

## **The Value of Advertising Education in a Business School Environment**

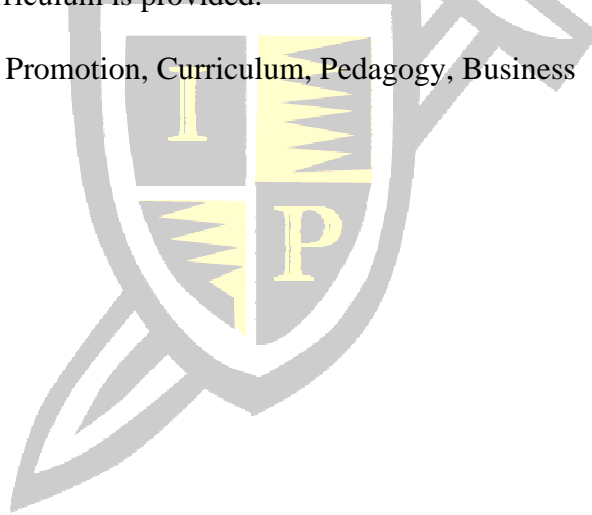
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### **ABSTRACT**

Advertising, as a college degree program, has always had an identity crisis. The major has been housed in Communication, Journalism, Arts and Sciences and only occasionally, Business. In this paper, it is suggested that advertising is best located in the Business School, as it is one of the 4P's, which have defined marketing for nearly 70 years. Currently, there are only 6 business schools that offer advertising as a major and/or minor. Given the exponential growth of digital and social media as message delivery systems, it would be prudent to offer new programs of study related to the promotion P in the business school. A suggested curriculum is provided.

Keywords: Advertising, Promotion, Curriculum, Pedagogy, Business



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## INTRODUCTION

In today's higher education universe, nearly every business school is working to innovate, mostly by developing new programs, new degrees and new "centers," each with an eye to manifesting contemporary business relevance. Marketing education is already offering two currently "hot" areas for demonstrating curriculum relevance: data analytics, and sales. It is easy to understand why "big data" is at the forefront (Mark Zuckerberg testifying before Congress showed this clearly). Even though "sales" as a subset of marketing has been around for nearly a century, it is now becoming the focus of new programs with obvious relevance to employers. This trend can be seen in the many schools rushing to add Sales Centers, many financially aided by sales firms seeking academic connections to train students and create qualified employee prospects. The University Sales Center Alliance new lists 33 full members and 23 associate member institutions ([https://www.universitiesalescenteralliance.org/content.aspx?page\\_id=22&club\\_id=554502&module\\_id=255937](https://www.universitiesalescenteralliance.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=554502&module_id=255937)). Marketing as a field has also tried to claim expertise in supply chain management and logistics since "Place" (distribution) is one of the 4 P's of the Marketing Mix, which is the central concept in marketing education. The COVID 19 pandemic has vaulted supply chain management issues to the forefront and those universities who have departments are seeing strong enrollment growth. According to Supply Chain Scene, there are 31 recognized Supply Chain centers in Universities (<http://www.supplychainscene.org/professional-development/university-supply-chain-centers>).

However, in this paper it is suggested that Marketing has another immediate source of relevance, that of the emerging technologies of digital and social media already being used in the Integrated Marketing Communications area of the field. It is these promotions tools that make academic Marketing immediately relevant to advancing business practices. The "Promotion" P is just as important as any other "P", growing and changing rapidly as marketing communication has changed.

Although creating Data Analytics, Sales and Supply Chain Management centers and degree programs are useful tactical level approaches to curriculum design, the central importance of promotions to contemporary real-world marketing calls for their inclusion in the strategic level education of young marketers. The well-established history of advertising theory and research already offers curricula that provide a conceptual level of education within which the tactics of digital and social media can be most effectively taught. It is in the Business School curriculum that advertising as a marketing communications tool is best understood.

