

# EXPLORING TEACHING METHODS IN MARKETING: A CROSS-NATIONAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the most widely-used teaching methods within the sphere of university education and more precisely in the area of marketing tuition. The authors analyse these teaching methods and their characteristics in two different arenas: Europe and US. To do this, chi-squared tests and factorial analysis are applied. The aim of this paper is to investigate the possible differences between countries and between methods. The study shows some interesting results.

**Keywords:** Methods, University, marketing, North America, Europe; factorial analysis.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to O'Brien and Deans (1995), over the past 15 years there has been a noted and disproportionate increase in the number of students attracted to marketing. The authors consider this to be as a result of the higher profile the subject now enjoys in both academic and commercial circles.

Therefore the academic arena must be concerned about the importance of teaching marketing. Aspects related to teaching media, teaching methods or teaching attitudes must be carefully considered, because universities play the role of specialists for the student audience (Forman, 2004). This is true in all university contexts, regardless of the country of origin.

As Smith and Van Doren (2004) state "active and experiential learning theory have not dramatically changed collegiate classroom teaching methods, although they have long been included in the pedagogical literature" (p.66).

The framework of this paper aims to highlight the variety of formulas whereby contact is established and maintained between supply (teachers) and demand (students) in the sphere of education, specifically in the framework of marketing teaching. The choice of a particular formula depends ultimately on the teaching situation (number of students, subject content and objectives, previous student training, teaching staff qualifications, available aids and resources, course length etc.). Such approaches in the teaching/learning process are known as *tuition strategies*, or performance guidelines designed to achieve learning objectives in the relationship between teacher and student.

The general objective of our paper is to analyse diverse teaching methods in marketing in different countries. In this sense, two specific objectives have been distinguished. Firstly, the paper compares alternative teaching methods in two educational environments: American and European universities. Secondly, the study investigates different teaching methods and their properties. To do this, we focus our research on the opinions of some marketing lecturers from both educational cultures, who specialise in marketing and impart any marketing related subject (industrial marketing, consumer behaviour/marketing, product, distribution channels, services, communication, education, marketing strategy, pricing, marketing research, e-commerce, public policy & ethics, international, retailing, sales etc.).

## 2. MARKETING, TEACHING METHODS, AND UNIVERSITY CONTEXT.

Available marketing (teaching) methods can be grouped in (i) traditional methods, such as master classes, practical exercises, seminars, tutorials, etcetera; and (ii) new methods, such as distance learning or business games. Both groups can be combined in marketing tuition.

In the experiment by Salisbury and Ellis (2003) both traditional and new teaching methods are applied together to test student preferences, finding that they still prefer classroom presentation with demonstration from the instructor, in spite of the relevance of computer based sessions and online tutorials. However, the relevance of technological advances should be approached with caution. As Amat (2000) affirms, every single advance should be considered as a tool with which to achieve educational objectives. Subject characteristics and student profiles should, therefore, determine the combination of resources to be used.

As Clarke and Flaherty (2002) point out, it is possible to find differences among countries. Other studies have found differences in teaching and learning approaches between Eastern and Western societies (Thompson, 2000), or between Asian and Non-Asian universities (Zhang, 1999).

In this context, and once more, when comparing U.S.A. and Europe, we should emphasise that the USA has the largest number of computers in the world, (161,000,000 in 2000) (Nationmaster, 2003) and that around 59.85% of the North American population are Internet users (AC Nielsen Report). For this reason, North American Universities will probably use significantly more information technology based methods than European ones. This explains why there are currently a larger number of North American universities with their own web pages on which information is available on the various departments and areas of knowledge (Atwong and Hugstad, 1997), and why many methodological innovations come from this part of the American continent. As Kinell (1989) outlines, American institutions discovered, some ten years ago, the power of distance learning and the possibility of recruiting students overseas to develop multicultural marketing educational programs. A first hypothesis can be developed on the basis of the above:

**H1: There are significant differences between American and European Universities with respect to the methods used in the teaching of marketing**

However, in addition to any differences between countries, similarities will probably be present as well. In fact, and according to Clarke and Flaherty (2002), the key is in understanding which educational tools can best facilitate learning in particular environments because marketing instructors must develop diverse educational experiences and choose appropriate educational tools to maximize students learning. For example, in the exploratory study with a sample of 78 students, Sweeny and Ingram (2001) found that face-to-face tutorials are more highly rated than Web-based tutorials. While interpersonal marketing instruction is difficult to replace, the use of other

marketing methods can enhance the overall learning experience for students (Clarke and Flaherty, 2002). So, a second hypothesis can be established.

