

**Presentation for Best Integrative Teaching Practices Interactive Track
Christian Business Faculty Association 25th Annual Conference
Point Loma Nazarene University
October 13-15, 2005**

Session Title: Making the Consumer Behavior Course More Interactive

Name of author(s): Geoffrey P.Lantos

Contact author email and address: Geoffrey Lantos
glantos@stonehill.edu
Stonehill College
320 Washington Street
Box D55
North Easton, MA 02357

Purposes:

- To demonstrate how marketing professors can make their Consumer Behavior (CB) or other marketing courses more interactive. (The nature of these exercises translates to other marketing courses too.)
- To have participants work through several selected exercises to give them a taste of using various types of interactive exercises for CB and other marketing courses.

Presentation Method:

The following areas will be covered. Pages from a CD containing the book and the Instructor's Manual will be projected for participants to follow along. Hard-copy handouts of my written and in-class presentation assignments will be given, and these will be projected as well.

- Presentation on the reasons for using interactive applications exercises. (See below)
- Description of learning objectives for the exercises and the nature of the types of exercises I've developed. (See below)
- Description and illustration of the use of applications exercises for in-class discussions, group presentations, and written exercises. (See handouts and CD)
- Mock in-class discussions for as many of the six exercises as time permits (See CD). (CDs will be provided to interested participants of a developmental edition of the book, containing all 55 exercises and background textual material for each plus the Instructor's Manual. Participants will be given permission to field test any exercises they wish in their CB, Marketing Principles or other appropriate marketing classes.)
- Revelation of lessons learned about successfully using such exercises Thoughts on how to integrate faith and learning in the CB course
- Question-and-answer session plus solicitation of ideas from participants

Session Highlights: Interactive participation in mock class demonstrating use of applications exercises and sharing of participants' ideas for other types of interactive exercises and how to improve teaching of the sample exercises.

Integrative Learning Outcomes: To give participants ideas for and experience in making their CB and other marketing courses more interactive and hands on.

Literature Cited: None. Recommended marketing education journals for occasional articles on interactive teaching in the marketing curriculum include *Journal of Marketing Education* and *Marketing Education Review*. Searches for article abstracts can be conducted at their websites using key terms such as “interactive learning” and “experiential learning.” *JME* also allows you to view references used in articles.

Summary of Content:

Overview

I am finishing up the writing and publication of a textbook for the Consumer Behavior (CB) course. CB is offered as part of most marketing curricula and required by the majority of them. The book is highly interactive and is entitled *Consumer Behavior in Action: Real Life Managerial Applications*, and it is being published by The Copy Workshop in Chicago, ideally available for January adoption consideration this fall. .

The Reason for the Book and Interactive Applications Exercises

Originally, this was not intended to be a textbook but rather a workbook that could be used to supplement any CB book. My intent in writing the book was to engage students with the material, rather than merely having them read about it. As I wrote the textual Background section for each exercise, however, it grew into a stand-alone textbook.

The idea is that concepts learned without application will not stick. Hence, the need for experiential applications exercises, since students learn best by rolling up their sleeves and immersing themselves in the material. Confucius was right—people best learn by doing. Using applied exercises turns students from passive spectators into active participants. These exercises are designed to get learners off the dime and into action. And it works! I've field-tested these exercises for several semesters now through several iterations, and students rate them very highly due to their interactive, fun, and engaging nature.

This book goes further than others to generate student interest and *involvement* with the material through applied exercises. Although CB is an *applied* field, most books keep it at primarily a *theoretical* level. This book is built around a series of exercises within each chapter that engage students in analyzing advertisements, scenarios, and Web sites as well as thinking about and describing their own marketplace behavior, conducting consumer research, crunching quantitative data, creating marketing materials, and making classroom presentations that illustrate their own CB.

The Nature of the Exercises

The book is built around a series of 53 interactive exercises, each with a substantive textual background.

