use the institute in their Masters' and Ph.D. research.

According to the Department of Psychology, there have been student requests for the consumer behavior course, but the home colleges and exact volume of these students is unknown; administrators in the department note, however, that Psychology majors are always very interested in any research opportunities available. There are usually not enough research opportunities on campus for all Psychology students to participate in, so undergraduate Psychology students are frequently seeking opportunities (Personal Communication, December 2009).

The research objective of the Department of Anthropology in the College of Arts & Sciences is basically to study changes in society and the human condition; the consumer is a major part of society, and so is of great interest to Anthropology students – especially any hoping to become Consumer Anthropologists. In any case, anthropology in its entirety is inherently involved in the study of consumer behavior. Consumers are fundamental to modern society, and patterns in consumer behavior are representative of patterns in society as a whole. Anthropology students can benefit from participating in consumer behavior research at Syracuse University, and an institute that offers unique, advanced opportunities to study consumers in society. Similarly, Sociology students in the College of Arts & Sciences can benefit from

involvement in a consumer-behavior research institute. Consumer behavior is of course greatly affected by social context. This should become a more important factor in consumer research, given that social issues (such as the green trend and concern over goods produced in China) are increasing in influence on consumers' purchase decisions.

Students and faculty in the School of Information Studies would play an integral role in a consumer-behavior research institute at Syracuse University, as well. According to Associate Professor of Advertising Edward Russell, consumer-behavior research is increasingly headed in the direction of consumer analytics (E. Russell, personal communication, April 21, 2009). Researching consumer behavior online would be key to maintaining the institute's relevancy to real-world clients. The School of Information Studies offers some related courses, including IST 341: Observations and Analysis of Information User Behaviors, IST 449: Human Computer Interaction and IST 558: Technologies in Web Content Management, whose students and professors teaching these courses could provide valuable assistance in studying online consumer behavior.

The scope of disciplines at Syracuse University whose students can participate in consumer-behavior research seems endless. For Economics students, it is important to understand that consumer behavior makes the economy tick. Even Geography involves knowledge of consumers. Furthermore, students in the Maxwell School of Citizenship can use a consumer-behavior research institute to carry out political research similar to that being carried out at Louisiana State University's Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs. The

range of students that can benefit from a consumer-behavior research institute at Syracuse University is pervasive, including a large variety of disciplines and colleges.

Benefits to All

This is not to say that only students in these disciplines will benefit from a consumer-behavior research institute. The institute can be an enormous asset to faculty, as well, providing opportunities to complete career-advancing, professional research without having to take time away from teaching and service obligations. Each college at Syracuse University has top-rated programs and faculty, whose multi-disciplinary resources and minds could collaborate in a consumer-behavior research institute.

Clients commissioning research for the institute will obviously benefit, as well. Local clients would especially appreciate pro-bono work, and for larger clients, knowing that research is being carried out in a top-rated academic atmosphere is noteworthy. Another client source is The NewHouse, a full-service, student-run advertising agency based in the Newhouse School. The consumer-behavior research institute could perform research for The NewHouse's various accounts. This was already accomplished to some degree by a joint effort with students in the ADV 509 course, but due to time constraints and narrow student enthusiasm, depth and professionalism of research was limited. Working in conjunction with the NewHouse also gives students and faculty guaranteed opportunities to execute real-world research topics. The NewHouse and its clients

benefit with professional-grade research to rationalize and improve their campaigns, and possibly even gain national visibility. Moreover, such high-caliber research makes the agency more competitive for the annual American Advertising Federation (AAF) National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC). Success in this competition bolsters Syracuse University's reputation. Thus, a consumer-behavior research institute holds enormous benefits in store for students, faculty, the Newhouse School, and Syracuse University as a whole.

Publishing studies or whitepapers of the institute's research results regularly adds another dimension to its function. Associate Professor of Advertising Edward Russell points out that other schools have had success with similar publications, such as academic journals, and this would be a way for the Newhouse School to use the institute as a major way of differentiating itself from other communications schools (E. Russell, personal communication, April 21, 2009). Regular publication and use of these materials by professionals and other academic institutions would considerably increase the Newhouse School's (and Syracuse University's) visibility and reputation.

