

Business Research Methods in Marketing

(MARK7210 / MARK8995)

Session 1, Fridays 11am-1pm, Marketing Seminar Room, John Goodsell Building

Consultation hours: Wednesdays (12:00-4:00pm), or by appointment

1. Aims and Objectives

This course is a concentrated, structured introduction to mainstream academic research *processes* in marketing. Specifically we shall:

- (a) Consider the range of issues that researchers routinely have to address.
- (b) Examine how these issues might be managed.
- (c) Discuss the design of executable research so that you can undertake research of your own.
- (d) Adopt a critical and questioning approach throughout.

Along the way, you will learn about the systems and structures of academic marketing (such as the journals, authors, conferences, societies and institutions), and have some exposure to research controversies, disputes and paradoxes. Much of this will come from your critical evaluation of the set readings, rather than from formal instruction in research methodology.

2. Syllabus

Marketing methods are varied, giving rise to many different ways to investigate topics of interest. Pricing, for instance, can be seen as a problem of optimisation or gaming strategy, it can be modelled econometrically or experimentally, the focus may be on buyers' responses to prices or the managerial task of price setting. We will discuss some of these different approaches, and consider the methodological issues that arise. However, we cannot do this in great depth for all the approaches that you might come across in marketing. It is for you, therefore, to extend the discussion to approaches that are of particular relevance for your work. What we will address are the following:

- (a) *An introduction to the research process:* Project management and research planning. The role of academic research and published material in the process of advancing marketing thought and knowledge. How to read, critique and prepare research proposals. The art of the solvable. Using this knowledge to write viable research plans. Writing research papers with a purpose – using narratives, tables, graphs and formal notation. Research that communicates versus research that obfuscates.
- (b) *Methodological issues and the research process:* Asking meaningful research questions - inductive and deductive approaches. Conjectures, propositions and hypotheses. Questions of proof, validity, reliability, robustness, representativeness, generalisability, scope, meta-analysis and marketing knowledge. Construct definition and measurement. The role of mediating and moderator variables. Preparing research designs to minimise error and bias.
- (c) *Theoretical foundations of marketing:* Marketing research and the development of the marketing discipline. The role of formal research processes in specific analytical areas (such as marketing science, consumer psychology, and industrial marketing). How paradigms and “schools of thought” emerge and are sustained. The relevance of these to the research process.

3. Timetable

I An Introduction to the Research Process

- 1 07/03 (MU/GG) The Process of Doing Research
- 2 14/03 (CS) Project Management in Research/Preparing a Research Proposal

II Methodological Issues & the Research Process

- 3 21/03 (CS) Construct Definition & Measurement
- 4 28/03 (GG) Validity & Reliability
- 5 04/04 (GG) Issues in Cross-Cultural Research
- 6 11/04 (EB) Logical Consistency in Marketing Research
- 7 17/04 (MU) Empirical Generalisation [NOTE: Thursday, 9-11, because of Good Friday]
- 8 02/05 (GG/MU) **Mid-session Student Progress Reports**

III Theoretical Foundations in Marketing

- 9 09/05 (MU) Development of the Marketing Discipline - Schools
- 10 16/05 (IW) Development of the Marketing Discipline - Theory and Thought
- 11 23/05 (GG) Development of the Marketing Discipline – Methodological Approaches

IV Presentation of the Research Plan

- 12 30/05 (GG/MU) Presenting Research
- 13 06/06 (Panel) **Student Presentations**– Combined with MARK7211/8996 (8am start)

23/06 **Research Projects to be Submitted**

Lecturers: GG (Gary Gregory), MU (Mark Uncles), CS (Chris Styles), IW (Ian Wilkinson) and EB (Eileen Bridges)

4. Format and Teaching Methods

Readings from the academic literature will be assigned every week and during the class these will be discussed and debated. Periodically a more didactic approach may be necessary, but on the whole the aim will be to adopt an interactive "workshop" format.

The class discussions will help you to develop critical skills and I will offer guidance as we go through the course. By way of background I refer you to my notes entitled "Reading Academic Papers Critically" (in course pack). These notes provide a checklist of issues to think about and questions to ask when reading an article and debating its contents in class.

5. Assignments

1. **Readings (critiques).** You will be expected to prepare a written summary and offer a verbal critique of your assigned reading each week. The written summaries should be confined to one page (A4 and not less than 10-pitch)(please make copies for every member of the class). You are welcome to bring along supplementary material to support your verbal critique (e.g., articles related to your topic or in support of your line of argument).

I will assess the readings reports in terms of:

- Your ability to assemble evidence (from the readings).
- The logical consistency of your argument.
- Persuasiveness of your argument (in terms of critical insights).
- Awareness of the methodological implications of your argument.
- Communication / presentation skills.

