

# The challenge of teaching consumer insights to non-marketing students as a minor in undergraduate studies: Empathy maps as a didactic resource

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**Purpose of the Study:** This article shares the teaching experience of introducing non-specialist students to the study of consumer behavior through the use of empathy maps as a learning resource in 2017 and 2018 through courses in one of the Top 10 private universities in Chile for students studying a minor in advertising.

**Method/Design and Sample:** The research design involved a qualitative methodology using data from two advertising courses that contained non-marketing students. Main findings are result of a combination of empirical and documentary sources and were analysed using self-reflection techniques which were supported by a survey on the usefulness of the empathy map as a teaching resource completed by students who participated in these courses.

**Results:** 93.5% of students in the courses recommend learning about them to friends. However, an effective application of empathy maps in this setting brings with it a series of limitations, such as the need for prior training in market research methodologies by learners, which was a particularly difficult requirement to comply with in the setting described herein.

**Value to Marketing Educators:** These compulsory interdisciplinary courses seek to provide the student with knowledge and skills different from those of the degree they are pursuing. The simplicity of empathy maps, as well as the possibility of applying them in a variety of contexts, make them an ideal resource for developing consumer insight for non-marketing students.

**Keywords:** marketing education; non-marketing students; consumer behavior; empathy map; interdisciplinary training.

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## INTRODUCTION

This article describes the educational experience of teaching marketing and advertising to non-specialist students in a Chilean private university with 10.000 enrolments, by means of formative supplementary programs called minors. These provide interdisciplinary learning opportunities within students' university education, and an added value to their professional resume.

As some authors point out (Yoo and Donthu, 2002; Bacon, 2017), marketing has become a popular field of study among students worldwide. Thus, universities and schools do not hesitate to introduce marketing in their educational offer. This trend is also observed in student choices of minors. As a result, the Advertising and Marketing minor is one of the most in-demand by the students at this Chilean university. According to data provided by this university, in recent years (2017, 2018, and 2019), the Advertising and Marketing minor has ranked in the top ten among students' first preference.

Students of non-commercial specialties show interest in consumer research (Holman, 1977), an area thoroughly studied in this minor. Despite continuing interest, very little research has been conducted on teaching marketing to non-specialists as Crick (2018) points out. Therefore, this article seeks to help close this gap. The aim is to contribute to the teaching and learning strategies on consumers by means of empathy maps in courses addressed to non-specialist students in mainly practical settings (Crick, 2018).

This article aims to describe, analyze and assess the use of empathy maps among students for whom this technical tool represents an unknown field, and for which promoting interaction becomes essential.

Methodologically speaking, case studies provided the insight to teach marketing to non-marketing students. This article draws from personal reflections and data from a survey on the usefulness of the empathy map as a teaching resource completed by students who participated in this course. Participation in the survey was voluntary so as to maximize student freedom in participating and encourage a constructive attitude. Of

104 students who participated in this course, 62 (W = 38; M = 24) provided feedback and, most of them (93.5%), stated they would recommend learning about and applying empathy maps to friends.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITY**

Concepts such as universality, recognized knowledge, the origin of culture and what any human aspires to know come to our mind when we think of "University". In its classic sense, a university only comes into being when a "community" of dialogue is established among those who, open to all truth, dedicate themselves to higher knowledge.

In the current situation, a variety of deficiencies and difficulties challenge the creation of a university in this sense. Identifying these difficulties can help substantiate the program of minors. Some of these are:

- The fragmentation of knowledge: Many sciences and disciplines today lack proper integration. Universities often become places where institutes from different disciplines merely come together physically, rather than create a "community of higher knowledge".
- Relativism: The classical idea of the University and "relativistic" or "skeptical" positions are incompatible. Only the recognition that humans can reach the truth with their intelligence brings sense to the idea of a "community of knowledge." However, students' and professors' lack of confidence in the ability of human intelligence weaken this concept of "university."
- Lack of culture: Finally, a lack of culture, which hinders or prevents university dialogue is frequently and disturbingly seen among today's university students. This scarcity may affect personal and character qualities, mastery of writing, reading skills or understanding of basic principles of history, science and the arts.

