PHOTOESSAYS IN THE TEACHING OF MARKETING II: CONSTRUCTION, INSTRUCTION AND IMPARTING PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

Irene C L Ng

University of Exeter

Discussion Papers in Management

Paper number 05/05

ISSN 1472-2939

Abstract
This paper is the second part of a report into a longitudinal research project to develop a new teaching tool, a photoessay. A photoessay is a group of photos tied together by a common theme and used as an instructional tool through presentation and narration to students. Through a combined action research and theory-in-use methodology, this paper reports how the photoessay should be constructed and instructed to facilitate learning and how the practitioner’s skills in marketing can be imparted. The findings show that photoessays must reflect theory, capture emotions, provide perspectives, abstracting theory and allow for discovery of information. While presenting the photoessay may help students learning and application of knowledge, the construction of one help teachers integrate their practice, knowledge and teaching, as well as fosters creativity. Through its construction, the teacher-practitioner has to provide a theoretical account of practice and at the same time, as teacher-academic, has to demonstrate a theory’s accountability to practice. This process trains the teacher to be reflective, sensitizing the teacher to why practices are the way they are and also to gain deeper insights into the gaps in practice, teaching and research. The study shows that photoessay construction could be an opportunity for practitioners who aspire to be teachers or researchers to achieve higher level reflection where the teacher questions fundamental beliefs that shape knowledge in that area.

Keywords: Photographs, Photoessay, Marketing, Practice, Application, Experience, Teaching

Submitted to the Journal of Marketing Education, 12 April 2005
PHOTOESSAYS IN THE TEACHING OF MARKETING II:
CONSTRUCTION, INSTRUCTION AND IMPARTING PRACTICE
EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

The growth of business education is unparalleled in the history of our time. More than 100,000 MBAs are awarded in the U.S annually. MBA programs are mushrooming across China and Russia and there seems to be no end to the thirst for business degrees as more people begin to perceive business as the key to wealth. Along with this surge in demand comes a host of willing suppliers in the form of universities and institutions whose objectives for launching business programs range from the noblest intentions to pure, unadulterated profit. However, with growing competition, even those who wish to profit have to, at the very least, promise quality in the education received.

This promise is not to be taken lightly. Graduates of business schools are expected not only to reflect the knowledge of a sound education but also to “act as independent thinkers and competent problem solvers” (Lang and Dittrich, 1982). This is especially true in marketing, where market conditions and consumer lifestyles change constantly. Consequently, a major objective of a teacher in a marketing course is to prepare students for adaptation to new marketing problems and settings. Yet in many business courses, the emphasis on information acquisition has marred this objective and many programs have been so focused on this acquisition that the development of problem solving skills has been neglected. In other words, teachers and students at universities are often content with what the student “knows” and are less interested in whether they can “apply” the knowledge (cf. Lang and Dittrich, 1982).

Traditionally, the case method is the method of instruction that assists students in learning how to apply the knowledge i.e. what education research term as transfer. However, with more students signing up for business school programs and increasing class sizes, teaching transfer through the case method places a considerable strain on school resources.
This paper is the second part of a report into a longitudinal research project to develop a new teaching tool, a photoessay. A photoessay is a group of photos tied together by a common theme and used as an instructional tool through presentation and narration to students. Paper 1 reported seven dimensions of student learning resulting from the use of photoessays. To achieve the learning reported in paper 1 this paper show that photoessays must reflect theory, capture emotions, provide perspectives, abstracting theory and allow for discovery of information. Moreover, the study finds that a photoessay is a useful tool to combine practice and theory and its construction serves as a method for experienced marketing practitioners to contribute to teaching.