## THE PROPOSITION: VALUING ADVERTISING AS A BUSINESS SCHOOL SUBJECT

Twenty-first century marketing executives must be experienced in the multiple approaches to communicating marketing messages designed to drive demand and therefore revenue in the global arena. Promotions as a broad marketing area (the 4<sup>th</sup> P), especially its subfields of Advertising, Integrated Marketing Communications and Media Planning, is of immediate use and obvious relevance to practitioners. Embedding learning of the new digital and social media technologies by which messages are delivered within the content of

Advertising and Integrated Marketing Communications courses improves the teaching of all marketing communication courses. First, it enhances the perceived relevance of academic marketing to future employers of students. Business students trained in the strategic relevance and use of these new messaging tools are poised to be of greater value to employers than those who are technicians untrained in the strategic business context in which their work takes place. Second, it fosters greater appreciation and understanding of marketing communications as a critical discipline in managing a business.

The intellectual boundaries of academic advertising theories are being expanded with research into how social messaging and digital media affect consumer behavior in new ways. Locating Advertising within business school curricula enriches students with higher level marketing communications skills grounded in scholarly advertising research. It will also acquaint non-marketing majors to the value of advertising as an accountable business asset. In addition, Advertising is possibly the most versatile addition to today's business curricula. It is central to accomplishing effective Integrated Marketing Communications, especially Integrated Brand Promotions (O'Guinn et. al. 2019). Since branding and brand management is the area of marketing most directly relevant to generating business revenue today, it can be argued that the absence of advertising in a business school curriculum is a serious void. In practice, advertising is the function that raises awareness of products/services brands, defines and describes the tangible and intangible benefits they offer, and in so doing persuades customers to prefer them, stimulating intention to purchase them.

In defining and expressing the value proposition of a business or brand, Advertising fosters consumer receptivity to sales efforts. This impact on business process is evident in an already long-established body of academic research. In business school curricula, courses in brand management and IMC strategy are best suited to connect the learning content of familiar courses like product and services marketing with these new technical marketing communications tools: digital, social media, and internet marketing.

## **FRAGMENTATION OF ADVERTISING ACROSS UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS AND CURRICULA**

Despite the value of Advertising to contemporary marketing communications, very few business schools include it in their curricula. Why has organization of advertising subjects within university curricula not been common in business schools? The answer is that it has historically been fragmented – housed in various areas such as Schools of Mass Communication, Journalism Schools or Divisions of Arts & Sciences (Wright-Isak, 2018). This means that many marketing departments are missing opportunities to strengthen degree programs by educating students about how to use rapidly advancing digital, mobile and social media technologies currently being used by marketing practitioners.

### **The Legacy of Academic History**

The historical evolution of advertising education has taken place in an intertwined mixture of marketing, communication, and journalism programs. Ross and Richards (2008) outline the slow evolution of university curricula in which advertising is academically embedded. The story is replete with organizational controversies and resolutions in which advertising is first understood as a topic of study, then a trade, and finally almost a

profession.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, advertising as a distinct subject is threaded through three related disciplines, marketing, economics, and psychology. Between 1910 and 2005 the number of institutions offering advertising programs (regardless of department of school) grew from one to 148 (Ross Osborne & Richards, 2006 p. 16). Early on most advertising courses were taught within journalism schools (30), followed by marketing (21) and then business (12) divisions (Ross, et al., 2006 p.14). In the earliest decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (1910-1920), most of these were in the Midwest and New York schools (Ross, et. al., 2006 p.16). Other locations of Advertising within university programs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century included curricula as diverse as English, Philosophy, and Retailing.

While Marketing came to be established as an academic discipline housed firmly in business schools, Advertising remained fragmented, at times located in one or another of the previously mentioned areas. In each venue, advertising itself was continually a secondary topic, partly due to its fragmented development as a distinct discipline scattered across these numerous areas of university curricula. This fragmentation may be partly responsible for its weak perceptions as either a field of research or a profession (Wright-Isak, 2018). Advertising is often located outside the very school where its problem-solving utility is most apparent.