University students and graduates need to overcome the narrow framework of their own disciplines. Universities must be "culture laboratories," places that enable the opening of intelligence to universal knowledge. This openness of mind, this ability to overcome the limited scope of a particular perspective, the talent to integrate and be interested in other areas of "knowledge" or "arts" is necessary for university life. Interdisciplinary training contributes to developing this capacity (Huber, 2002; Abascal-Mena and López-Ornelas, 2015.)

Interdisciplinary training is commonly understood to provide students with the opportunity to learn different scientific and humanistic disciplines (with regard to the subject of study, encompassed methodologies, main assumptions and conclusions) by establishing dialogues that nurture learners, expand their field of knowledge and grant them the opportunity to acquire skills and abilities that go beyond the professional profile of their original degrees (Sill, 1996.)

American universities have been at the forefront of pointing out the importance of interdisciplinary training

(Westmeyer, 1985). The basis of the education in American universities stems from the well-known distribution into majors and minors programs (Butin and Seider, 2012). The goal of seeking to educate students in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies, of setting the foundations for excelling professionals as well as of promoting contact with universal knowledge, with the ultimate goal of contributing citizen to a democratic society heightening openness of mind and freedom of thought can be supported by providing less intense training in main disciplines and enriching interdisciplinary studies (Rhoten et al., 2006; Stone and Elder, 2002; Augsburg and Henry, 2009) .

Cultivating interdisciplinarity leads to building upon prior knowledge, to discovering and overcoming the limits of science itself, and to valuing the contributions of other sciences, may they be experimental, social or humanistic. True progress requires the specialization of knowledge, but that should not entail the degeneration of the body knowledge by fragmentation, and the consequent loss of unity in mankind. It is to this principle that interdisciplinary training contributes greatly (Newell and Klein, 1996.)

## **TRAINING IN ANOTHER DISCIPLINE: THE CONCEPT OF THE MINOR IN A CHILEAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY WITH 30 YEARS OF EXISTENCE**

Although most universities in Europe and Latin America are inspired by the Humboldtian model of university, some have chosen to introduce the concept of minors in their curricular programs, following the North American model. In Chile, where this research was undertaken, universities share the idea that a minor is a set of subjects different from the degree students are working on, aimed at providing students with knowledge and skills different from those of the degree they are acquiring.

The private university which is the subject of this study, was founded in 1989 and headquartered in Santiago (Chile), and began offering a Minors programs in 2011 with a variety of goals: to provide a unified vision of knowledge and a genuine interdisciplinary training, contribute to generate opportunities for dialogue and exchange, and to offer different views and perspectives to supplement those present in each degree. This program is stated and explained in the Educational Model of the university (2019) and was considered one of the main strengths of its undergraduate teaching in the last institutional accreditation process in 2017 ("Institutional Self-Assessment Report", 2017, p. 209; National Accreditation Commission of Chile, 2018).

At this institution, interdisciplinarity is understood as the ability to dialogue studying disciplines other than ones' own, which in addition to cultural enrichment and supplementation of the professional profile of the student; favors familiarity with different ways of thinking and methodologies to develop knowledge; and provides an opportunity to develop the ability to address an object of study from different viewpoints, and in doing so, enhance the ability to make more informed judgments.

This Top 10 Chilean private university ensures interdisciplinary training by requiring undergraduates to complete a Minor Program of their choice. Although minor programs are comprised of relatively small number of subjects, they are a key element in the curricular organization of all undergraduate study plans. Their completion ensures all students graduate having the conceptual and methodological foundations of a science different from their degree of choice. These programs contribute to the university goal of delivering students with a supplemented understanding of reality and an attractive employability profile.

Minor programs have been assigned 12 SCT-Chile and are offered at various faculties so that students can supplement their curriculum in areas of personal or professional interest, depending on their intellectual preferences. They can only include subjects present in the curriculum of a degree in a basic science or a disciplinary branch of a core career. Professional specialization courses are not offered. A clear distinction between general disciplines and professional specialization has been established. General disciplines courses are characterized by providing basic, formative, and initial knowledge. Professional specialization courses provide in-depth and more technical knowledge, require mastery of the basic science it stems from and are usually offered in specialization programs.

