Integrating Direct Marketing Programs/Courses into Business Schools: An Examination of its Penetration and Scope

Maria L. Roxas
Central Connecticut State University

Juanita P. Roxas
California Polytechnic University – Pomona

Efforts by Marketing EDGE (Direct Marketing Educational Foundation) have borne fruit. Direct/ interactive marketing is now recognized as an important component of companies' marketing toolbox along with more traditional tools in marketing. This paper estimates how far programs/courses in direct marketing have been included in a broad sample of schools by examining websites of a systematic sample of AACSB-accredited colleges and universities to determine their course offerings in direct/interactive marketing. Findings from the initial sample showed less than 13% had courses in direct/interactive marketing. An expansion of the search to DME attendees in 2012 then later the list of schools in the Marketing Edge website found one full program and a variety of sub-programs among schools actively participating in the DMEF conference. This paper is a general review of where the discipline stands with regards to course availability among AACSB accredited U.S. universities and demonstrates the discipline's expansion into new and different areas largely because of technology.

BACKGROUND

The Direct Marketing Educational Foundation (DMEF), now renamed Marketing EDGE, has been very active in promoting Direct/Interactive Marketing as a viable program in colleges and universities for more than two decades. Today, with the variety of activities sponsored by Marketing EDGE as well as resources allocated in the form of grants, workshops, conferences and publications in the last twenty years, more and more colleges and universities have been offering courses -- and even whole programs in direct/interactive marketing (Spiller and Scovotti, 2008; Katzenstein, et. al., 1993; McCorkle, 1997).

Direct marketing has been practitioner-driven throughout its history. Scovotti and Spiller (2006) chronicled the evolution of the practice of direct marketing from its origins as early as 1667 to what it has become today. Practitioners took advantage of available resources and technology to reach out to customers in primarily non-store situations. In the course of doing so, they have tried and tested techniques as they progressed, establishing what works and what didn't for more than a century.

In the 1980s and 1990s, academics, with the support of the DMEF became involved in teaching and exposing their students to this growing field. In order to promote its visibility among students, DMEF engaged in a myriad of activities to keep academics interested in doing research and publishing in the field as well as exposing them to the state of the art in practitioner techniques through sessions in the Direct Marketing Association's (DMA) conference. Scovotti and Spiller (2006) sought to clarify the exact

nature of direct marketing by trying to reconcile perceptions between practitioners and academics. In an effort to arrive at a definition, they did a content analysis of textbook definitions from introductory marketing, integrated marketing communications (IMC), and advertising and found 19 different definitions. They then surveyed practitioners to determine how strongly terms used by academics in textbooks and conference publications were related to practitioners' ideas of direct marketing. The definition they came up with was that direct/interactive marketing is "a database-driven interactive process of directly communicating with targeted customers or prospects using any medium to obtain a measurable response or transaction via one or multiple channels" (Scovotti and Spiller, 2006).

Over the years, courses in direct/interactive marketing include separate courses representing different aspects of this definition. In the 1990s, books were written on "Database Marketing" (Nash, 1993), and the 2000s, "E-Commerce," "E-Marketing" (Strauss and Frost, 2009), "Customer Relationship Marketing" (Greenberg, 2001) and "RFM (Recency, frequency, and monetary value)" (Libey and Pickering, 2005). These textbooks were critical tools that facilitated instructors' attempts to develop courses in various aspects of direct/interactive marketing. However, some of the more passionate and enthusiastic instructors designed their courses with no required books, putting together their own materials.

Although colleges and universities listed in Marketing EDGE provided specific courses in Direct/Interactive Marketing, many other colleges and universities could be covering concepts related to direct/interactive marketing through other courses. Textbooks in marketing can no longer ignore digital, social, and mobile marketing without being criticized for lack of currency in the field. Zahay et.al., (2010) attempted to approach direct/interactive marketing by trying to distill the myriad activities into fundamental competencies necessary for implementing direct/interactive marketing activities. Their conceptual model of the direct marketing process breaks down the activities to where it would be easier to find coverage of competencies in marketing courses not specifically labeled "direct marketing" or "interactive marketing." It also enables measurement of competencies for purposes of assessment of programs.