The exception to Advertising's stepchild status may be the more recent phenomenon of so-called Portfolio Schools whose main purpose is to train those who make ads (the "creatives") in the visual, writing and musical skills needed. Yet the focus of these schools is inadequate for educating account managers, media executives, or research/planners, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century where these roles call for extensive strategic business thinking and the application of sophisticated technologies. Nor do they offer college degrees like the universities' business and journalism schools. Other sources of training are in some of the nation's art schools where degree programs in digital design and similar media technologies are part of arts degrees.

## **ADVERTISING IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS TODAY**

What is the current state of Advertising's presence in the Business Schools where its practitioner value as a field is likely to be most relevant? Although the number of advertising programs grew over time, their presence in business schools has diminished from 12 to 6. This shift poses a problem for advertising as a profession today.

To more closely describe the current situation, the curricula of the six current advertising programs in b-school settings were examined (as a major, a minor, or both) with two questions in mind. First, the range of subjects included in advertising curricula were reviewed and whether they include digital and/or social media was determined. Second, whether or not the advertising courses operate as a cohesive field on its way to establishing itself as a profession (Ben-David, 1984).

Table 1 provides details on the required coursework for a degree in advertising from a business school. By far, Ferris State University provides the most detailed training, requiring students to take 46 credit hours of coursework for the degree, with no elective choices. Three schools, Western Michigan University, Baruch College and Youngstown State have an advertising major requiring between 21 and 27 credits. The final two schools, Missouri State University and Florida Gulf Coast University, provide advertising as a minor to the

marketing major and each requires 18 credit hours of coursework.

Taking a closer look at the individual courses required provides insight into what business schools think “Advertising” is. The only true advertising course required by every school is Principles of Advertising. Nearly all schools require a Creative course, a Media course and an IMC campaigns course. All schools also require Consumer Behavior (though FGCU requires it as part of the marketing major, not the advertising minor).

Beyond these few courses, the list of electives crosses all areas of marketing. Marketing research, professional selling and analytics are offered by half of the schools. Finally, digital and social media marketing is offered as an elective by 3 schools. Until now, marketing departments that offered an elective course in this area used many possible titles: internet marketing, e-marketing, digital marketing and more recently, social media marketing. However, these courses have not been well integrated into the curriculum and are usually not well taught. They may be forgiven given that the field changes daily and academics don’t.

Nevertheless, these topics belong within an advertising curriculum because all are media, delivery systems for ad messages, just as “out of home,” radio, and television are. Offering them benefits students by better preparing them for 21<sup>st</sup> Century careers. Simultaneously, offering them benefits Marketing Programs because this is the cutting edge of the practitioner’s expert body of knowledge. At this point in time, as can be seen in Table 2, only 3 schools offer such a course in digital or social media and these courses are electives, not requirements.

## **VISUALIZING WHAT A BUSINESS SCHOOL ADVERTISING SPECIALTY WOULD LOOK LIKE**

In business school curricula, Marketing is the department focused on the revenue-generating function and advertising is a critical tool of marketing communications needed to accomplish marketing goals. Moreover, advertising’s practitioner importance has increased with the growth of branding as a marketing tool (Wright-Isak, 2018). Thus, marketing’s more immediate 21<sup>ST</sup> Century-relevant utility might be its unique combination of strategic, research-based help for practitioners regarding Internet and digital communications technologies of the past 15 years. The Internet has already been recognized for its ability to help target consumer segments more precisely and effectively through development of digital data gathering capabilities. As creation of ads suitable for delivery via Internet-assisted new media advances, the ability of the Internet to provide more efficient communication of marketing messages to more precisely defined audiences is evident.