**H2: There are significant differences in the properties of marketing teaching methods.**

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

#### Sample

As previously stated, this paper attempts to analyse diverse pedagogical skills related to methods used to teach marketing in two different environments: North American Universities and European Universities. The reason is that, as we have reviewed, the marketing discipline was mainly developed in North America and several studies have taken this part of the American continent for comparative purposes (Yoshida, 1994).

To do this, 657 marketing university teachers in both groups were surveyed by e-mail. We obtained 135 valid answers, to give a response rate of 20.55%. Our final sample was made up of 135 interviewees. "The questionnaire method was selected for its low-cost outlay and ease of issue. It can be used to reach a widely dispersed population at low cost; it allows leisurely and thoughtful reply while minimising interviewer bias; and it can encourage responses to sensitive questions when respondent anonymity is maintained" (O'Brien and Deans, 1995, p.48).

Each interviewee was required to indicate the marketing methods they more frequently use to impart marketing and the advantages that they perceive in each of them. We considered 11 alternative methods following Amat (2000)'s classification: master class, tutorials, seminars, distance learning, practical exercises, case studies, business games, role plays, Phillips 66, brain storming and outdoor training.

The advantages for each method were classified in 7 blocks, also following Amat's (2000, p.86) proposal: it allows knowledge, it allows know-how, it allows team work, it facilitates communication, it develops leadership, it helps decision-taking, it develops creativity.

#### Methodology

Univariate Analysis (Chi square test) was used in our study to test the significance of differences between the two groups (North American and European) with respect to the teaching methods considered in this study. That is, to test H1.

We used factorial analysis to test H2, because with this technique the different teaching methods and the features used to evaluate those methods can be represented simultaneously on a perceptual map. The underlying idea is that two teaching methods near each other on the map and with similar coordinates are perceived as approximately the same for marketing teachers and consequently are associated with the same advantages. In other words, factorial analysis is a special representation technique which makes it possible to choose on a map the way in which individuals cognitively represent some teaching methods in relation to others.

### 4. RESULTS

#### Marketing topics

Before contrasting the hypotheses in this paper, this study analyses the subjects that lecturers from USA and Europe teach in their universities. The objective was to find out if there are significant differences between the subjects taught by North American and European lecturers. No differences were found between USA and Europe, however some issues are of interest. Firstly, market research is the most popular marketing subject among North American and European teachers. Specifically, 58.14% of the Europeans interviewed and 49.46% of Americans teach this subject. In contrast, education (2.25%), public policy and ethics (11.82%), and industrial marketing (11.82%) are the least taught by North American educators; and education (2.33%), pricing (9.30%), and public policy and ethics (11.62%) are the least taught by European teachers.

We would also like to point out that industrial marketing and services marketing are of greater importance for European educators (18.60% and 30.23% respectively) than for their North American counterparts (11.82% and 24.73%). Traditionally, North American markets have focused on consumer goods, while European markets, especially Nordic ones, have paid more attention to services and industrial goods (Gummeson, 1987).

**Table I. Marketing topics at USA and European universities**

	USA (n=93)	Europe (n=42)	$\chi^2$
Industrial marketing	11,82%	18,60%	1,12
Consumer behaviour	45,16%	51,16%	0,42
Education	02,15%	02,33%	0,00
Marketing strategy	47,31%	48,84%	0,03
Pricing	15,05%	09,30%	1,09
Marketing research	49,46%	58,14%	1,47
Product	20,43%	13,95%	0,82
Distribution channels	22,58%	18,60%	0,30
E-commerce	20,43%	18,60%	0,06
Public policy and ethics	11,82%	11,62%	0,00
International marketing	35,48%	44,19%	0,94
Retailing	18,28%	12,63%	0,96
Services	24,73%	30,23%	0,46
Communication	21,50%	25,58%	0,28
Sales	20,43%	13,95%	0,82
Others	25,81%	18,60%	0,85

\* p<0,05 \*\*p<0,01

### Teaching methods in European and US universities

With regard to our first hypothesis (Table II) we can appreciate that, when comparing the properties related to the methods used to impart marketing classes, North American and European marketing teachers differ significantly in a small number of variables (see asterisks in Table II). So, we can partially accept H1.

European lecturers use significantly more traditional methods (master classes and tutorials), than their North American counterparts. Other teaching media in marketing are more frequently used in North American universities, for example distance learning, business games or role playing; but these differences are not statistically significant.