At this Chilean university, Minors Programs are taught in Economics and Business (4), Liberal Arts (4), Politics and Society (4), Communication (2), Psychology (4), Education (1), Sciences (1), Health (6), Law (1) and Theology (1), for a total of 28 minor programs. The Minor Program in Advertising and Marketing is offered by the Faculty of Communication. In general terms, Minor Programs are well evaluated by the students ("Evaluation Report of the Minors Program, Directorate of Curriculum", 2019).

## **MARKETING AND ADVERTISING TRAINING FOR NON-SPECIALIST UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

The Faculty of Communication is responsible for managing and teaching the Minor Program in Advertising and Marketing. Its faculty is responsible for developing and regulating the program offered to its own students which, in simple terms introduces them to the science of communication and marketing. This discipline is seen as a tool to support decisions about positioning and selling services and products among consumers. Given the introductory approach of Minor Programs, the Minor in Advertising and Marketing is not open to students of Communication (Journalism, Advertising and Audiovisual Communication) or Business Administration.

The Minor in Advertising and Marketing consists of three subjects: Introduction to Advertising, Creativity and Marketing, and lasts for three semesters. Every semester students enroll in one of the three courses, in no particular order. According to data provided by the University, enrollment averages 85 students annually (divided into sections of a maximum of 60 students).

Around 50% of the attendees are earning a degree in Engineering or Law, followed by lower levels of enrollment from students of Psychology, health majors (Dentistry, Nursing, Phonology and Nutrition) and Education. In the academic years 2017, 2018 and 2019, exam passing rates of the Minor Program were above 95%, with averages of 5.5, (2017); 5.1 (2018); 5.3, (2019) on a scale of 1-7.

An introductory approach was applied to design the curriculum of this Minor Program, given the context in which it was to be carried out and the heterogeneous profile of the students. Basic subjects from the Advertising career were incorporated and adapted, taking into account factors that contribute to increasing non-specialist student commitment (Crick, 2018). Topic selection and presentation were addressed in a way that could ensure future application in a variety of professional areas.

In general, the Introduction to Advertising agenda presents a theoretical basis for non-specialists, considering advertising as a communicative phenomenon, and stimulating students by means of a purely practical approach. Much the same happens in the Creativity course. The aim is for the student to become acquainted with and understand how a creative phenomenon is developed and become familiar with lateral thinking processes (De Bono, 1993), thus enhancing the ability to find original solutions to daily problems.

The marketing subject presents the basic knowledge to learn to work under external and internal pressures in certain markets. This enables students to learn to accurately identify external and internal factors that condition marketing strategies. Theoretical sessions present experiences in marketing design plans, from which students learn to identify advantageous opportunities, to recognize and address threats, to enhance and exploit the advantages of organizations, and to steer clear of and overcome weaknesses.

Thus, Introduction to Advertising, Creativity and Marketing are in essence practical courses that follow dynamic teaching methodologies to encourage interactivity among students who do not know each other, to relate and apply the key concepts of the minor with the disciplines of the degrees on which student are working:

Marketing academics should integrate theory with practice [...] it is also concluded that lecturers and tutors should provide students with ample opportunities to have discussion-oriented interactions [...] it is finally concluded that marketing should be related to non-business subjects, namely, the subjects-of-origin of nonmarketing students (Crick, 2018, p. 1079).

Table I shows the adaptation of the original subjects of the Advertising degree to the needs of a non-marketing audience, keeping the focus on the future application to their degrees, so as to enhance the combination of marketing with other disciplines and contribute to the students' personal success and learning process (Lamont and Friedman, 1997).