This paper is organized as follows. It begins with a literature review, followed by a discussion of the methodology. Results on photoessay construction are then presented. The results are then discussed and implications considered.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Business schools understand that the role of the teacher is extremely important in the competency level of the student in transferring the skills learnt in the classroom to the workforce. Top business schools today entice speakers from the practitioner’s world to add luster to the teaching roster while students sign up in droves wanting to hear ‘from the horse’s mouth’ about “how it’s done”. Real world experience helps a teacher develop examples that are relevant to the subject, triggering ideas and stimulating creativity in students when the examples are presented in class. However it is common knowledge that success in the real world does not always translate to being a great teacher. This is because practice or experience-informed teaching has not been sufficiently investigated. The research-teaching link is more straightforward since research is often reported through articles and books and these may be adapted into instructional tools. Practice, on the other hand, seldom exists in a written form, is heavily contextual and its knowledge is largely tacit (Polanyi, 1966). In business schools, practice informs teaching through good examples and case studies. However, there is still a lack of critical attention paid to developing tools that enable an informed marketing practitioner to impart his or her knowledge through teaching. Yet, as evidenced by the number of marketing lecturers in business schools who have been in practice for some time, practical experience is clearly highly valued.
Notwithstanding the value of practice, students need to understand not merely how to solve a problem, but why the problem is solved in the manner described. In any given scenario a practitioner might be able to articulate how a problem is solved from his experience. However, the student needs to understand how the solution can be used across different contexts and problems. To do so, the solution needs to be abstracted into principles that can be meaningfully applied in a different set of circumstances. Practitioners may not be able to abstract the solution into such principles and this might inhibit learning. Polanyi (1966) makes clear this distinction, which he calls explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is that which is transmittable through a systematic language. Tacit knowledge, however, is the knowledge that is normally not easily articulated since it is deeply embedded in action and within a specific context. Consequently, for practitioners to become effective teachers, they need to understand the theory and principles within that subject area, as well as the research governing that discipline. By understanding the theory and research, practitioners are then able to know how their practice can complement the theoretical knowledge for more effective teaching. More importantly, practitioners need to understand where the knowledge acquired from experience belongs to within the body of knowledge of that subject. Failure to do this may result in the practitioner falsely believing that that his or her experiences are “new” knowledge when in fact they are merely the manifestation of a failure to abstract the contextualized information.

In 1990, the President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of University Teaching, Ernest L. Boyer argued that the understanding of scholarship was too narrowly focused on basic research, with other functions such as teaching and application flowing from, rather than being on par with research. Boyer proposed an alternative model for scholarship that transcends the teaching versus research debate and aims to give all aspects of academic work some level of legitimacy.

_Surely, scholarship means engaging in original research. But the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one’s investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one’s knowledge effectively to students._

_Specifically, we conclude that the work of the professorate might be thought of as having four separate, yet overlapping, functions: These are the scholarship of discovery; the scholarship of integration; the scholarship of application; and the scholarship of teaching._

(Boyer, 1990, p. 16)
The scholarship of discovery is described as the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and the discovery of new knowledge. The scholarship of integration provides value judgment to work done and connects research in the subject area with insights and contribution to the area in the pursuit of learning. The scholarship of application is concerned with the accountability and rigor academic researchers should hold against real world practices in the subject area in ensuring that the work done is useful and applicable. In the scholarship of teaching, Boyer asserts that teaching should not be seen as a merely a routine activity, but should be seen as a highly complex activity involving great expertise in knowledge and understanding of the subject on the part of the teacher and that the teacher needs to constantly reflect, review and learn from his practice. The teacher, according to Boyer, serves also as inspirer of future scholars.

Despite the scholarly excellence described above, the question of how the scholarship of application, discovery and integration can be combined to assist the scholarship of teaching in marketing is still not satisfactorily answered. Little attention has been devoted to this lack of extrapolation between integrating practice experience into the curricula. Studies in teaching business policy propose that the most appropriate instructional techniques to impart business practices in real life are those that are pedagogical in nature such as cases, games and readings from business publications. For example, Hegarty (1976) found that case methods dominate the teaching of business policy with the use of business publications as reading material and games coming a close second and third. Similarly, Richards (1976) found that case methods were actively used in the teaching of business policy courses.

Within marketing education, researchers have also proposed the use of experiential activities to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Frontczak, 1998; Ronchetto and Buckles, 1994). Experiential education activities allow students to combine direct experience with reflection and analysis, and is a philosophical orientation in teaching and learning that prizes “learning by doing” to maximize learning (Sakofs, 1995). However, as Joplin (1995) proposes, true experiential education must contain a reflection process.

The focus of the studies above has been on students acquiring a practitioner’s skills. Regrettably, there is still a lack of critical attention devoted to helping practitioners integrate their experience into teaching or even research. This implies that either practice experience
does not contribute to teaching or the research community has not been interested to investigate this linkage. This investigation suggests the latter.