Given the interactive nature of the classes the feedback is as likely to be verbal as written (in other words, take note of what is said in class and do not simply respond to any written comments that might be provided).

In addition, you may find it useful to consolidate your thinking after each workshop by writing a brief report. A few learning points, listed as bullet-points, can serve as a useful *aide memoire*. This will not be assessed – but it will be of help to you in the long run.

2. **Research plan.** You will be expected to prepare a viable proposal for a well-stated research question in the area of marketing (examples of good practice will be made available during the course). Although the subject matter is wide open, your proposal should:

- State and justify the focus of your work.
- Identify questions/propositions/hypotheses.
- Specify and justify your approach and preferred method.
- Include a viable and feasible research design.
- Say something about sampling and data acquisition procedures.
- Comment on your intended analyses and schedule of work.

The strengths and limitations of your chosen approach need to be considered, including questions to do with validity, robustness, universality and predictive power. The practical constraints should also be considered (for example, timing and budgetary constraints). If you have already undertaken exploratory work or pilot studies, you should incorporate the conclusions from these into your research plan.

Typically, a complete research plan contains a literature review. However, that – in essence – is your assignment for the Research Seminar in Marketing (MARK7211/8996) and there is no point repeating the review here. Nevertheless, you might find it useful to list the key conclusions of your review - such as the conceptual framework that you derive or the synthesis that you propose.

My assessment of the research plan will be based on criteria such as the following:

- Clearly specified aims and goals.
- Mastery of the academic/methodological sources that underlie the research.
- Evidence of critical thought.
- Technical validity of the proposed research.
- Practical viability of the research.
- Logical flow of ideas.
- Linkage of theory/concepts, methods and practical research planning.
- Communication of ideas – clarity, structure, presentation.

Also, see the criteria used by the *International Journal of Research in Marketing* (in the course pack). The *IJRM* list gives an indication of the type of factors academics use to assess whether a paper should be published or not. Many of these criteria are relevant when assessing research plans.

Written reports should be 20-25 pages (A4 and not less than 10-pitch). You should aim to have a draft report ready for presentation to the whole group during our final class in week 13 – which is to be combined with the class for MARK7211/8996 (Friday 6th June). Allow time for your supervisor to see, and comment on, your draft before the presentations. You then will have until 10am on Monday (23rd June) to make changes and submit your final report.

3. **Participation.** The "workshop" format of this course means that you will be expected to contribute to the discussion - in terms of making observations, offering criticisms and putting forward constructive suggestions. It is the quality of your remarks that matters, not the quantity, nor your wit (although the occasional witticism is fine for light relief!).

6. Assessment

1. Readings (Critiques).....	40%
2. Research plan.....	50%
3. Participation.....	10%

7. Sources

There is no set textbook for this course. Most of the relevant material is scattered across specialist books, journal articles and web-sites. To help you, all set readings are reproduced and included in the course pack. However, you will need to read more widely than this – the process of reading for a research assignment is likely to be very different from the way you have previously read for courses.

A list of sources is provided in the course pack.

8. Profile of Lecturer-in-Charge

Dr. Gary D. Gregory received his education at Central Michigan University (B.S. in Management Science and Mathematics) in 1985, and an MBA (Marketing and Computer Applications) in 1989. He then went on to complete his Ph.D. at The University of Texas (Marketing, Research Methodology and International Business) in 1997. He has taught over the last 16 years at such institutions as Central Michigan Univ., Univ. of Malawi, Univ. of Texas, and Univ. of Wollongong. His training and consulting experience includes work for the United Nations, USAID, U.S. Peace Corps., foreign governments and NGOs, and private organisations around the world. Currently, he is a Senior Lecturer and Director of The Centre for Applied Marketing in The School of Marketing (SOM) at UNSW. He is also in charge of the Research Seminar Series in the SOM and is supervising two Ph.D. students.

His current research interests include cultural effects on branding and advertising strategies, cross-cultural marketing and market entry strategies, internationalisation of SMEs in East and Southeast Asia, and the role of external advisors in the internationalisation process. His publications have appeared in *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *Psychology and Marketing*, *Journal of Brand Management*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Studies*, *Journal of International Business and Entrepreneurship*, *Journal of Transnational Management Development*, *Economic Papers*, *Advances in Consumer Research*, *International Business Teaching*, and *Nursing Management*. Additionally, he has presented papers at *American Marketing Association*, *Academy of Management*, *Association of Consumer Research*, *Society of Consumer Psychology*, and *Academy of International Business conferences*.