In the 1990s, the early editions of direct marketing textbooks primarily contained chapters that detailed traditional direct marketing media, i.e., print (catalogs, direct mail), television (infomercials, home shopping), telephone (telemarketing); while incorporating database (Katzenstein et. al., 1993) and emphasizing the need for tracking success (David Shepard Asso., 1995; Rogers and Berger, 1997). Since then, the development of technological tools have exploded in the marketplace as the internet became the alternative of choice during the second half of the 1990s culminating in the dot.com bubble bursting (James, 2000). As marketers stepped back to regroup, more realistic, profit-oriented business models have taken over.

Partly in response to Marketing EDGE's efforts as well as faculty interface with practitioners, courses were developed in direct marketing (Mitchell and Strauss, 2001). Over the years, these included incorporating Direct/Interactive Marketing in overview courses like Principles of Marketing and Principles of Advertising, then to designing courses in direct/interactive marketing (Roberts and Berger, 1999; Stone and Jacobs, 2008; Spiller and Baier, 2012), as well as to more specific courses like Database Marketing (Nash, 1993), Electronic Commerce/Marketing, Internet Marketing, and Social Media Marketing (James, 2000; Mitchell and Strauss, 2001; Barker et. al., 2012; Schneider, 2013).

In 2008, Spiller and Scovotti reported findings of their study on the currency of the Introductory Marketing Courses, as it pertains to its treatment of direct/interactive marketing. Their findings showed a gradual increase in the coverage -- though with varying degrees -- among textbooks. They also found a pattern among faculty regarding amount of coverage in courses. Younger faculty members who were closer to the start of their careers were more likely to report coverage while faculty members who were late in their careers were less likely to do so.

The http://www.marketingedge.org/students/marketing-education-resources (2013) website of the Marketing EDGE reported 183 colleges and universities who offered courses in direct/interactive marketing in 2013. This reflected around 20 percent increase from 1997 (McCorkle, 1997). In 2010, Zahay et.al., reported that according to the DMEF in 2011, "less than 15 percent of universities offer

courses in direct or interactive marketing and less than 2 percent offer related degrees, certifications and specializations within related majors."

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Since the direct/interactive techniques have become so important a tool in the marketing arsenal, colleges and universities should try to keep up by training students in the most effective techniques of marketing for when they reach the workplace. The purpose of this study is to measure the success of all these efforts on a broader scale. In other words, to what degree has the teaching of direct/interactive marketing kept pace with its growing importance in business among colleges and universities in the United States.

METHODOLOGY

The authors examined topics covered in a sample of textbooks in direct/interactive marketing as well as books on specific aspects of direct/interactive marketing to show the expansion of coverage in the area as the industry has evolved. This was done through a content analysis of each book's table of contents recording the number of pages devoted to each of eighteen major topics. The variations in topics reflected the current scope of direct/interactive marketing covered in courses.

Where initial textbooks focused on traditional direct marketing media (e.g. catalogs, direct mail, etc.), current textbooks are expanding their coverage of digital marketing (e.g. social media, mobile, etc.). Based on the major topics covered in direct marketing textbooks, the authors searched for courses on "direct marketing," "interactive marketing," "database marketing," "e-Commerce," "e-Marketing," "Internet Marketing," "Digital Marketing," "Social Media Marketing," etc. among the colleges and universities in the sample

The authors selected the list of schools accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) -- a premier accrediting body for business schools -- as of October, 2012. A systematic sample of a third of all accredited schools in the United States was taken resulting in 162 schools. To be accredited, universities must meet 21 standards, some of which emphasize continuous improvement. Having a course in direct/interactive marketing represents innovation in the marketing curriculum and it is expected that AACSB accredited schools would offer this course.

All universities have websites containing course offerings and course catalogs online making it relatively simple to examine and keep track of direct/interactive marketing course offerings – both graduate and undergraduate. Each school's website was analyzed to search for direct/interactive marketing from their catalog (bulletin) in the marketing department and, 1) whether they had a full program in direct/interactive marketing or just courses, 2) whether courses were required or elective, 3) course titles and 4) how often they were offered. Most schools have more than one semester's schedule online. So, it was easy to see whether the class was offered once a year or both semesters in a year. The bookstore link identified the textbooks being used by the course.