Learning Objectives

The exercises have been designed in view of the following objectives:

- To allow students to experience deriving and applying CB theories, concepts, and principles introduced in their textbook to specific situations so as to sharpen their understanding and aid their retention of these ideas.
- To demonstrate the practicality of the material, both professionally (as marketing decision makers) and personally (as consumers).
- To permit students to test their understanding of the material and to challenge them to think about this material.
- To serve as catalysts to encourage in-class participation, involvement, exchange of information, and oral presentations.
- To provide outside-of-class involving applied activities and writing assignments.
- To stimulate creative thinking.
- To make learning fun, enjoyable, entertaining, and relevant.

The Nature of the Applications Assignments

Each exercise begins with learning objectives—what students should know and be able to do as a result of reading the Background textual material and working through the Applications questions at the end of an exercise. The Background section follows, serving as the text. Finally, there are both in-class and written applications questions.

There are eight types of applications exercises designed to achieve these objectives:

- (1) **Analysis of advertisements:** The majority of exercises ask students to think about how various print and/or Web site ads apply behavioral concepts, how effectively they do so, and how, if at all, they can be improved. This is the type of exercise my students most enjoyed and felt was most valuable.
- (2) **Scenarios:** Many exercises present a series of short scenarios to be analyzed in light of concepts learned. These are especially useful to test learners' understanding of the material and how it is applied.
- (3) **Introspective exercises:** Some exercises ask students to think about, analyze, and come up with examples of their own CB related to a particular topic or concept. This demonstrates the personal relevance of the material to students. Many of these work well as “show-and-tell” oral presentations where students discuss and demonstrate their own CB.
- (4) **Interactive Web exercises:** Several exercises require learners to visit corporate or other websites in order to simulate decision making or otherwise learn about CB in an interactive environment, effective Internet advertising, and sources of consumer information. Students can “compare notes” on their Web experiences during class discussions.
- (5) **Fieldwork exercises:** Certain exercises involve students in implementing an experimental or survey-based field research procedure. This allows them to develop an understanding of how various principles were derived as well as gain a feel for consumer research, albeit on a small scale. These too are useful in generating classroom discussion on students' experiences.

- (6) **Quantitative exercises:** A few exercises require students to do mathematical calculations to arrive at decisions. This reminds them that “number “crunching’ isn’t just for accountants and financial executives.
- (7) **Creative exercises:** Several exercises ask learners to creatively apply their knowledge of CB to designing ads or other marketing strategies and tactics.
- (8) **Debatable Issues:** Several exercises pose controversial topics to heat up class discussions.

Each exercise contains suggestions for in-class discussions as well as written assignments. Instructors can select which of the various questions in each exercise to assign for in-class discussion, written assignments, and in-class presentations.

Students report that the exercises help highlight and illustrate the material and generate good applications, which makes concepts easy to understand and reinforces the material. Applications allow for easier understanding of concepts because of connection with real life situations. The exercises increase classroom participation and are useful in preparation for the exam. In-class applications are a great way to cement the concepts just discussed in students’ minds.

Three Uses of Applications Exercises (See handouts and CD)

(1) **In-class discussions.** Each exercise can easily be integrated into the instructor’s lectures and classroom discussion using the section entitled *In-Class Applications*. These give students the opportunity to “compare notes” regarding their personal experiences.

(2) **Written assignments.** Each exercise contains a section entitled *Written Applications*. Questions are given which can be answered in an approximately three-to-five page report. Students are also asked to find additional ads that illustrate the concept of interest and to discuss those. Students report that the written exercises can be applied to personal experience and real life, and that they are good preparation for exams and make students really think about the concepts.

(3) **Oral presentations.** Especially the introspective, Web, and fieldwork exercises can make for brief, interesting, and informative student oral presentations during class. Most students like working in groups and think that the presentations help them to grasp one main idea or concept. Many enjoy the break from lecture/discussion and think that having classmates present makes it easier for them to understand that material. They like that the oral presentations allow for group work and permit students to develop their public speaking skills. Moreover, the presentations are entertaining, informative, and allow for creativity.