		<b>Course objective: Students will</b>	<b>Main contents</b>
<b>Minor in Advertising and Marketing</b>	<b>Introduction to Advertising</b>	Become acquainted with the basic concepts of advertising. Content is presented to be applicable in their future professions	Introduction to the concept of advertising; the advertising process; consumers in the market; the media as an advertising medium
	<b>Creativity</b>	Become acquainted with knowledge on creativity and have the opportunity to apply it to their professional field	Introduction to creativity; creativity and advertising; creativity applied to the consumer
	<b>Marketing</b>	Analyze situations and implement strategic decisions	What marketing is; environmental factors; marketing mix; choice of target market and positioning; marketing plan
<b>Advertising major</b>	<b>Advertising I</b>	Become acquainted with the history and evolution of techniques and theories in advertising, and put them into practice in a variety of advertising projects	Advertising history; advertising planning; advertising administration (management and creativity); the media
	<b>Creativity I</b>	Deepen into the knowledge and application of creativity oriented to advertising	Creativity (definition, of the creative process for advertising, suitability of ideas); empathy and planning; integrated creativity applied
	<b>Marketing I</b>	Acquire the basic knowledge to diagnose and accurately define and design Marketing plans	Marketing function and characteristics; marketing mix; analysis of surrounding; market research; segmentation and positioning; integrated mk communication

Table I. Comparison between the learning objectives and contents of the Advertising and Marketing Minor and the Advertising major

Courses consist of key content needed to teach the practice of marketing: stakeholder and relationship marketing, management of the marketing mix, strategic planning, marketing and centrality of the customer (Dibb *et al.*, 2014), global and comprehensive approaches to emphasize the central notion that marketing is “everyone’s job” in an organization

(Loveland *et al.*, 2015; Dibb and Simkin, 2003). Table II shows the weight of the practical part per subject of the Minor Program.

Minor courses	% theoretical assessment	% practical assessment
<b>Introduction to advertising</b>	20%	80%
<b>Creativity</b>	20%	80%
<b>Marketing</b>	25%	75%

Table II. Modes of assessment of the Minor in Advertising and Marketing

### EMPATHY MAPS: A TOOL TO STUDY CONSUMERS AMONG NON-MARKETERS STUDENTS

The centrality of clients is a core notion in each subject of the Advertising and Marketing Minor. This topic is one of the fundamental contents of the marketing practice (Dibb *et al.*, 2014), and the study of consumers has shown to be of interest among non-specialist students as well (Holman, 1977). General knowledge of how markets work from the perspective of companies and clients was assumed given that attendees were mostly 21 to 25 years old (Vermut, 2005). "As people experience the commercial world, they might appreciate how marketing benefits customers, as well as how firms engage in marketing strategies" (Crick, 2018, p.1074).

The teaching experience using empathy maps presented here was carried out in the Creativity course during the academic years of 2017 and 2018. The simplicity in the concepts and their application incorporated into this course enables teachers to make students aware of their own behavior as consumers and deepen consumer knowledge (Holman, 1977). Students are stimulated to enrich their own learning process by making the most of their previous knowledge and resources and suggest other formal research processes, such as the SWOT analysis or the empathy map itself.

One of the intentions behind introducing empathy maps in the Creativity course was to demystify the notion that creative ideas appear in a void or are the mere result of spontaneity. Students need to be aware of the fact creative ideas are the product of a research process aimed to respond to consumer needs (explicit and latent), and scientific research in advertising creativity is essential to develop messages capable of attracting the attention of the recipient and achieving advertising objectives (Arroyo, 2015). Intuitively, it could be thought that creativity in advertising and in other branches of knowledge is a whimsical phenomenon that occurs when least expected and by individuals with privileged minds (Feijoo and Guerrero, 2018). However, the target audience of this course needs to know that creative ideas are synonymous with usefulness and problem solving and are the result of deep reflection based on a prior research process.

From a content viewpoint, prior to practice, a theoretical session was planned in which the foundation and application of empathy maps was explained, as suggested by Crick (2018) and Hooijberg and Lane (2009). This theoretical session introduced the notion that empathy maps were introduced as a tool developed by a consulting firm (XPLANE, acquired by Dachis Group), so as to highlight the concept that development

stems from professional needs and practice, to better understand client's requirements, environment and vision of the world.

Empathy maps have been used in Design Thinking for some time (Castillo Vergara, Álvarez-Marin and Cabana-Villca, 2014); however, they have gained visibility and popularity as a valuable tool in the business models thanks to Osterwalder and Pigneur (2011). It was the business field that envisioned the potential of empathy to improve sales techniques.

Although everyone intuitively knows how to put themselves in someone else's place and practice empathy, empathy maps facilitate a systematic and complete analysis from which to plan objectives, strategies and action plans (Villaescusa, 2019).