Unexpectedly, the authors found that the resulting percentages turned out to be quite low, (12.3%) for the sample. The authors had speculated that the prevalence of offering courses in direct/interactive marketing in AACSB accredited schools would have been more than the 15 percent (DMEF, 2011) that was reported among colleges and universities overall. So, it was decided to take the list of universities represented by the participants from U.S. universities in the Direct Marketing Educators' Research Summit in October, 2012. It was anticipated that most if not all of those schools will have some direct/interactive marketing courses. This second sample totaled 53.

Then, with rather dismal results, the list of schools in the Marketing Edge website was examined to verify whether there were any schools that had degrees in direct/interactive marketing but were not included in either list (http://www.marketingedge.org/students/marketing-education-resources).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are several limitations to this study. First, only marketing departments' websites were included in the study for every school in the sample. There may be some direct/interactive marketing courses housed in other departments or other colleges/divisions. Since the availability and advocacy for any course rests on faculty, faculty who develop a passion for keeping up with direct/interactive marketing developments are likely to develop and teach those courses. So, database marketing could be housed in a computer information systems department and other courses like social media or viral advertising could be housed in communications or journalism departments.

Second, the authors are only able to report what is in the schools website. If any particular direct/interactive marketing certificate or concentration exists but is not found in the marketing department's website and/or the course catalog (university bulletin), it may not be included in the tally. Third, although there was an attempt to use a systematic sample to enable generalization, because of the low percentages found, the authors resorted into selecting a non-random sample to be able to make a rough comparison.

FINDINGS

Textbook and Topics

An examination of a sample of textbooks shows the topics included in direct/interactive marketing textbooks as well as textbooks on direct/interactive marketing activities, i.e., internet marketing, and social media marketing. Table 1 summarizes these topics and the number of pages devoted to each according to the table on contents. In presenting this table, the authors are trying to show the expansion of topics covered by direct/interactive marketing over the years. First, a comparison of the 1st and the 3rd edition of the Spiller and Baier texts (2005 and 2012) show differences between the seven years of publication. Where mobile marketing didn't exist as a viable area in 2005, the textbook authors devoted nine pages to this topic in the current edition. Another major contrast is the amount of space allotted to digital and social media, where the amount of space increased by 30%.

In 1999, Roberts and Berger devoted 100 pages to print. The 30 pages for digital/social media was really only on digital or internet marketing. Stone and Jacobs (2008) put more emphasis on research (i.e., testing, measurement, and analysis) and designing the message.

The other texts included in Table 1 are of specialized direct/interactive marketing activities, i.e., electronic commerce, social media marketing, internet marketing, and business to business direct marketing. As digital marketing evolved from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s, new search engines were developed, websites were introduced that enabled individuals and companies to offer services that streamlined their own operations and proved to be invaluable for customers. Marketers recognized the power of digital media and implemented strategies to capitalize on its capabilities. Textbooks were written on electronic commerce, electronic marketing, internet marketing, and now social media marketing.

When courses were being offered, it was also relatively easy to determine the textbooks assigned to the course. Only four course offerings in both samples were available. Mostly courses either had a custom book or no textbook was listed.

TABLE 1
CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DIRECT/INTERACTIVE MARKETING TEXTBOOKS

Author	Spiller 3rd ed	Spiller 1st ed	Roberts 2nd ed.	Stone 8th ed.	Schneider 10th ed.	Barker	Roberts	Miller	Scott
Subject	DM	DM	DM	DM	eCommerce	Social M	Internet	Digital	Mktg/PR
Year/Topics	2012	2005	1999	2008	2013	2008	2013	2012	2013
Characteristics	17	17	30	11					29
Growth	3	7							15
Strategic Plan'g				12	21		16	52	30
Databases	20	16	13	13			9		5
Lifetime Value	6	7	21	18	3		30		
Lists	20	21	45	23	12	15		12	
Research	26	26	28	68			29	131	2
Offer	19	24	24	20					20
Message	15	23	18	74					30
Print	17	16	100	36					
Broadcast	10	8	22	18			3		
Mobile	9				5	16	23	16	10
Telephone	9	14	24	20					
Digital/Social Media	31	19	30	44	168	216	159		128
Fulfillment	20	25	16					14	
B2B		14		33	30		28	179	
Ethics and Environment	19	32		2	84		25		
Global	20	21		23					

Programs and Courses

Only 12.3% of the sample of AACSB-accredited universities offered a course in direct/interactive marketing. Most of the courses offered were at the undergraduate level and all of them were elective courses. The pre-requisite for all the courses was the principles of marketing course. With such a small percentage of schools in this broad sample reporting a course in either direct/interactive marketing or specific direct/interactive marketing activities (e.g. electronic marketing, social media marketing, database marketing, etc.), the authors decided to examine the schools represented in the 2012 DMEF conference in Las Vegas (n=53). These, although non-random, were likelier to include schools active in offering programs or courses in direct/interactive marketing. There were 9 universities that appeared in both samples. Five of the nine universities offered a direct/interactive marketing course. Forty percent of the DMEF sample had a direct/interactive marketing course, mostly elective undergraduate courses. Results of the two samples are shown in Table 2.