CONCLUSION

Given the findings of the literature review, analysis of students' responses to the online survey, and consideration of other solutions to the need for consumer behavior education and research at Syracuse University, the establishment of a consumer-behavior research institute is the most comprehensive, ultimate

solution. The institute inherently bears significant benefits for the students, faculty, professionals, clients, Syracuse University, the Newhouse School, and communities who would be potentially involved. Students would gain invaluable undergraduate experience in professional-quality research – fulfilling their desires to explore topics outside of the classroom, work more closely with faculty, and build their resumes. Faculty could finally satisfy their responsibilities to teach and research without sacrificing reputations or career advancement, and lead high-quality published research. Professionals and clients commissioning this research could have the opportunity to interact with academics, bridging the gap between the professional and academic spheres of marketing; local clients especially have the opportunity to forge a closer relationship with Syracuse University and the Newhouse School. Syracuse University could further its academic reputation, and be recognized as a leader in innovative scholarly research. Likewise, the Newhouse School could gain visibility, and continue to be at the forefront of public communications education and research. At a consumer-behavior research institute, significant, relevant, high-quality research could be achieved, with the ultimate mission *to advance consumer-behavior knowledge in ways meaningful to marketers, inspiring to academics,, and in the best interest of consumers.*

Reinstalling PSY 377 can only increase these benefits, and due to proof of significant student interest in the course, its presence on the time schedule once again would be well received. However, the findings of this thesis project give way to even greater aspirations; that Syracuse University has the opportunity to

not only provide quality education in consumer behavior, but lead research in the discipline, as well. Indeed, a consumer-behavior research institute at Syracuse University can and should be pursued in the near future. It is this honor student's hope that these ideas can one day become a realized dream for Syracuse University.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENTATION



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY Institutional Review Board MEMORANDUM

TO: Carla Lloyd
DATE: February 9, 2009
SUBJECT: Determination of Exemption from Regulations
IRB #: 09-033
TITLE: *Survey of Student Interest in Consumer Behavior Research and Curriculum*

The above referenced application, submitted for consideration as exempt from federal regulations as defined in 45 C.F.R. 46, has been evaluated by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the following:

1. determination that it falls within the one or more of the five exempt categories allowed by the organization;
2. determination that the research meets the organization's ethical standards.

It has been determined by the IRB this protocol qualifies for exemption and is assigned to category 1. This authorization will remain active for a period of five years from **February 9, 2009** until **February 8, 2014**.

CHANGES TO PROTOCOL: Proposed changes to this protocol during the period for which IRB authorization has already been given, cannot be initiated without additional IRB review. If there is a change in your research, you should notify the IRB immediately to determine whether your research protocol continues to qualify for exemption or if submission of an expedited or full board IRB protocol is required. Information about the University's human participants protection program can be found at: <http://www.orip.syr.edu/humanresearch.html>. Protocol changes are requested on an amendment application available on the IRB web site; please reference your IRB number and attach any documents that are being amended.

STUDY COMPLETION: The completion of a study must be reported to the IRB within 14 days.

Thank you for your cooperation in our shared efforts to assure that the rights and welfare of people participating in research are protected.

Diane Young, Chair

Note to Faculty Advisor: This notice is only mailed to faculty. If a student is conducting this study, please forward this information to the student researcher.