The rationale behind having non-specialist applying empathy maps is to demonstrate how common daily situations appear in professional life (ideas on innovative products, new services, "small" innovations in a business process, modifications in the functionalities of the service or product offered) and how familiarity with this tool can indicate whom to target. Empathy maps are easy to apply. They are a series of questions to be answered by the prospective consumer that go beyond what a client "seems" to want or what s/he says s/he wants to help us understand what s/he really wants such as what s/he sees, what s/he hears, what s/he says and does, what s/he thinks and feels. Developing empathy maps is about adjusting a value proposition to the aspirations, frustrations and real needs of a client.

Empathy maps are an adaptable and flexible tool (Villaescusa, 2019). There are six basic sections to building an empathy map:

- What you see: What is your niche and what it is like? Who do you know in this niche? What offers does the market make you?
- What you say and do: What is the public's attitude toward you? How are you perceived? How do you behave? What contradictions do you present?
- What you hear from your environment: What do your friends, family, staff, bosses, influential people around you say (or tell you) about yourself? Through which multimedia channel does this information reach you?
- What you think and feel: What really matters to you? What are your main concerns, dreams and aspirations?

From these four sections, two more are obtained by way of conclusion:

- What are the efforts you make: Which are your fears? What limits and obstacles do you face in achieving what you want? What risks are ahead

of you and that you must take? What efforts or risks are you not willing to take?

- What are the results, the benefits you hope to obtain: What are your real needs or wants? On

what do you base success? How can you achieve your goals?

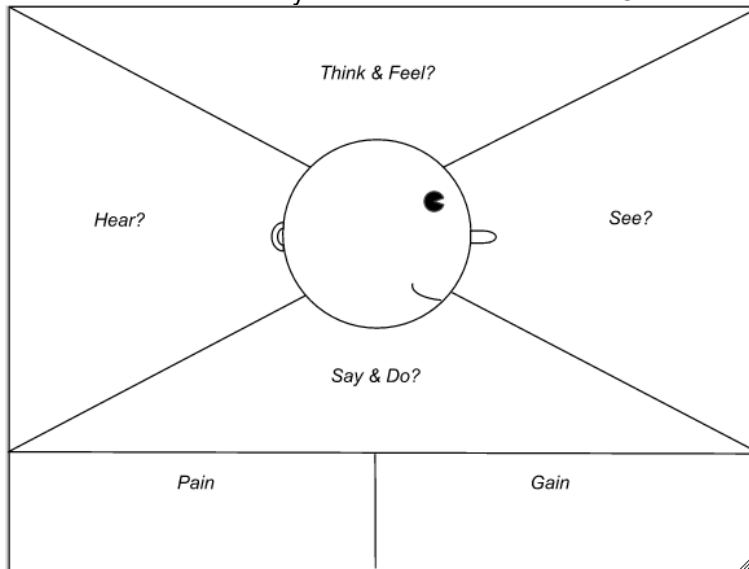


Figure 1. Empathy map template. Source: Bland, 2016 <https://www.solutionsiq.com/resource/blog-post/what-is-an-empathy-map/>

Figure 1 shows a template to complete an empathy map. The consumer profile reflected in the empathy map will provide clues for designing the value proposition of the product or service. The lower part of the map is particularly relevant given the need to minimize efforts and eliminate the customer's fears, and provide the benefits the developer expects or wants. Empathy map application may be subjective as it is based on the perceptions that one person has about others; however more objective versions can be achieved by first determining a target audience through research work (Villaescusa, 2019).

As a final explanation to non-specialist students (Crick, 2018), students were faced with the idea that, as its name indicates, elaborating an empathy map is to "put ourselves in the other's shoes", a requirement to understand aspirations, people's needs, fears and frustrations (Cândido and da Silva Bertotti, 2019). These are the foundations on which to build a better world. Likewise, the multidisciplinary natures of the classes enriched the experience of becoming aware of the variety of perceptions on one phenomenon, and, simultaneously, learn to appreciate points of view that totally differ from our own.