Both groups of marketing lecturers frequently use practical exercises and case studies, because these teaching media are highly suitable for achieving diverse learning objectives. Phillips 66 and outdoor training are the least frequently used media in teaching marketing, given that they are perceived as less suitable.

**Table II. Teaching marketing methods in North American and European universities.**

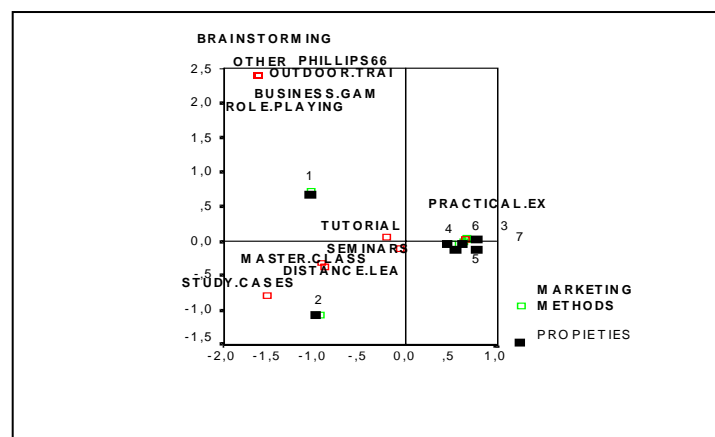
Method	I use this method	Creates knowledge	Allows team work	Facilitates communication	Develops leadership	Helps decision making	Develops creativity
Master class	21,741 (0,000)**	22,707 (0,000)**	0,083 (0,773)	1,235 (0,267)	1,743 (0,187)	0,311 (0,577)	0,644 (0,422)
Tutorials	22,956 (0,000)**	10,955 (0,001)**	5,929 (0,015)*	5,929 (0,015)*	5,410 (0,020)*	1,405 (0,236)	3,285 (0,070)*
Seminars	3,000 (0,083)*	1,079 (0,299)	4,332 (0,037)*	2,651 (0,104)	0,128 (0,720)	1,185 (0,276)	0,016 (0,901)
Distance learning	1,815 (0,178)	0,588 (0,443)	1,437 (0,231)	4,855 (0,028)*	0,466 (0,495)	2,902 (0,088)*	0,649 (0,420)
Practical exercises	2,172 (0,141)	0,134 (0,715)	0,235 (0,628)	0,208 (0,648)	0,184 (0,668)	0,527 (0,468)	0,350 (0,554)
Study cases	0,000 (0,982)	0,366 (0,545)	1,503 (0,220)	0,001 (0,978)	1,417 (0,234)	1,185 (0,276)	0,050 (0,823)
Business games	0,380 (0,537)	0,590 (0,442)	0,124 (0,725)	1,912 (0,167)	0,018 (0,894)	1,222 (0,269)	0,482 (0,488)
Role playing	0,436 (0,509)	0,028 (0,867)	0,121 (0,728)	0,273 (0,601)	0,279 (0,597)	0,023 (0,880)	0,062 (0,804)
Phillips 66	2,179 (0,140)	0,939 (0,333)	0,004 (0,948)	0,083 (0,773)	0,939 (0,333)	0,939 (0,333)	0,004 (0,948)
Brain storming	0,035 (0,852)	1,052 (0,305)	0,847 (0,357)	0,000 (0,982)	0,009 (0,296)	0,267 (0,606)	0,454 (0,501)
Outdoor training	0,981 (0,322)	0,136 (0,712)	1,687 (0,194)	1,328 (0,249)	2,224 (0,136)	2,224 (0,136)	3,749 (0,053)*
Other	2,607 (0,106)	2,809 (0,094)*	1,361 (0,243)	2,809 (0,094)*	2,333 (0,127)	2,168 (0,141)	2,166 (0,141)

### Teaching methods

We obtained two perceptual maps for the two arenas analysed: Europe and the USA in order to contrast the second hypothesis and show that the different teaching methods have different advantages. Both maps show the different teaching methods and the advantages which are more closely related to each of them in each country.

Thus, Map 1 shows the results for the European scene, obtained from the perceptions of European marketing teachers who have associated different advantages to the different teaching methods proposed.

**Map 1. Marketing teaching methods in Europe**



Properties related to teaching methods						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I use this method	It allows knowledge	It allows team work	It facilitates communication	It develops leadership	It helps decision make	It develops creativity

As shown in Table III, in Europe, it can be seen that after applying factorial analysis, two factors explain 98% of total data variability. The first factor is particularly explanatory. In short, map 1 can be said to be largely representative of the perceptions expressed by European teachers in the questionnaire.