One impediment towards a lack of studies in this area could be the nature of both domains. With a few exceptions, academics have not spent many years in practice and conversely, practitioners are not often interested in academic research. While academics and practitioners often do work together on various educational, research and consulting projects, self preservation dictates a territorial attitude on both sides to ensure that the expertise and skills are kept separate. Hence, the old joke of: “if you can’t do, teach” and practitioners’ perception of academics not being in touch with reality is still widely held. Similarly, academics, perhaps interested in preserving their scholarly esteem often insist practitioners “lack depth” and participate in “brain-dead” practices. Yet, despite the rhetoric, practitioners still flock towards obtaining their MBAs as much as academics still strive towards becoming relevant and increasing students experiential skills.

This suggests that, despite the politics, the two domains are not mutually exclusive and are in fact complementary. Intuitively, it is plausible that excellent practitioners could contribute to both teaching and research. What is lacking is a more useful guidance on how practice and teaching can be integrated.

This study investigates how a practitioner-teacher could impart the richness of his or her own experiences in a lecture setting. To achieve this purpose, a specific medium, i.e. photographs is used. By using photographs to construct a photoessay for use in lectures, the study investigates how the medium could combine the teacher’s academic judgment with practice experience and creativity. When used in lectures, this tool can serve to expand the teacher’s scholarship in teaching and assist teachers in enhancing students’ competency level in solving real world business problems.

Photoessays are a group of photos tied together by a common theme. Used as a teaching tool in marketing, the photos illustrate a particular theory or principle that is carried through the text and narration of the Photoessay. The discovery on how to make a photographic image came in almost 200 years ago. Since then, photography has been used to report, illustrate, archive and evince. In the social sciences, visual researchers are increasingly using photography as a scientific research method (Heisley and Levy, 1991). The literature on the use of visual methods such as prints, film and video in research documents three
ways where these methods can be most effective. This was reviewed in paper 1 and repeated below for completeness.

First, photographic images can assist in creating ‘inventories’ of the content in such a way that the written word may not be able capture. Images contain nuance and detail that serve to complement a study. Visual items can be scrutinized in an open-inquiry manner to obtain a narrative for example, in ethnographic presentations (e.g. Aron, 1979; Ewen, 1979). In the second, photographs are de-composed into items that can be categorized according to their significance. Finally the use of proxemics (measurement of spatial relationships (Hall, 1974)), kinesics (study of body language (Birdwhistell, 1969)) and choreometrics (study of movement through time (Collier, 1979)) is also a common form of photographic image analysis.

The second technique that uses visual methods is the projective photoelicitation technique. Photographic images are usually presented to research participants with the aim of eliciting the participant’s interpretation of reality, either in the form of stories or behavioral cues. This technique has been used by sociologists (e.g. Harper, 1984), psychologists (e.g. Akeret, 1973; Entin, 1979) and anthropologists (e.g. Gates, 1976) as “the imagery dredges the consciousness (and sub consciousness) of the informant and in an exploratory fashion reveals significance triggered by the photographic subject matter” (Heisley and Levy, 1991).

Finally, visual methods have been used as social artifacts. Researchers can examine photographs, films etc. made by groups to see what the group values, the norms and investigate various socio-cultural aspects of the group.

This paper uses photographic images as a medium to apply knowledge taught across various contexts. As an example, consider a student who is being taught the theory of color and is given a set of paints. He has the skill to combine colors to produce any color he wishes. Imagine that this student has never seen a painting in his life. He is then shown, not a work of art, but a child’s painting, much like the caricature of how color can be applied. It suddenly dawns on him, after seeing that painting that he may be capable of doing better than what has been shown to him. He may then proceed to apply tremendous creativity to the knowledge (i.e. skills and information) he has attained to produce a spectacular piece of art. Without the caricature, he may lack the imagination to apply the theory. With it, the
bridge between knowledge and practice has been built, and he can focus on how much more effectively the knowledge can be used.

However, education research studies have shown that when a subject is taught only in a single context, transfer to other context may be difficult (e.g. Barrows, 1985). To promote a better transfer of the learning, students need assistance in abstracting general principles from the contextualized knowledge either by providing “what if” problems or by asking students to extract general rules that can be applied across multiple contexts (Gick and Holyoak, 1983).

Yet, when knowledge is taught in an abstract form, students may fail to connect its meaning to a real world situation (Resnick, 1987). For example, when students are taught the concept of interest rates in borrowing money, they may not see interest rates (contextualized form) as the price of money (abstracted form), thus losing an opportunity to discover insights by applying pricing theory into that context. This issue of context is especially relevant in marketing courses within the MBA. Students who come from a rich experiential background often draw upon their experience to solve problems without attempting to assimilate new knowledge. New knowledge therefore, can be seen as sets of disjointed facts and students may face difficulty in integrating the two. If the new knowledge is overly contextual, the student may not be able to transfer that knowledge across contexts. If it is overly abstract, the student cannot see meaning in different milieu.