## METHODOLOGY

Teaching marketing to students of other disciplines is a subject that has been infrequently approached scientifically (Barr and McNeilly, 2001). For this reason, the authors considered that recording the teaching experience of using a professional tool (empathy maps) in an advertising and marketing minor aimed at non-specialists, could contribute to a specific niche of the educational marketing literature. Empathy maps proved

to be helpful tool in bringing non-specialist students closer to the study of consumer behavior.

Therefore, this research has an exploratory nature and aims to share the results of a teaching experience, not to test any theory. Thus, a qualitative methodology was preferred to prioritize reflection on the teaching and learning strategy in the classroom.

Data were collected by means of participant observation, that is, having one of the researchers act as a "teacher-observer". This allows the researcher to be part of the study setting, and become involved and interact with the informants, while recording the information in a natural and non-intrusive way (Taylor and Bogdan, 1986). The teacher-observer collected the reflections of the teaching after each class in which the empathy map was taught information as notes. This provided the researcher with a day-to-day record of the teaching process that could be referenced later on.

During this teaching/learning experience, enrolled students were requested to complete a brief survey on their perception of the empathy maps as course content. The objective was to have a counterpoint to the researchers' vision and provide students' feedback to assess the effectiveness of marketing teaching strategies for non-specialist students. One limitation of surveys is that they can facilitate socially desirable responses from the respondents. To minimize this effect, questionnaires were anonymous and voluntary, and emailed to the students' institutional emails six months after completing the course, once there was no teacher-student contact and students had had time to evaluate the usefulness of the empathy map in their academic and personal life.

The questionnaire was designed with a descriptive purpose (questions follow) and was answered by 60% of the total number of students attending (N = 62) the

two courses taught, from Engineering (27), Law (17), Psychology (4), Dentistry (4), Nursing (4), Education (4), and Speech Therapy (2) majors. Questions and possible answers were:

1. Coming from another major, did you understand the use and purpose of the empathy map? *Yes, from the very beginning; Yes, but through practice; Yes, but I didn't know how to apply it; I didn't fully understand its use; I did not understand anything.*
2. Do you consider that empathy maps enriched your training? *Yes, No.*
3. In which areas were empathy maps useful to you? *Multiple choice question: In my own professional field; In my personal / family relationships; To pass the minor; To prepare for a job interview; To start a business; To get to know myself better; To get to know my interlocutor better; To better understand the advertising process; It was of no use to me; Other.*
4. How would you assess your handling of empathy maps in the tasks performed? *Tasks were very easy to complete, I completed them successfully; Tasks were not difficult, I completed them correctly; I completed the tasks correctly after answering questions either by consulting the teacher or by other sources; I completed the tasks, but with great difficulty and mistakes; I was unable to complete the tasks.*
5. Empathy maps are used to make a detailed description of the consumer of a product or service. For this, previous research work is essential. In the assigned tasks, what kind of research did you carry out? *Quantitative; Qualitative; A combination of quantitative and qualitative research; I drew upon secondary sources (studies, reports, official statistics ...); I did it intuitively and informally, asking friends, family ...; I did not do any research: I covered the empathy map following my perceptions and intuitions about the target audience; I didn't know how to do the research; Other.*
6. What suggestions do you have to improve the teaching on empathy maps? *Open-ended question.*
7. Would you recommend learning about empathy maps? *Yes; No.*
8. What skills did the Minor in Advertising and Marketing help you develop? *Multiple Choice Question: Oral and Written Communication Skills; Creativity; Critical thinking; Positioning and sale of goods and services; Consumer knowledge; Deeper knowledge of how advertising and marketing work; Other.*
9. What do you think the Minor in Advertising and Marketing contributed to your training? *Multiple*

*choice question: It incorporated complementary knowledge that I can easily apply in my profession; It helped me acknowledge and value other disciplines of knowledge; I had the chance to work with a variety of people; It expanded my cultural knowledge; I learned something that I liked but that is not related to my profession; Other.*

## MAIN FINDINGS ON THE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

At the didactic level, empathy maps cover the areas of study of consumer behavior suggested by Holman (1977) in this non-specialist context: "study of individual processes (perception, information processing, personality, learning, attitudes, etc.); study of group influences upon the individual (reference groups, social class, culture, etc.); and non- traditional approaches (innovative ideas, future studies, futurizing, etc.)" (p. 271). The application of the empathy map requires a prior market research process whose level of strictness depends on the student's knowledge of research methodologies and techniques. This prior work and knowledge influenced students' evaluation of activities, as will be described further on. The pass rate was 100% with an average of 5.4 out of 7.