**Table III. Two dimensions' solution for Europe**

Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Proportion Explained	Cumulative Proportion
1 (axe x)	0.64752	0.4192	0.803	0.80
2 (axe y)	0.30533	0.0932	0.178	0.98

To interpret the significance of the X and Y axes, their contribution to the inertia of the points on the map has been analysed (teaching methods and properties), i.e. the coefficients known as OTR: Thus, if a point on the map has a 100% OTR for the X axis, then the X axis explains that point perfectly. If on the contrary OTR is 0% for the X axis, then the opposite is true, i.e. the point is poorly represented on the X axis.

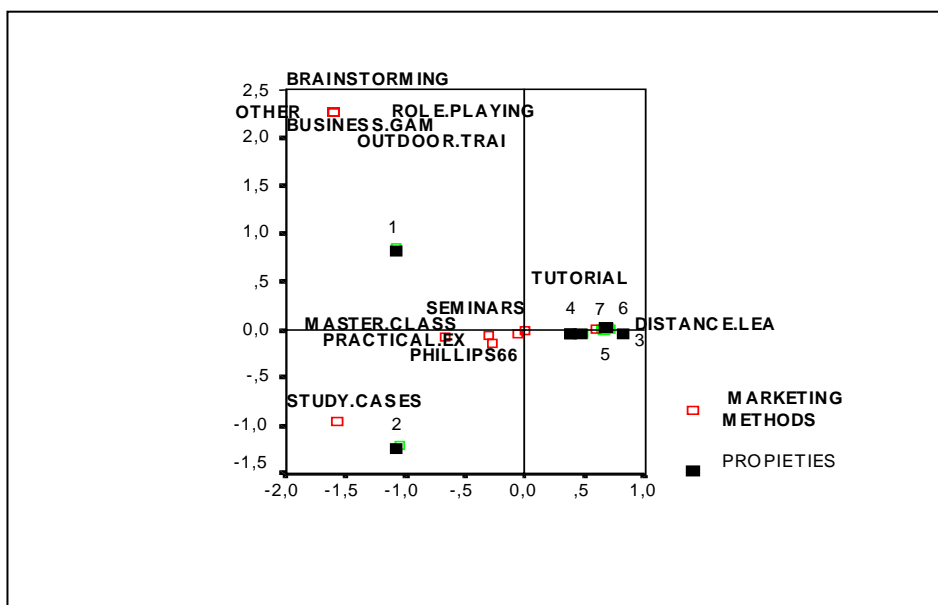
Analysis of the OTR for the X axis shows that this locates at one end teaching methods such as master classes (92%), study cases (88%), distance learning (37%) and tutorial systems (61%) versus practical exercises (99%) at the other. In other words, on the X axis practically all the marketing teaching methods are in opposition to one of them: "practical exercises". As for properties, the X axis puts attributes 3 (95,9%), 4 (84%); 5 (98%), 6 (96%) and 7 (95%) in opposition to 1 (81%) and 2 (62%). Therefore, as the map shows, properties 1 "I use this method" and 2 "it allows knowledge" are linked to practically all the teaching methods in marketing, while the other properties are strongly associated to "practical exercises". Therefore, in Europe "practical exercises" are positively perceived due to the large number of properties they offer, despite the fact that other methods are more widespread among marketing teachers.

Analysis of the OTR for the Y axis shows at one end, teaching methods such as business games (50%), role playing (50%), Phillips (50%), brainstorming (50%), outdoor training (50%) and others (50%), and at the other methods such as study cases (10%), seminars (8%), distance learning (7%), master classes (4%), tutorial (3%) and practical exercises (0,1%). With regard to properties, the Y axis explains attributes 2 "it allows knowledge" (37%) and 4 "it facilitates communication" (0,2%) in opposition to attribute 1 "I used this method" (0,2%). In particular it can be seen that attributes 2 and 4 are mainly associated to study cases (10%), seminars (8%), distance learning (7%), master classes (4%), tutorial (3%) and practical exercises (0,1%).

In conclusion, on the European scene, it has been observed that the perception of 11 teaching methods for marketing (12 including the option "others") is varied due to the fact that the different methods are used with different intensity and are associated with different properties. "Practical exercises" are of particular note as they are perceived positively and closely related to most of the attributes. This shows the high degree of application that European marketing teachers want in their subjects. With regard to use, it can be seen that in Europe the most widespread methods are study cases, practical exercises, seminars, master class, and tutorials.

Map 2 shows the results for the North American arena, obtained from the perceptions of North American marketing teachers who have associated different properties to the different teaching methods proposed.