DEPT: Advertising, Newhouse III, Rm. 421

STUDENT: Carolyn Meitzner

Office of Research Integrity and Protections
121 Bowne Hall Syracuse, New York 13244-1200
(Phone) 315.443.3013 ♦ (Fax) 315.443.9889
orip@syr.edu ♦ www.orip.syr.edu

APPENDIX B: SURVEYMONKEY.COM ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

SurveyMonkey.com Logged in as "newhouse3" [Log Off](#)
 because knowledge is everything

Home [Create Survey](#) [My Surveys](#) [Address Book](#) [My Account](#) [Need Help?](#)

survey title: **Honors Capstone CBM 2009** [Edit Title](#) [design survey](#) [collect responses](#) [analyze results](#)

current report: Default Report [Add Report](#)

[View Summary](#) [Browse Responses](#) [Filter Responses](#)

Response Summary

Total Started Survey: 139
Total Completed Survey: 127 (91.4%)

1. How old are you?








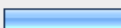

	Response Percent	Response Count
18	9.4%	13
19	20.9%	29
20	23.0%	32
21	30.9%	43
22	15.8%	22
23	0.0%	0
24	0.0%	0
25	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		139
<i>skipped question</i>		0


2. Are you...

	Response Percent	Response Count
an undergraduate?	99.3%	138
a graduate?	0.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>		139
<i>skipped question</i>		0



3. What is your class year?				
			Response Percent	Response Count
Freshman			15.8%	22
Sophomore			24.5%	34
Junior			18.7%	26
Senior			38.8%	54
view	Other (please specify)		2.2%	3
			<i>answered question</i>	139
			<i>skipped question</i>	0

6. Please list any minors you have declared or are planning to declare.		
		Response Count
view		92
		<i>answered question</i>
		92
		<i>skipped question</i>
		47


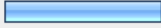
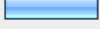


4. Please select your HOME college:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
School of Architecture		1.4%	2
College of Arts & Sciences		30.9%	43
School of Education		6.5%	9
L.C. Smith College of Engineering & Computer Science		1.4%	2
College of Human Ecology		5.8%	8
School of Information Studies		0.7%	1
College of Law		0.0%	0
Martin J. Whitman School of Management		11.5%	16
Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs		0.0%	0
S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications		31.7%	44
College of Visual & Performing Arts		10.1%	14
University College		0.0%	0
		<i>answered question</i>	139
		<i>skipped question</i>	0

5. What is your major(s) or master's program?		
		Response Count
 view		139
		<i>answered question</i>
		139






1. Have you ever wanted to explore a topic in more depth, but didn't have the time or resources to research it?



		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		83.6%	112
No		16.4%	22
<i>answered question</i>			134
<i>skipped question</i>			5


2. How interested are you in collaborating with students from other majors and colleges in extracurricular projects or research studies?

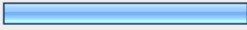
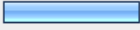
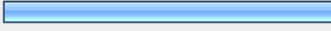
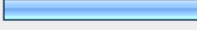

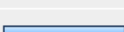


		Response Percent	Response Count
Very interested		20.9%	28
Interested		41.8%	56
Neutral		24.6%	33
Not very interested		8.2%	11
Not interested at all		4.5%	6
<i>answered question</i>			134
<i>skipped question</i>			5

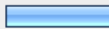


3. How interested are you in collaborating with outside institutions and professors on extracurricular projects or research studies?



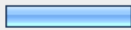


		Response Percent	Response Count
Very interested		16.4%	22
Interested		41.8%	56
Neutral		27.6%	37
Not very interested		10.4%	14
Not interested at all		3.7%	5
<i>answered question</i>			134
<i>skipped question</i>			5

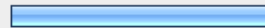

4. Would you consider working on an extracurricular research team for academic credit (i.e. Independent Study)?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		79.9%	107
No		20.1%	27
answered question			134
skipped question			5


5. If you answered yes (to #4), how much time per week would you consider devoting to such research?			Response Count
		 view	104
answered question			104
skipped question			35

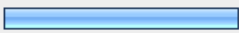
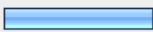
6. Which of the following are incentives for you to contribute to extracurricular projects or research studies? (Please choose up to 3 that you feel most strongly about).			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Extra credit		63.4%	83
Personal fulfillment		35.1%	46
Resume-building		85.5%	112
Exploration of personal interests		50.4%	66
Establishing an academic reputation		19.8%	26
Working directly with faculty		31.3%	41
 view	Other (please specify)		2.3%
answered question			131