First, students analyzed some examples advertising campaigns and read relevant texts (Zaltman and Zaltman, 2008). Next, two practical activities followed, one involved the direct application of empathy maps and another more global activity included proposing an innovation for a product or service to other classmates. All these activities were conducted as group activities aimed at generating opportunities for exchange between classmates from different disciplines (Crick, 2018). Teachers acted as mediators, guides, team members, providers of sources and resources on the subject in an environment overloaded with information (Holman, 1977).

In the first practical activity, students were to choose a brand of which they were consumers and apply an empathy map with the aim of modifying or renewing the value proposition of the brand. Figure 2 shows an example of students' work. Likewise, a second comprehensive practice was contemplated in which student groups had to find and present a viable and innovative solution to a problem detected among their peers after a research process. This exercise was sequenced in the following phases: (I) Definition of the consumer profile based on primary and/or secondary sources of information (empathy map); (II) detection of a problem, a gap, an unmet need in that target group; (III) presentation of innovative solution; (IV) sale of the idea to a brand that may be interested in developing the innovation. Figure 3 shows a student's work.



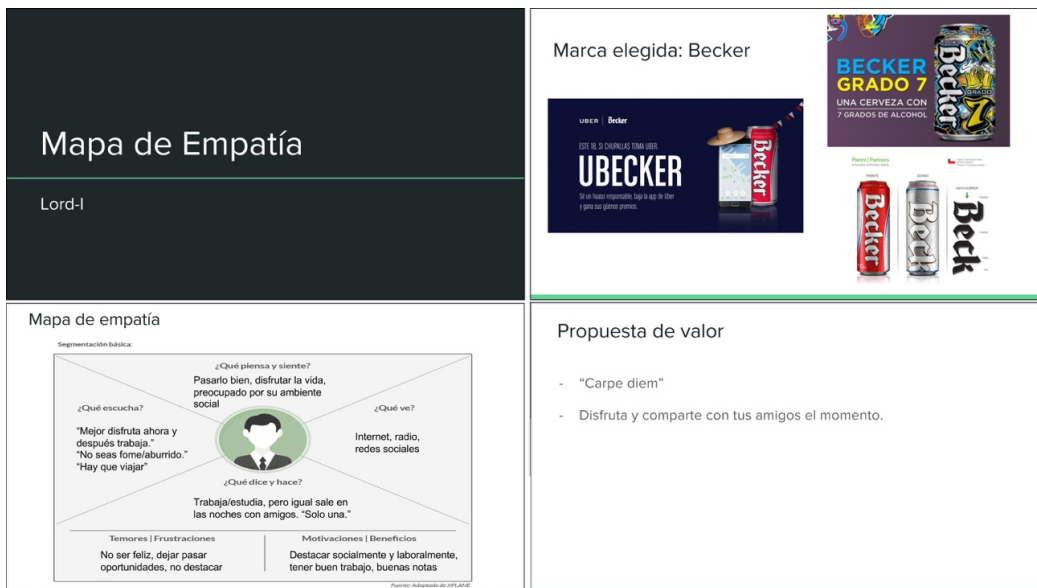


Figure 2. Sample of students' empathy map



Figure 3. Sample of students' project for which empathy map were used



For teachers, the theoretical explanation of empathy maps is not complex. The questions empathy maps pose to become acquainted with consumer behavior are simple and common. Specifically, the visualization of successful advertising campaigns based on product innovation (for example, the Panasonic Talk to Me campaign, developed by Maruri Grey Ecuador and awarded at Cannes 2017), were proof of the benefits of applying empathy maps to segment a market and respond to its needs and demands.