Mock In-class Discussions (See CD)

- Exercise 2 Marketing Management Philosophies—Scenario Analysis and Debatable Issue
- Exercise 5 Segmentation Strategies—Advertisement Analysis
- Exercise 6 Brand Positioning—Creative Exercise
- Exercise 8 The Economics Perspective on Consumer Decision Making—Introspective
- Exercise 40 Measuring Personality and Brand Image Quantitative and Fieldwork Exercises
- Exercise 10 Consumer Decision-Making in an On-Line Environment

Lessons Learned

Based on classroom/course experience and soliciting feedback via a questionnaire at the end of each semester:

- Stress the importance of student preparation for class by having worked through assigned exercises in advance. Discussion proceeds to slowly and is less thoughtful if students do it off the cuff. Call on quiet students and students who have a history of being unprepared to force them to better prepare and participate.
- Be selective in choosing among ads and scenarios to analyze in each exercise. More than four or five ads and six or seven scenarios usually become tedious.
- Spend about an equal amount of time reviewing, discussing, and (perhaps) extending the background textual material and then discussing the applications exercises.
- Regarding team presentations, a number of students did not like the time limits and thought the presentations were too short. They said that there were too many guidelines and that they were not always able to be as creative as they wanted. It was suggested that students have more of a say in the topics and groups should do more than just PowerPoint or reading off cards. It might help to limit groups to three members and make the presentations worth a larger part of the student's final grade. Although I've assigned team members randomly, almost half of the students report that they'd prefer to pick their own team members.
- On the written assignments, encourage students to paperclip ad exhibits and other materials they found to their paper. You can make color slides from their ads to use the next time you teach the course, and you can use these ads to build test questions around.
- Exams should stress applications. Have students analyze ads and scenarios, introspect into their own CB, and perform quantitative analyses on exams.

Faith Integration in CB

While the book is targeted to the broad secular market, it does integrate Judeo-Christian faith and thinking in a low-key way in appropriate places.

Because CB deals with human society and human behavior, there are plenty of opportunities for faith-learning integration in both nominally Christian as well as devoutly Christian institutions.

For instance, in the Catholic school in which I teach, most students haven't really committed their lives to Christ. Therefore, after discussing consumer decision making, I ask students what they believe will be the most important decision in their life. Common answers include whom to marry, what career to enter, where to live, and whether and how many children to have. I then tell them the most important decision they'll ever make is their relationship to God and invite interested students to stay for the last 10 minutes of class, during which I discuss making a decision for Christ in the context of the consumer decision-making process.

As another example, when discussing religious subcultures, I have explained exactly what evangelical Christians are and how they make a personal commitment to Christ.

In discussing Exercise 4, I ask students what motivates consumers as well as people in general, e.g., money, fame, power, etc. If the discussion doesn't naturally turn to God, I steer it in that direction.

When describing consumer research methodologies, I compare a modernist worldview (the basis for traditional quantitative research) with a postmodernist view (the basis for qualitative research). I then contrast these with a theistic worldview.

In Evangelical colleges, instructors can take it to a higher level. For instance, the Christian underpinnings of the marketing and societal marketing concepts (love of God and fellow humans) can be discussed (Exercise 2). Spiritual benefits can be probed when discussing benefit segmentation (Exercise 7). In discussing culture (Chapter 5), you can discuss aspects of our culture that displease God, to what extent marketers are to blame, and how, as future marketers, students can work to redeem the culture. The influence of churches and other Christian reference groups on consumer behavior could be discussed (Chapter Eight). A Christian critique of Freudian personality theory is certainly in order (Exercise 38). Christian lifestyle groups could be discussed under the topic of psychographics (Exercise 41). The fact that Maslow's hierarchy neglects spiritual needs and places selfish self-actualization needs above all others is worth noting (Exercise 44). Creative instructors will come up with more ideas. (If you do, e-mail them to me for a possible Christian version of this book.)

Questions and Answers/Further ideas

This will be an open-ended discussion. Participants' ideas about other types of interactive exercises they have used or think would work well will be solicited.