Consequently, photoessays – a medium to extract practitioner’s experience - can show how theory could be applied to various contexts. This, in turn could assist students in activating the construction of knowledge that takes into account their existing disposition and experience. In other words, the challenge placed on the photographic medium is to bridge the gap between the teacher wanting to impart his experience and a student who is constructing his or her knowledge of the subject. Moderating this relationship is the theory and principles of the subject matter. This challenge is diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 1: Application, Theory and Teaching using Photoessays

The justifications above serve as a backdrop to this study. The investigation aims to derive insights into how the photoessays assist in the construction of knowledge in marketing. Yet, as stated in paper 1, whether or not a medium such as a photoessay has the capability to affect learning depends not only on the medium itself but also the content, and
the way the medium is structured for instruction. This is a dilemma of the research. How can one show the efficacy of a teaching tool if the specific attributes and structure of the tool have not been developed and how can the tool be developed if it has not been shown the nature of its effectiveness?

To resolve this dilemma, a further research question was incorporated. It became clear that the characteristics of the photoessay needed to be obtained - the traits that would contribute to the learning activated by the photoessay. It was apparent that these two questions interacted and the answer of one would inform the other i.e. how photoessays should be constructed depended on how students learn from it and vice versa.

Consequently, to accomplish these two objectives, the methodology used had to understand the iterative process of presentation-investigation-presentation that was needed to achieve the objectives laid out. In this regard, an action research approach was employed.

The findings from students learning perspectives (as reported in paper 1) showed that the learning process is activated by the presentation of photoessays in seven ways i.e. reinforcement of understanding, feedback, cognitive efficiency, reflection, creativity, motivation and emotional resonance. In this paper, the attributes of the photoessay that serve to achieve that learning and how its construction is in itself an experiential learning for the teacher in terms of imparting practice experience as well as integrating practice with theory is discussed.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Construction of Photoessays**

Action research is the process by which teachers or practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically so that they are able to guide, correct and evaluate their decisions and actions. In short, action research is the method of “learning by doing”, similar to experiential education. A problem is identified and attempts are made to resolve it. The effort is evaluated and if the problem has not been solved, then the attempt is made again with modifications. It is a common methodology for teacher learning and is well used in education research. Teachers participating in action research have been shown to be more critical and reflective about their teaching (Oja and Pine, 1989; Street, 1986) and are more careful with their perception and understanding of the teaching process.
Action research was chosen as a methodology for four reasons. First, having served as a marketing practitioner for several years, as well as a CEO of a large company, I believed that there would be value in the “real world” experience that could be brought into the teaching material. However, as indicated in the literature review, a practitioner’s knowledge is often tacit. By using a medium such as photographs, and through the compilation and construction of a photoessay within an action research format, practice knowledge could be activated.

Second, notwithstanding the years in practice, I have also spent several years in academia completing my doctoral studies. By grounding practice knowledge with theory and focusing entirely on research, I ventured from applied research to the use of combinational methodologies e.g. theory-in-use (Ng, Wirtz and Lee, 1999), to pure theoretical research (Lee and Ng, 2001). Consequently, what Schwab (1964) describes as “syntactical” knowledge has been acquired – the understanding of the principles that guide knowledge formation within the subject area. The photoessay therefore provided a medium to synthesize practice and theory and illustrate how and under what conditions do information from theory can be combined with practice. Furthermore, ideas on teaching marketing have been formed. Since ideas and action are linked dialectically (Waters-Adams and Nias, 2003), action research acts as a methodological tool to elicit such ideas, putting them into action and then reflect on their effectiveness.

Third, each modification of the photoessay would improve on the previous one, after presentation in a lecture. The teacher learns from the feedback of the students and upon reflection, analyses and modification of the photoessay, the teacher obtains further understanding of the role and effectiveness of the photoessay. In other words, the process is not static and action research provides a means of introducing dynamism into the research. In the words of Zeichner (1993), action research is a “systematic enquiry by practitioners about their own practice”.

As there is little research in the area of constructing photoessays for teaching, the action research process enables an exploratory research to be conducted within the process that can inform the construction of the photoessay. Furthermore, action research provided a degree of flexibility better than many alternatives.