In addition, nine of the universities that list a course in direct/interactive marketing have not offered the course within the last two semesters (academic year: 2012-2013). Six universities offer the course both semesters and the rest offered the course once a year. Only four universities named the textbook assigned to the course.

TABLE 2
DIRECT/INTERACTIVE MARKETING COURSE OFFERINGS

	AACSB Universities		Universities Attending 2012 DMEF	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total sample size	162	100.0%	53	100.0%
Direct marketing course offerings				
Undergraduate	20	12.3%	18	40.0%
More than one undergraduate course	1	0.6%	5	9.4%
Graduate	3	1.9%	1	1.9%
Both undergraduate/graduate courses	3	1.9%	1	1.9%
Elective undergraduate	20	12.3%	18	40.0%
Required undergraduate	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Table 3 shows the course titles of the direct/interactive marketing courses. The table shows a variety of course titles used for direct/interactive marketing, in some cases incorporating specific areas of direct/interactive marketing and in others, courses in specific direct/interactive marketing tools. The majority of the AACSB universities named the course the more traditional "Direct Marketing." More of the Universities attending the Marketing EDGE's Research Summit conference named their course "Interactive Marketing."

TABLE 3
COURSE TITLE OF DIRECT/INTERACTIVE MARKETING COURSES

	AACSB Universities	Universities Attending 2012 DMEF
Direct marketing	11	5
Direct marketing and sales promotion	2	
Direct marketing strategy	2	
Direct and interactive marketing		3
Direct response marketing		2
Direct and database marketing	1	
Direct and multichannel marketing	1	
Direct marketing methods	1	
Interactive marketing	1	3
Interactive retailing	1	
Direct, digital and social media marketing		1
Interactive and digital marketing		1
Interactive digital advertising		1
Interactive marketing strategy		1
Interactive media marketing		1
Internet and direct marketing		1
Multi-channel interactive marketing		1
Creative approaches to direct interactive marketing		1

One possible reason for the low percentage of universities offering a direct/interactive marketing course is that the inclusion of direct/interactive marketing course materials are incorporated in the internet/electronic marketing course or that the internet/electronic marketing course replaced the direct/interactive marketing course. Of the 162 universities, seven (or 4%) offer a direct/interactive marketing course without offering an internet/electronic marketing course. Fifty-five (or 33.7%) universities offer an internet/electronic marketing course without offering a direct/interactive marketing course, and 13 (or 8%) offer both a direct/interactive marketing and an internet/electronic marketing courses.

Marketing EDGE

The seemingly low percentage of direct/interactive marketing courses in the sample led to the examination of the Marketing EDGE'S www.marketingedge.org website. Out of the 183 universities listed on the website as having a direct/interactive marketing course, 38 universities were in the original AACSB sample. Of these, only 8 universities (21%) have a direct/interactive marketing course. Three of these universities did not offer the course within the last academic school year. Twenty-eight (73%) universities have an internet/electronic marketing course listed in their bulletins. Five universities do not have a direct/interactive marketing or an internet/electronic marketing course. These universities may have offered this course in the past but the course could have been removed from their bulletins if they have not been offered for some time or they could have been offered as a special topics course in the past. Most universities have a policy of removing a course from their bulletin when the course has not been offered for two years.