Up to this point, students did not raise many doubts. Questions did arise when empathy maps were to be applied on a target audience of a certain brand. Questions were resolved with the support of the teacher. In order to assess how well questions were resolved, some student voluntarily completed the questionnaire mentioned above. Answers showed that regarding the difficulties in understanding the empathy map, almost all students asserted they understood their use and purpose: 45.2% stated this understanding derived from the initial theoretical explanation and 50% at the time of applying it in practice through the activities. Only 4.8% stated not knowing how to apply empathy map but claimed they understood its utility.

Teacher support and working in a relaxed atmosphere are fundamental for students to apply an empathy map. Although 60.3% of the respondents stated that they had carried out the tasks without difficulty and correctly, the rest of the class admitted to needing the support from teacher or classmates to work with, implement and understand how the empathy map contributed to other activities.

Both the professors' personal experience and the statements of the students, show that the empathy map is an attractive tool to deepen the study of the consumer among non-specialist profiles. However, in order to rigorously apply the empathy map, it is necessary to conduct previous research based on techniques and methodologies that collect valid and representative information from the group of consumers. Indeed, students correctly applied the tool, but based on biased data and sources. This means that 25.8% of the students carried out the research intuitively or informally (asking friends, family...) or directly created the empathy map following their own perceptions and intuitions about the studied target audience. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research was used by 33.9% of the students, 17.7% used only quantitative methods, 12.9% only qualitative research and 9.7% chose to refer to secondary sources (studies, reports, official statistics). Although students intended to use research techniques **questionnaires and interviews** the truth is that they were applied with relatively loose statistical rigor. Consequently, most students (90.3%) earned the equivalent of B or less.

In their feedback, students suggested reinforcing the teaching of research, by creating simple guides on how to obtain the information about consumers using a valid correct methodology, considering their level and area of interest (pre-graduate studies). However, the recommendation on which they insisted on the most

was to enrich the explanation sessions with a greater number of examples and practical cases resolved by the teacher and contextualized in their areas of pre-graduate studies (engineering, law, health sciences ...). This request is fully in line with what Crick (2018) has already reflected on his case study.

Despite the limitations described herein, after completing the course, 87.1% of the students who provided their feedback believed that empathy maps were a resource that enriched their training. Empathy maps were useful to pass the course for 66.1% of the students; 64.5% considered they contributed to better understand the advertising process; 41.9% considered empathy maps contributed to their own professional field; 30.6% said they improved their personal/family relationships and 24.2% used them get to know conversation partners. Only 3.2% stated that empathy maps had not been useful. It is interesting and gratifying to see how empathy maps reach beyond professional applicability and seem to be seen as a new tool for enriching personal relationships. Pre-graduate students can benefit greatly by knowing that the reach of empathy maps extends beyond advertising or commercial uses and can be of use in their personal lives.

On the issue of completion of the Minor Program in Advertising and Marketing as a whole, non-specialist students valued the importance of studying consumer behavior (72.6%), of developing their creativity (69.4%), of acquiring in-depth knowledge on the functioning of the advertising process (67.7%) and of them valued improving their oral and written communication skills (43.5%). In short, more than half of the respondents recognized that the minor had provided supplementary knowledge perfectly applicable to their profession, had helped them learn about and value other disciplines of knowledge and had been an opportunity to work with students with other interests, and thus learning on marketing had broadened their learning process.

## CONCLUSIONS

The description and analysis of a marketing teaching experience addressed to non-specialist students, allows the author to conclude that empathy maps are a potential tool to immerse pre-graduate students in the study of consumer behaviour for various reasons:

- They are easy to understand, do not take much time to explain, and are very visual.
- Students can work in groups (which encourages collaborative work), and benefit from exposure to different points of view.
- They are widely used in the Design Thinking methodology, so they are familiar to students.
- They are useful to better understand the target audience in a simple and quick way (they do not require much previous knowledge) and facilitate audience segmentation.
- They are useful for students to disregard their own opinion or what they "think" consumers want, while learning about their personality,

environment, desires, needs, vision, etc. in a very practical way.

- They are a simple way to connect with the emotions and feelings of others.

Without a doubt, introducing the use of a professional marketing teaching tool to non-specialists constitutes an interesting educational innovation. The pedagogical benefits obtained after having used empathy maps encourage us to continue trying to apply other professional practices as a way to permanently innovate in the classroom.

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