Within the action research process, another method was drawn from Zaltmann, LeMasters and Heffring ‘Theory Construction in Marketing: Some Thoughts on Thinking’
(1982) to activate practice knowledge in creating the content of the photoessays. Through the theory-in-use method, photographs were collected and the content of the photoessay structured through an exercise in reconstructed logic; sourcing for visual business practices that could be a reflection of the theory, linking the photograph with academic literature and developing a greater understanding of how to better explain the theory. The rationale of this approach, applied in this study, to understand, formalize and document visual situations as a contribution to the teaching of that topic (for an example of this approach, see Ng, Wirtz and Lee, 1999).

The research embarked upon was guided by the framework suggested by Susman and Evered (1978) where the project is viewed as cyclical with diagnosing, action planning, action taken, evaluating (observation) and reflecting on the results (Zuber-Skerritt and Perry, 2000; Dick, 2000) as illustrated in Figure 2 – The Action Research Process.

Making the Photoessay – the context

Photographs are a natural medium when teaching marketing as marketing can be a very visual subject. Students, who are themselves consumers, are constantly bombarded with visual images such as product packaging, advertisements, discount price tags, just to name a few.

The context of the photoessay chosen for this research article was a theory in psychology taught in services marketing called script theory. For continuity, I will replicate the explanation of script theory in paper 1 below.

In psychology, a script is described as a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation (e.g. repetitive daily events). Within the context of services marketing, the service script contains the expectations about the sequences of actions, the actors and the setting of a service encounter. It has been well established in services marketing literature that customers use scripts as a guide to behavior and as a means of making sense of the behavior of others. Furthermore, studies states that familiarity with script imparts to the customer a perception of having some “control” and a departure from script can result in both positive and negative experience. This perception of control has been described as a principal human driving force as people are motivated to demonstrate their competence and superiority over their environment (Averill, 1973). Perceived control is also relevant in research on waiting and queuing. The themes of the photoessays compiled
for this study were script theory, perceived control theory and queuing, topics that are considered important when designing a service and that are often taught within a services marketing course.

Through the theory-in-use method embedded in the action research process, a systematic guide on photo collection was followed, to synthesize theory with practice. It started with the identification of theory holders, i.e. the service firms and their service offerings. Photographs were taken as indicators of effective (or ineffective) practice. Then principles that described the observed practice were embedded in the narration of the photo. Next the concepts involved in each governing principle were identified and linked with one another. The possible linkages were then described in the narration. Several such practices were collected and syntheses developed to expound the core theory. Ineffective practices were also photographed and the above procedure repeated.

These photographs were placed into a PowerPoint document and text (if there were any) added. Following multimedia principles (Mayer, 1997) on effective multimedia presentations, the photos dominated the screen and any extraneous words were kept to a minimum (coherence principle). The photos and the verbal narration were presented contiguously rather than separately and the words were used as an auditory narration rather than a visual on screen text (contiguity principle). Furthermore, content from journal articles and text books as well as notes made by the author from previous discussions with practitioners and students served to further assist in the construction of the narration. The narration was then improved using results from assignments set on the topics (students were given assignments of keeping a service encounter journal). Discussions with colleagues also became part of the analytical and reflective process as the photoessays evolved and developed into “an amalgam of content and pedagogy” (Shulman, 1987).

This photoessay was then presented to students and interviews were conducted to draw insights into how the students responded to the photoessay. The categories were then analyzed, reflected upon and used to modify the photoessay. This photoessay was then presented again to students and the process starts over. This multiple iteration in the methodology allowed student learning to inform the construction of the photoessay and vice versa.
RESULTS

Components of the Photoessay

In the construction of a photoessay, attention was focused on the factors that contributed to the learning reported paper 1. In the course of the action research, the following characteristics of a photoessays were uncovered, a summary of which is tabulated in Table 1: Excerpts from the Photoessay

Reflecting Theory in Practice

While this feature seems to be central in a photoessay construction, interview data showed that students differ in the degree in which they can recognize the theory embedded within. For example a photograph that illustrated the principle that ‘certain waiting feels shorter than uncertain waiting’, students generally understood that principle even before the photograph was shown but the photo provided a contextual application of the theory in a service setting that many had experienced (i.e. the time before the actual ride in a theme park). In the interviews the students remarked that they had to think about the setting (familiar) and the theory (new) and cognitively negotiate how that photo would be a reflection of the theory.