Business schools require all business students to take Introduction to Marketing courses – why? In order to teach them the discipline that is responsible for driving the revenue generation, without which no business can remain viable. For many years, and persistently among many managers today, Sales is synonymous with Marketing. Marketing Professors know how narrow and short-sighted a view that is. Our research and our teaching educate even non-majors to the importance of adequate budgets and respect for marketing professionals. Directly and indirectly business faculty are educating them to recognize Marketing is as important a part of a business management team as the new-product development engineers or the Chief Financial Officer.

Planning an advertising curriculum begins with the principle that holds business

schools needn't teach people to make the ads or to get jobs as creatives (in ad agencies or marketing firms). The focus is on teaching managers to understand how to most effectively and efficiently use advertising along with other promotion mix elements in the Marketing Communications Tool Kit. Advertising along with PR and Media Planning helps management and the sales force to accomplish the following general goals:

- Persuade consumers to prefer and purchase (revenue generation) a firm's goods and/or services by raising awareness, creating understanding of the value proposition, and "fertilizing" the market to respond favorably to sales efforts. In addition, marketing communications help redress market misperceptions (or repair perceptions when the firm or the brand has violated public trust).
- Create, manage, and evolve a brand – establish its social and emotional significance beyond functional utility to the consumer or other constituent whom the brand can or does influence.
- Counter competitor messaging that directly affects our brand's value perceptions. This is accomplished by presenting implicit alternative value under the sign of our brand. Its ongoing task is to maintain or enhance brand differentiation from alternative consumer options.
- Engage our consumers on the multiple bases of values, emotions, and normative matching of our brand's cultural (and functional or utilitarian) significance to their own beliefs and lifestyles. (One example, every luxury car brand does this – and would not be competitive if it did not.)

### **A Curriculum Proposal**

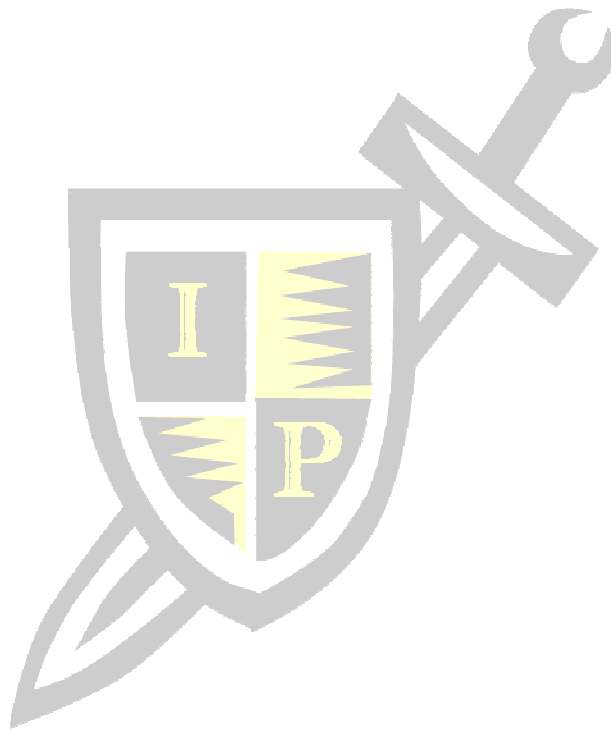
In our view the curriculum for advertising majors or minors in the Colleges of Business need not include ad design and creation; its focus would be on developing the marketing strategy, brand positioning, and learning how to systematically apply these marketing elements to messaging strategy for long-term consistent brand messaging and short-term response-to-market needs messaging. The general focus of advertising as a part of the marketing curriculum is to train marketing executives in the effective management of marketing communications resources in generating awareness, developing accurate expectations, and conducting effective customer communications as needed. It might include the set of courses presented in Table 3.