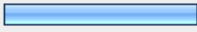



1. How much do you explore the course catalog before registering for classes?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
I browse courses offered in almost every discipline.		26.8%	34
I look at a few other disciplines, but most seriously at those which fulfill requirements for my major/degree.		52.8%	67
I only look for courses which fulfill my college or major/minor requirements.		20.5%	26
I do not use the course catalog.		0.0%	0
Other (please specify)		0.0%	0
answered question			127
skipped question			12

2. How often do you look for courses in other disciplines that specifically complement your main field(s) of study?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		20.5%	26
Often		36.2%	46
Sometimes		32.3%	41
Rarely		7.1%	9
Never		3.9%	5
answered question			127
skipped question			12

3. Are you satisfied with the quantity of courses at SU which complement your main field(s) of study?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		66.1%	84
No		33.9%	43
answered question			127
skipped question			12

4. Please list any topics you wish the university offered courses (or more courses) in:		
		Response Count
		50
	answered question	50
	skipped question	89

5. Have you ever heard of "consumer behavior" or "consumer psychology" as disciplines of study or professional fields?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		61.4%	78
No		38.6%	49
	answered question		127
	skipped question		12

6. Please rate your interest in the following course description: "Consumer Psychology: The psychological study of consumer behavior; the role of awareness, beliefs, associations, feelings and desires, intentions and behaviors."			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Very interested		19.7%	25
Interested		50.4%	64
Neutral		19.7%	25
Not very interested		9.4%	12
Not interested at all		0.8%	1
	answered question		127
	skipped question		12

7. How relevant do you find the previous course description to your main field(s) of study?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Very relevant		34.6%	44
Somewhat relevant		33.9%	43
Neutral		11.8%	15
Not very relevant		16.5%	21
Not relevant at all		3.1%	4
answered question			127
skipped question			12

8. How likely are you to consider taking this course (Consumer Psychology) if it were offered at SU?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
I would definitely take this course.		17.3%	22
I would consider taking this course.		46.5%	59
Neutral		16.5%	21
It is not likely that I would consider taking this course.		18.1%	23
I would definitely not take this course.		1.6%	2
Please feel free to comment: view			14
answered question			127
skipped question			12

9. If you have been interested in this course (Consumer Psychology) in the past but been unable to take it, please feel free to comment:			
		Response Count	
		view	6
answered question			6
skipped question			133

WRITTEN SUMMARY OF CAPSTONE PROJECT

“Rationale and Proposal for the Establishment of a Consumer Behavior Curriculum and Research Institute at Syracuse University” is a thesis project carried out for completion of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University. This project was inspired by my hopes to take a class on consumer behavior (PSY 377) that is no longer offered by the Department of Psychology. As an undergraduate Advertising major in the S.I. Newhouse School of Communications, I chose a minor in Psychology because I knew it would really complement my main studies, as messages (in this case, advertisements) can be communicated most effectively when one understands how their audience (in this case, consumers) thinks. Seeing PSY 377 in the annual course catalog played a major role in my decision to declare the Psychology minor. However, the professor teaching the class left the university, and the Department of Psychology was too unsure of student interest in the subject to hire a replacement. Knowing a lot of other students – particularly a number of other Advertising majors with Psychology minors – who would be interested in the course, I wanted to explore the situation in depth and validate the idea that PSY 377 could be back on the annual schedule of classes.

Therefore, the mission was clear; basic questions needed to be answered. Why is studying consumer behavior important to advertising and psychology? Are there other disciplines whose students could benefit from studying consumer behavior, as well? Is it really true that not enough students are interested in consumer behavior to warrant a whole class on the subject? What do

professionals have to say on the subject, and how do Syracuse University's professors feel about the fact that PSY 377 is on hiatus? Are there any other ways students could learn about consumer behavior, even if PSY 377 is never offered again? What are the newest developments in the field of consumer behavior – have there been any major changes that call for new research?