In reflecting theory, it became useful to provide illustrations with sufficient breadth of application. Not surprisingly, the findings indicated that more examples led to better comprehension of the theory. Having more photographs illustrating a single concept also ensured greater relevance to a broader set of students. Furthermore, photographs were chosen that were different from the normal examples. The purpose was to contest common and traditional answers to problems and provide unusual solutions.

For example, in explaining the idea of a service script, students could be thinking of a movie or theatre script. Usually, they imagine a script of going to a bank, consuming fast food, or watching a movie. A simple photograph (Figure 1a of Table 1 – Reflection of Theory and Discovery of Information) showed that some scripts were subtler than initially perceived. The photograph merely showed a counter at a golf club with two carpets – one for ‘guests’ and one for ‘members’ indicating the position at the counter where each group should register. The use of a simple object such as a carpet to adjust a customer’s script (i.e. where to go to sign in) illustrated the use of divergent thinking in script theory that could be
beneficial in practice. The photo was not unfamiliar or unusual. In fact, it was precisely because it was so normal to daily lives that made the conclusion powerful.

By reflecting theory in various contexts, teachers are able to exercise their creativity while fostering students’ creativity. Demonstrating connections between theory and practice also helped students reinforce their understanding of the topic (cf. paper 1).

*Capturing Emotions*

From the interview data, emotions made the subject more relevant and that in turn motivated learning. Photoessays could be used to capture emotions through involvement. For example, photoessays could involve students within the narration e.g. by asking them to mentally take on the role of a person in the photograph or by leading students along the narration while showing them the photographs. In so doing, students became more immersed in the context, involving both emotion and cognition and allowing for the interplay between them to enhance learning and transfer, as illustrated in Table 1 – Excerpts from Photoessay, Figure 1b. –Capturing Emotions. In paper 1, it was reported that students perceived relevancy when photographs had emotional resonance.

Inquiries into emotional levels of students when viewing photos that were designed to elicit emotions showed that although students could feel that emotion, it was a detached empathetic emotion resulting from the role play. By having twin roles – as the role player and as an observer – student learning became richer.

Creating photographs that captured emotions also allowed the teacher to be sensitive to the emotions of various consumption activities in marketing. From students’ responses, I actively sought “moments” in consumption that I could capture with photographs to strengthen the image created. As the project progressed, I began to see “moments” in more marketing activities – a habit of mind that sensitised situations and surroundings into theories and principles.
Providing Perspectives

Photoessays could be shown in different perspectives. In this study, perspectives of the customers were often narrated alongside the perspective of the firm. Students would need to mentally switch between these perspectives and that would allow them to form strategies, conclusions and in-depth thinking. For example, in the narration of Figure 1c – Providing Perspectives, the students caught on quickly that script ignorance could be translated to a loss of revenue for the firm.

Reports also indicated that by providing opposing perspectives, students felt that the photoessays placed them in the role of “experts” and they felt compelled to critically assess and analyze the photos and narration and engaged in activities that are similar to expert practice.

Although I wasn’t a professional photographer, it became clear to me early on that every photograph provided a perspective and that the students’ perception was highly influenced by the perspective manifested in the content and angle of the photograph I took. Hence, if a scene could be photographed to show consumer and firm’s perspectives, I became more discerning in the photographs taken. The objective was not to create a better photograph in an aesthetic sense. Rather it was meant to be in line with the narration of the photoessay and how I wanted the students to learn that drove the way the photographs were taken.

Abstracting Theory

It was found that photoessays assisted learning when the narration and photographic images combined to present an applied context and having the students abstract the theory from that context. Figure 1d – Illustrating Theory illustrates how this is achieved. A familiar photo is displayed i.e. a menu outside a restaurant. Students were then asked to articulate the theory. Responses and explanations showed that they developed their own observations and
interpretations of the picture and such discussions resulted in stronger understanding when applying the knowledge.

When combined with the theory reflection reported earlier, the iterative role of abstracting a theory from a context and then seeing it contextualized into different forms by looking for other photos was reported to be mentally stimulating and extremely rewarding. Furthermore, it seemed to challenge students to seek more creative solutions.

This was a learning challenge for the teacher. Instead of taking photographs that merely reflected theory, I had to think about how to see theory in real world settings. Mentally, it was stimulating and I found satisfaction when I saw “theory twists” in practical day-today settings.

Allowing for Discovery of Information

Photoessays can be constructed to put forward a problem, rather than providing or illustrating a solution. Interview data showed that the learning experience was different when students discovered and explained a solution for themselves. Hence, a photoessay that is structured around the presentation of problems may help students discover information and assist them in framing solutions. Through this manner, students can come to understand the arguments, ideas and reasoning strategies that underpin their construction of knowledge instead of merely knowing factual information.