Of note is that we do not recommend a separate, purely digital or social media course. Alternatively, we suggest that this delivery vehicle be woven throughout the other courses in the curriculum. Advertising, public relations, personal sales, etc. are all conducted via digital media vehicles. Business school curriculum committees will need to meet to determine how best to integrate digital and social media throughout the core courses.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper began by mentioning the "hot" areas of marketing in the academy: data analytics, sales, and supply chain management. It was recommended that social media and/or digital marketing is part of our prescription for Advertising's academic future because it is rapidly becoming part of practitioners' present-day work lives. Based on its real-world growth and global reach, this area of promotion is the #1 subject in marketing right now, and

it is a major phenomenon among billions of consumers worldwide. Future marketing programs in B-schools will have to prepare degree candidates to understand digital, social and mobile media if they are to be relevant to the employers who seek marketing professionals. The window where offering that expertise is forward thinking and professionally differentiated is rapidly closing. Academia is slow to change, yet the market evolves almost instantly. It is imperative that academics move to the forefront of the training of our students in these new media options.



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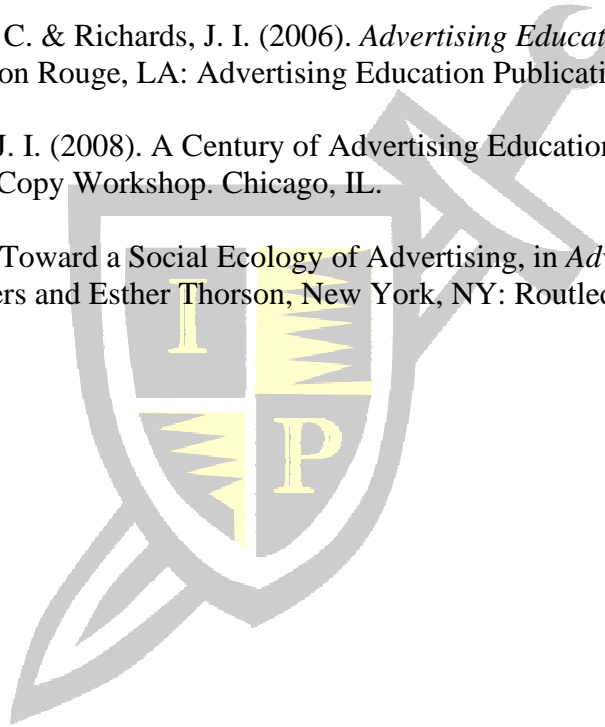
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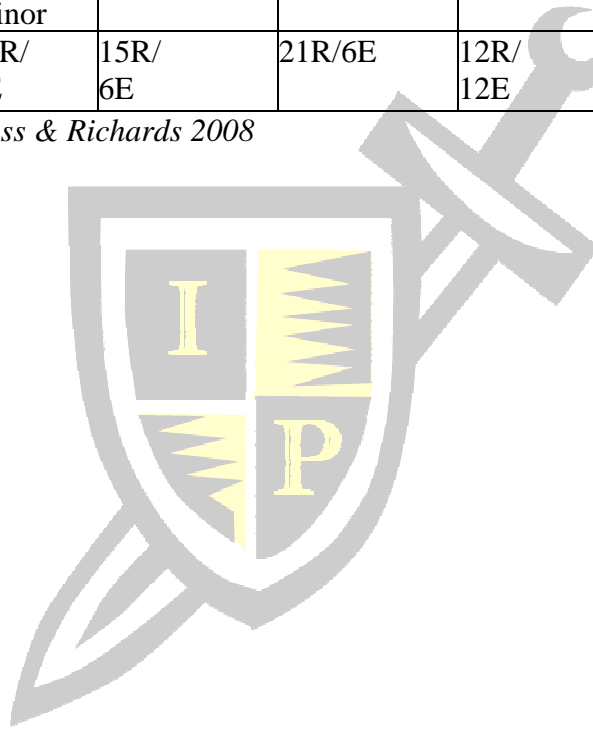