A literature review was compiled to summarize and relate information written or spoken by professionals and experts in marketing, advertising, consumer behavior, and related disciplines. This background information was gathered to support the idea that consumer behavior knowledge has reached a pivotal point in what researchers do and do not understand about consumers' attitudes and behaviors, that it is relevant to academic studies in a wide range of disciplines, and that the current state of information in marketing-related disciplines is in need of more research collaboration between professionals and academics.

The literature review realized the idea that understanding consumers is essential to business success. Consumers make the economy run, and therefore consumer behavior is not just of interest to marketers and advertisers, but economists, politicians, bankers, and speech-writers alike. Psychologists and anthropologists have been especially active in researching consumer behavior. Consumer behavior is inherently multidisciplinary. Moreover, a new "global consumer" has emerged over the last two decades, and advances in technology, politics, environmentalism, the economic depression and aging population have

had immense effects on how consumers act and think. Understanding the implications of these changes is essential to future business success.

Furthermore, there is disconnect between professionals (especially marketers) and academics, and more cooperation in research would strengthen the depth of consumer-behavior knowledge. Other universities have had success with such collaboration, however, a key obstacle is the dilemma many professors have between time spent on research and the duties of teaching. Employers, especially in disciplines related to marketing, are expecting more real-world experience of entry-level job candidates, and students are expecting closer interaction with faculty.

The needs of professionals, faculty, students and employers give way to the idea that simply putting PSY 377 back on the annual schedule of classes would not completely solve the problems of consumer-behavior research and understanding. Though this would solve the short-term issue of students wanting to take a psychology class in consumer behavior, there are also opportunities to advance the discipline and connect professionals and academics through the establishment of a consumer-behavior research institute in the Newhouse School. Faculty in the Advertising Department were interviewed and asked to weigh in on the concept, and almost unanimously agreed that a consumer-behavior research institute would be an exceptional asset to the Newhouse School.

To probe for students' interest in taking PSY 377 if it were offered and participating in research at the institute, an online survey was conducted to which 139 undergraduate Syracuse University students responded. An analysis of the

survey results found that the majority of respondents were interested on some level in taking a class on consumer behavior and exploring topics not covered in classes through extracurricular research. These results indicate that both the re-installation of PSY 377 on the time schedule and the establishment of a consumer-behavior research institute would both be worthwhile and feasible endeavors for Syracuse University.

Options on the spectrum between the course and the institute were examined, as well, including alteration of PSY 377 to be offered in the Newhouse Advertising Department rather than the Department of Psychology, and creating a sequence of courses in consumer behavior. However, these two concepts were found to be logistically very difficult, especially due to budget and accreditation issues. A rationale for PSY 377 was accomplished and student interest was proved; the next step was to provide guidelines for how the Newhouse School could proceed in establishing a consumer-behavior research institute.

Given the resources and facilities of the Newhouse School, little would need to be altered to accommodate a research institute; actually, the institute might even bring in extra profits to the school. The likelihood of profit is especially increased by allowing real-world clients (advertisers and advertising agencies) to commission research on specific groups of consumers, in addition to academic research being carried out. In this way, the institute has the potential to benefit not only the university, but the communities and industries which surround it. Interdisciplinary input, as in professional consumer-behavior research, would be key to the institute's success, and this gives students and

professors from different disciplines the opportunity to participate. This fulfills students' needs for real-world, professional-quality experience, and faculty needs to carry out research while increasing interaction with their students. Indeed, a consumer-behavior research institute at Syracuse University would benefit all parties involved.

Hence, this thesis project was significant because it lays out what can be done to fulfill students' desires for education in consumer behavior and extracurricular research opportunities in ways that provide maximum benefit to students, faculty, Syracuse University and the professional world. It resolves questions about the volume of student interest in consumer-behavior (particularly PSY 377), and proves that a consumer-behavior research institute in the Newhouse School could actually be feasibly implemented. Reinstalling PSY 377 will surely fulfill the need for undergraduate education in consumer behavior. However, establishing a consumer-behavior research institute has the ultimate power to truly enhance the rich academic traditions and professional reputation of the S.I. Newhouse School of Communications and Syracuse University.