For example, Figure 1a – Reflection of Theory and Discovery of Information was a non-traditional illustration of a script. From the narration and with a teacher’s guidance and probing, students shared explanations and experiences and the discussion became more sophisticated. Through the process of synthesis and reflection within the mind, this method compels students to assimilate their experiences and attributes and construct knowledge that is richer and more transferable.

Similarly, Figure 1e - Allowing for Discovery of Information is an ‘escalator’ of sorts that transports people up the hill with their rubber tyres and from the top of the hill, they would slide down sitting on the rubber tube.

The photograph had a little sign that said ‘If you are not familiar with this lift, ask operator for assistance’. As the narration showed, the discovery of knowledge helps students in their applied skills, as the inquiry nature of the discovery gives them confidence. Through
this exercise, students understood which part of the acquired knowledge contained gaps and how the gaps could be addressed.

The teacher is also not immune to the dynamic process of marketing activities. In contrast to the usual case questions in the classroom, when the case questions themselves are already provided and solutions discussed, the construction of a photoessay required the teacher to hunt for questions that exist in real world settings. It is an incredibly challenging task as the teacher has to deconstruct the learning process of a student and reconstruct it through photographs. For example, there was a time when I was walking down a popular street with several bars. One bar had very low patronage while the bar next door was full of people. A photograph that showed a contrast in patronage led to a classroom discussion on why this could be so. The real answer was elusive but the point was to obtain photographs that posed questions for students to apply what they have learnt (in this case, on service design and servicescapes) to attempt answers.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In paper 1, activating student learning was discussed through the presentation of a photoessay. Through analysis and synthesis with education research, theoretical background and explanations on the seven dimensions of learning was found. In this paper, it will be shown how photoessays can be used to integrate practice and theory. In addition, this paper will also propose how the integration should be structured and organized in a photoessay so that it can be a tool to enhance students’ learning.

The findings also demonstrated the potential of teacher learning in the construction of photoessays. A lot of time was spent mulling over the relevance of each photo, deciding on the concepts that the photos illustrated and the narration that could be used. More importantly, by going out into the ‘field’ to search or take the photographs for the essay, the teacher became engaged in a learning activity that made teaching more enjoyable. Similar to the learning process evinced by the photoessay, collating and culling the photoessays were a learning exercise in itself and a statement of the teacher’s skill in applying in practice that which was grounded in theory. Through the photoessay, knowledge of the subject became sharper and better ideas were formed on how to facilitate student’s learning. Through action research and theory in use, the photoessay can be a tool to blend theory and practice in a way that can inform teaching. As Raelin (1997) puts it, “theory makes sense only through
practice, but practice makes sense only through reflection as enhanced by theory”. The construction of photoessays therefore serves as an experiential learning activity for the teacher. Kolb’s experiential learning model (1984) suggests that learning occurs through an experiential learning cycle of four stages: concrete experience of the teacher, reflective observations where the emotional aspects of the experience is reflected upon; abstract conceptualization of existing theories and applied to the experience and finally active experimentation of concepts generated from the reflection and put into practice for testing in a new situation. In this case, the teacher is participating in an experiential learning by constructing a photoessay. While presenting the photoessay may help students learning and apply their knowledge, the construction of one helps the teacher learn to integrate her practice, her knowledge and her teaching, and fosters creativity. While experiential learning is usually facilitated by an educator, the teacher here guides herself, assisted by students through the action research method.

The photoessay can therefore be a tool that could be useful for marketing practitioners to contribute to academia. As the literature review has pointed out, learning through theoretical understanding is often inadequate. Similarly, it is insufficient to participate in tacit practices without articulating the practitioner’s mental models. Through its construction, the teacher-practitioner has to provide a theoretical account of practice and at the same time, as teacher-academic, has to demonstrate a theory’s accountability to practice. This process, embedded within an action research method trains the teacher to be reflective, sensitizing the teacher to why practices are the way they are and also to gain deeper insights into the gaps in practice, teaching and research. Reflection has been thought as a strong contribution to learning. The photoessay construction could be an opportunity for practitioners who aspire to be teachers or researchers (such as practitioners retiring into academia) to achieve higher level reflection where the teacher questions fundamental beliefs that shape knowledge in that area. Such transformative learning in the practitioner-academic would greatly benefit both the world of practice and the research community in that domain.