**Table 1 Degree or Major/Minor in Advertising\*\***

School	Ferris	WMU	YSU	Baruch	MSU	FGCU
Degree	ADV/ IMC Major Minor	ADV and Promo Major Minor	ADV and Public Relations Major Minor	ADV and Mktg Comm. Track	B- Admin Mkt Major/ Ad minor	B- Admin Mkt Major/ Ad minor
Total Courses Ad degree or Major/Minor	46 Major 18 Minor	27 Major 21 Minor	27 Major 18 Minor	24 Track	18 Minor	18 Minor
#Required #Elective	46R/ 0E	15R/ 6E	21R/6E	12R/ 12E	12R/6E	15R/3E

*\*\*Derived from Ross & Richards 2008*



**Table 2 Courses in B-School Advertising Curricula\*\*\***

Courses	# Schools	R/E	Notes
Principles of Adv	6	R	
Consumer Behavior	5	R	FGCU – E
Adv/IMC Campaigns	5	R	Baruch – E
Creative	4	R	Baruch, MSU – E
Media Planning, Strat & Tactics	4	R	Baruch E, Not MSU
Marketing Research	3	R	Not WMU, MSU, FGCU
Mkt Analytics	3	E	Not Ferris, MSU, FGCU
Professional Selling	3	1R/ 3E	Not WMU, Baruch, YSU
Digital & Social Media Marketing	3	E	Not WMU, Baruch, FGCU
Web Design	1	R	Only at Ferris State
Web Analytics & Intel	1	E	Only at Baruch
Direct/Interactive Marketing	1	E	Only at Baruch

\*\*\*Derived from Ross & Richards 2008

**Table 3: Suggested Coursework**

**INTRODUCTION TO MARKETING** - required of all business students, this course sets the foundation for the advertising minor. Marketing's task within the firm is to generate revenue by means of relationship building with consumers, customers and other influencers or constituents of the firm's products, services and brands.

**PRINCIPLES OF ADVERTISING** - This course introduces advertising as the key marketing communications tool in raising brand awareness, managing consumer familiarity, and other business and brand management messaging. Included are these uses of advertising: engage specifically defined target markets, change or improve attitudes toward the brands purveyed by the firm, and counter competitor messaging.

**MEDIA PLANNING** - this course involves learning how to define intended consumer segments in terms of their media usage to better deliver the client's marketing messages to them at times and in ways that enhance the saliency of the messages to ensure that consumers receive and pay attention to them.

**PR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND WRITING** - PR is the marketing communications tool that implements the brand identity dramatized and described by the advertising used to define and maintain the firm or brand's reputation to desired constituents. PR is often the line of first response to unexpected events that impact the brand (positively or negatively). PR communications require careful and effective writing developed to implement the immediate response strategy within the overall brand perceptual parameters.

**INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS** - Combining the tools of Media Planning, Advertising strategy and campaign management with Public Relations capabilities of "walking the brand talk," calls for strategic thinking about a firm's ongoing presence in its markets and the perceptions that affect evaluations of its worth. The IMC Course teaches students how to coordinate the activities of all these functions toward a coordinated and consistent identity for the product, service or brand offered by the firm.

**PRODUCT AND BRAND MANAGEMENT** - Many businesses consider marketing after the brand of product or service has been developed, relying on their marketing teams to identify the type of consumers most likely to want it, and prepare communications required to raise awareness and create desire for it. Forward thinking firms manage changing brand perceptions, issue reminder messaging about the value of a long-term brand leader or discover new consumer segments and reposition the brand to them. Forward thinking firm also leverage popular brand identities into future product development – line extensions, brand ventures into new categories etc. This course teaches an executive level of marketing thinking about brands as key assets of a firm's full spectrum of offerings to its consumers or customers.

**ADVERTISING RESEARCH** - This course would include ways to measure the effectiveness of the other marketing communications tools (media and PR) in the context of brand perceptual asset management. This course will supplement existing consumer behavior and marketing research courses. There is very little overlap with other research courses as the focus is on research that measures message reception, accumulated brand perceptions over time, and testing alternative messaging for a given brand strategy. Measuring advertising effectiveness using industry best-practices will be included.