Bachelor's Degrees and Certificate Programs in Direct/Interactive Marketing

The number of universities offering courses in direct/interactive marketing grew to 183 in 2013 from approximately 150 in 1995 (McCorkle, 1997). One hundred eighty three universities and colleges offer their direct/interactive marketing course in their bachelor's degree in Marketing. According to the Marketing EDGE listing, three universities offer a bachelor' degree in direct/interactive marketing:

Alabama State University	B.S.B.A. in Direct Marketing
Fashion Institute of Technology	B.S. in Direct and Interactive Marketing
Mercy College	B.S.B.A in Direct and Interactive Marketing

The websites of the three universities were examined to compare their curricula. Only the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) offered a B.S. degree in Direct and Interactive Marketing. See: http://www.fitnyc.edu/2059.asp for a description of their program. Mercy College offers a degree in Master of Science in Direct Marketing, not a bachelor's degree. The curriculum includes a number of direct marketing courses as illustrated on their website:
https://www.mercy.edu/acadivisions/busacctg/grad/directmarketing/grad_dir_mktg.pdf.

Alabama State University offers a B.S. degree in Marketing. There was no reference to a BS degree in Direct Marketing and two courses on direct marketing were listed in their bulletin:

MKT321 Elements of Marketing and Direct Marketing, and
MKT335 Creating Direct Marketing Response, Advertising and Promotion.

(http://www.alasu.edu/academics/colleges--departments/college-of-business-administration/college-of-business-academics/business-administration/bs-in-marketing/index.aspx)

Four universities offer a certificate in direct/interactive marketing:

DePaul University	Pennebaker Direct and Interactive Marketing Certificate
Ferris State University	Certificate in Direct Marketing, course of study includes Introduction to Data Mining.
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	Direct Marketing Certificate
Southern Oregon University	Certificate in Interactive Marketing and e-Commerce

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Marketing EDGE, through their website and their annual research summit has done a commendable job of supporting the research and teaching of direct/interactive marketing. Despite continued support by Marketing EDGE, the degree of penetration of direct/interactive marketing courses in business schools is low. Since AACSB is a prestigious accrediting body for business, targeting more of the AACSB accredited schools will enhance the visibility of direct/interactive marketing to students.

This study has found that there is some evidence that universities are using the internet/electronic marketing course to cover the material included in a direct/interactive marketing. More universities offer an internet/electronic marketing course than direct/interactive marketing. There was also some evidence that some universities use a textbook on internet marketing for their direct/interactive marketing course.

In most universities the direct/interactive marketing course is an elective. The complement of elective course offerings is usually dependent on faculty interest and expertise as well as universities' budgets. Offering direct/interactive marketing courses depend not only on faculty interest and expertise, but also availability. Marketing EDGE has made strides in increasing faculty interest and expertise in several ways. First, in order to catch doctoral students early, Marketing Edge offers a Best Dissertation Proposal Award which provides $6,000 in financial assistance to conduct research and data collection to support doctoral dissertations. In contrast, other institutions offer a Best Dissertation Award. One idea to encourage dissertation chairs to increase doctoral students' interest in direct/interactive marketing is to offer an award to the doctoral candidate as well as their dissertation chair. Marketing EDGE also offers awards for Outstanding Educator as well as Best Case Writers.

For those schools that were in the forefront of research and courses in direct/interactive marketing, faculty retirements have affected course offerings. There was evidence of schools that listed a direct/interactive marketing course but had not offered the class in a year. As anecdotal evidence, one of the authors comes from a school that has offered a direct marketing course for more than twenty years and had students place honorary mention in the Collegiate ECHO Competition in the past, the retirement of the faculty in charge has resulted in reliance on adjuncts to teach the class while the department seeks a replacement with a similar passion in direct/interactive marketing.

Books and supplementary materials (end of chapter problems, cases, test banks, etc.) in direct/interactive marketing are not as readily available as other marketing courses as indicated by our search for commonly used textbook material. Faculty must be passionate about teaching direct/interactive marketing to spend the time and effort to supplement material in their courses. The DMEF set up the Professor's Academy to provide research and teaching materials to faculty.

Direct/interactive marketing is a lucrative industry for student jobs. One of the authors is from a public university in Southern California. Direct Marketing has resulted in 90,000 jobs in California alone (DMA 2013). A large proportion of student internships for that university's marketing students consist of companies hiring students to handle their online presence. Some jobs involve social media marketing. Students need to be exposed to the panoply of opportunities offered by direct/interactive marketing, both in term of careers and knowledge about what works and what doesn't. Some students and oftentimes faculty do not recognize the connection between direct/interactive marketing and online marketing. Offering courses in direct/interactive marketing or electronic/internet marketing will arm students with some of the skills they need to provide value to companies they work for.

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