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to provide insights into how to construct photoessays to aid learning. This could be relevant in the creation of web-based or distance learning marketing curriculum where images and narration are combined and delivered through electronic
media. Furthermore, the paper illustrates how marketing practitioners could use the proposed tool to integrate practice experience and academic theories.

The number of practitioners entering academia either for research or teaching in marketing is increasing. Future research could investigate other tools that can assist practitioners in delivering higher quality lectures. Furthermore, the practitioner-research link has yet been investigated thoroughly. While practitioners can be a boon for the academic community, many fear that their contribution will dilute the research rigor and scholarly excellence of an institution. Skeptics criticize that practitioners are only interested in applied research and that practitioners seeking to join academia (often by pursuing PhDs) are only interested in the title and esteem but are not committed to basic research. Certainly there could be instances where this is true. Yet one cannot be so hasty in dismissing marketers’ contributions to both research and teaching. There are many who have been in practice for years and would enjoy going back to a learning environment to do their part in teaching future marketers as well as to partake in research. What is important is for practitioners to realize that the evaluation criterion within academia is different. In other words, excellence in academia is judged differently and is often research based. Accordingly, their achievements in the practitioner’s world may then not be as highly rated within the academic world.

If this is understood and accepted by the marketer-turned-academic, the benefits could be immense. Just as practice should not be overrated, neither should it be underrated. Professional marketing experience does not only contribute to teaching, as this paper has shown, it is also able to bring about greater theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and innovative cutting edge research could be a consequence. Having sound applied skills does not have to be at the expense of good research or teaching. It is hoped that this paper is able to encourage more practitioners to contribute to teaching and research and in so doing, enrich the marketing discipline.
REFERENCES


21


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1a     | Reflection of Theory and Discovery of Information | *(For discovery of Information)*  
|        |                                             | T: Do you know where to sign in if you are a guest?  
|        |                                             | S: Yes.  
|        |                                             | T: Where?  
|        |                                             | S: On the right.  
|        |                                             | T: How do you know that?  
|        |                                             | S: The carpet.  
|        |                                             | T: So a carpet can change your script?  
|        |                                             | S: Yeah. *(laughter)*  
|        |                                             | T: Anything else that can change your script? |
| 1b     | Capturing Emotions                         | *(laughter)*  
|        |                                             | T: Do you remember your first experience at a salad bar?  
|        |                                             | S: *(laugh)* Yes.  
|        |                                             | T: Why?  
|        |                                             | S: They ask you what bread you want and you don’t know what they are called *(Class laugh)*  
|        |                                             | S: I mean, if you’re at the salad bar for the first time, how would you know what a baguette, croissant or a pita bread is?  
|        |                                             | T: How do you think he feels? |
| 1c     | Providing Perspectives                     | *(Pause for student reflection)*  
|        |                                             | T: Imagine you are thinking of getting a cup of coffee here and you have no idea how to do it. What would you do?  
|        |                                             | S: Ask someone  
|        |                                             | S: Forget the coffee.  
<p>|        |                                             | T: Now you’re the firm. What would you do? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1d   | Abstracting Theory | T: A familiar photo. What is it?  
S: Menu outside a restaurant.  
T: Don’t they have menus inside?  
S: Yes.  
T: So why is this one outside?  
S: To tell you what the restaurant offers even before you go in.  
T: Why? |
| 1e   | Allowing for Discovery of Information | T: Do you know what this is?  
S: No.  
T: You get onto this little black escalator thingy and it takes you up the slope with your big rubber tire and then you sit on it and slide all [points to photograph] the way down here.  
S: [some laughter]  
T: Anyone tried this before?  
S: [murmurings of yes and no]  
T: Would you know how to get on this escalator?  
S: [murmurings of yes and no]  
T: Can you read this sign?  
S: Yes.  
T: How do you think the sign helps? Does it help? [pause and murmurings]  
S: Well, if I don’t know how it works, the sign tells me I’m not stupid to ask because if there is a sign there, it means many people don’t know right? So it’s ok to ask.  
T: Do you feel better about it?  
S: Oh definitely.  
T: How does this help in the design of your own service? |
Figure 1: Application, Theory and Teaching using Photoessays
Figure 2: The Action Research Process

**Scope of Paper 1**
- Presenting photoessay
- Conducting interviews
- Conducting focus groups

**Scope of Paper 2**
- Taking Photographs
- Discussing with practitioners
- Discussing with colleagues
- Cropping and editing
- Constructing narration