**Map 2. Marketing teaching methods in USA**



<i>Properties related to teaching methods</i>						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I use this method	It allows knowledge	It allows team work	It facilitates communication	It develops leadership	It helps decision make	It develops creativity

In the case of the United States, it can be seen after applying factorial analysis that two factors explain 96% of the total variability of the data (Table IV). The first factor is particularly explanatory. Thus it can be seen that map 2 largely represents the perceptions expressed by North American teachers in the questionnaire.

**Table IV. Two dimensions' solution for USA**

Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Proportion Explained	Cumulative Proportion
1 (axe x)	0.67268	0.4525	0.73	0.73
2 (axe y)	0.38200	0.1459	0.23	0.96

In particular, analysis of OTR for the X axis shows that several teaching methods such as practical exercises (99%), study cases (82%), master classes (79%), business games (47%), role playing (47%), brainstorming (47%), outdoor training (47%), seminars (37%) and others (47%) are in opposition to two others, distance learning (37%) and tutorial systems (4%). In other words, practically all the marketing teaching methods are in opposition to those which are more centred on the close, individualised professor/student relationship, whether it be real/physical or virtual (tutorial systems or distance learning). As for properties, the X axis opposes attributes 3 (97,5%), 4 (72%); 5 (90,5%), 6 (85,6%) and 7 (96,1%) to attributes 1 (73,4%) and 2 (57,7%). Therefore, as can be seen on the map, properties 1 "I use this method" and 2 "it allows knowledge" are linked to practically all the marketing teaching methods, while the other properties are more closely related to two teaching methods "tutorial systems" and "distance learning". In other words two teaching methods, "tutorial systems" and "distance learning" are perceived very positively by marketing professors in the United States, due to the large amount of properties which are recognised for both. This shows that in North America, a close, continuous professor/student relationship is valued very positively.

Analysis of OTR for the Y axis shows that it places three teaching methods -practical exercises (0,01%), study cases (16%) and master classes (0,05%)- in opposition to business games (52,9%), role playing (52,9%), brainstorming (52,9%), outdoor training (52,9%), and others (52,9%). In other words, three classical teaching methods used in the teaching of marketing from the very beginnings of this discipline (practical exercises, study cases and master classes) are in opposition to other more modern teaching methods which came later to marketing teaching and are less widespread among teachers. The vertical axis explains property 1 (26.6%) "I use this method" in opposition to 2 (42,3%) "it allows knowledge". In particular, it appears that "study cases" is the teaching method which is more closely associated to knowledge, while the other methods are associated to "I use this method".

In conclusion, in the North American arena it has been observed that perception of 11 marketing teaching methods (12 including the option "others") varies due to the fact that different methods are used with different intensity and are associated to different properties. Two teaching methods: "tutorial systems" and "distance learning" are outstanding for being positively perceived and closely related to most of the attributes. In other words, North American teachers value very positively methods which allow a close, individualised relationship between the professor and student. As for use, it can be seen that in North America, the most widespread methods are study cases, practical exercises and seminars.

Therefore, from the interpretation of both maps for Europe and the USA, the conclusion is that hypothesis two should be accepted.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

From the information obtained from marketing lecturers in the two countries analysed, our paper analyses diverse combinations of teaching methods and activities. European and North American marketing teaching systems have been compared, obtaining the following four main conclusions.

Firstly, practical exercises and case studies are the most popular teaching media in marketing in both groups of universities, because they seem to offer more advantages than the other media. Secondly, European lecturers tend to use significantly more master classes and other traditional methods than their American colleagues. At the same time, they make intensive use of practical exercises which highlights the applied approach that European marketing teachers want to give their subjects. Thirdly, North American lecturers tend to use more distance learning and tutorials, this reveals that the close, continuous student/teacher relationship either virtual (distance learning) or real (tutorials) is valued very positively. Fourthly, Phillips 66 and outdoor training are the least popular teaching media in marketing.

In sum, from the data and results obtained, we can not generalise the use of the different teaching methods to all the teaching situations. The specific circumstances of each particular teaching environment must be taken into account.

On the basis of these results, public and private educational organizations and institutions should be encouraged to promote new teaching media and methods in marketing. For example, the enormous possibilities of distance learning should be further explored and developed. The opportunities offered by Internet and other new technologies can throw the door to university learning and teaching system wide open. In spite of this, we should remember that students and teachers prefer face-to-face methods, as other studies have pointed out (Sweeny and Ingram, 2001). At the same time, lecturers should also consider their available resources, students profile, university facilities, and their own skills and abilities.

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