

Why Do Undergraduate Marketing Majors Select Marketing as a Business Major? Evidence from Australasia

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This research examines the reasons behind marketing majors' decision to select marketing as a major, where students have the option to select more than one major toward their undergraduate degree. Results of surveys conducted at two universities, one in Australia and one in New Zealand, provide some new findings as well as extending findings from earlier studies. This research complements existing studies on the topic by providing empirical evidence from Australasia. The results also suggest that marketing is the most popular first-choice major for Australasian marketing majors.

Keywords: *marketing major; marketing educators; business major; choice of major; and ranking of majors*

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Marketing educators across business schools are facing an increasingly challenging marketing environment. The number of nontraditional educational providers and corporate universities entering the higher education arena is increasing in the context of declining public support for higher education (Smart, Kelley, and Conant 1999). In addition, technological advances are enabling the delivery of education across borders and facilitating the emergence of competition from overseas providers in domestic markets. Furthermore, internal departments within business schools might be competing for the same student pool (Hugstad 1997).

The customer environment is constantly changing. Students might be selecting marketing as a second choice or fall-back major when they are not successful in gaining entry to more preferred disciplines such as accounting or finance (LaBarbera and Simonoff 1999). Thus, the *quality* of students opting for a marketing major may be declining with many of the top-skilled students in the pool of business majors "siphoned off" by other business disciplines (Hugstad 1997, p. 6). In addition, the selection of the major is argued to be a dynamic process (Astin and Panos 1969; Levine 1976). Thus, if the initial expectations are not fulfilled, students who have

already opted to major in marketing might switch their major to other available business disciplines as a response to their dissatisfaction. It might become "increasingly difficult to keep marketing students from defecting" to other business majors (Smart, Kelley, and Conant 1999, p. 212).

Researchers exhort marketing educators to identify the requirements of their student customers (Floyd and Gordon 1998), to develop a customer orientation (Stafford 1994), and to adopt effective marketing strategies (Hugstad 1997) in view of the complex challenges in the marketplace. For example, Schmidt, Debevec, and Comm (1987) argued that "suppliers of educational services need to know what criteria will influence their buyers' choices" (p. 58). Stafford (1994) reasoned that "educators should be more concerned with factors affecting choice of and satisfaction with services offered in marketing education" (p. 26).

Furthermore, understanding the reasons behind students' choice of marketing major becomes important because "a student's major often becomes an important part of his or her *self definition* [emphasis added]" or role identity (Kleine 2002, p. 15). Kleine argued that students choosing to major in marketing evolve an identity around being a marketing major and that marketing educators should work toward enhancing students' role identity as marketing majors. According to Kleine, "the more a student identifies with being a marketing major, the more committed he or she will be to enacting behaviors that lead to success as a marketing student" (p. 15). Hence, understanding the reasons why students choose to major in marketing can be a first step for educators in under-

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standing their expectations of the marketing schools and subsequently work toward enhancing their role identity.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Earlier research has examined issues such as how to market a marketing major (e.g., Hugstad 1997), reasons behind students' choice of marketing electives (e.g., Stafford 1994), why students change their major (e.g., Kohli 1995), the criteria marketing majors consider when selecting a college (e.g., Schmidt, Debevec, and Comm, 1987), and the reasons why business students enroll in an introductory marketing course (e.g., Juric, Todd, and Henry 1997). With respect to student decisions to pursue a marketing major, O'Brien and Deans (1995) found that *advice of a student adviser, flexibility offered by a marketing major, good career prospects, and prior knowledge and popularity of the subject* were the main reasons that influenced the U.K. 1st-year marketing students' choice of marketing major. Tom, O'Grady, and Swanson (1995) found that *employment potential, public perception, and quality of the program* were some of the criteria students use when deciding to adopt a marketing major. Other researchers (e.g., Keillor, Bush, and Bush 1995; Newell, Titus, and West 1996) found that *academic reputation, course work, curriculum, influence of parents and peers, and variety of career prospects* were the reasons behind students' selection of marketing as their major. Recently, LaBarbera and Simonoff (1999) investigated the reasons behind marketing students' selection of a marketing major and obtained results that were largely consistent (e.g., *career prospects, course work*) with the literature.

NEED FOR RESEARCH

The majority of research investigating business students' choice of major has been conducted in a decision situation where students have the option of choosing only one major from the available disciplines. The U.S. undergraduate marketing students usually select only one major as part of their degree and choose other subjects from noncore areas to fulfill the curriculum requirements.¹ However, the decision situation for marketing students at Australasian universities is somewhat different in that students have the option to select more than one major as part of their undergraduate degree. In fact, the degree regulations in many Australasian institutions are such that business students are required to choose a minimum of two majors to complete their degree. Most of the studies investigating students' choice of marketing major have been conducted in North America (e.g., LaBarbera and Simonoff 1999) and Europe (e.g., O'Brien and Deans 1995). Thus, extant literature does not explain whether the same set of reasons holds if students have the option to choose more than one business major. It is also not clear from the literature whether the reasons influencing students' choice of major are

culture-centric.² To the best of our knowledge, there have been no studies that investigated the reasons influencing students' selection of marketing major, in a decision situation where students have the option to select more than one business major, in the context of regions outside North America and Europe. In the face of increased competition from other disciplines within business schools, the threat of defection of marketing majors to other business disciplines, and the opportunity to select more than one major, it becomes important to understand how often students select marketing as a first- or second-choice major. The two objectives of the present study were to investigate the reasons behind the choice of a marketing major in the Australasian context, in a decision situation where students can choose more than one business major, and whether marketing students choose marketing as a first- or second-choice major.

MARKETING EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA

New Zealand had eight universities and 24 polytechnics catering for around 205,000 students in 1999 (New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee [NZVCC] 2000). In Australia, there were around 726,400 students enrolled in the 39 universities and six other higher education institutions in 2001 (Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee [AVCC] 2002). Most universities in Australasia offer undergraduate marketing programs. In 1997, on average, a business faculty in Australasia had 3,640 students, with about 682 marketing student enrollments, two-thirds (455) of whom were undergraduate marketing students (Danaher and Starr 1998).

Marketing educators in New Zealand and Australia have been facing challenges similar to their counterparts in North America and Europe. Government funding to educational institutions has not been keeping pace with the increasing number of students enrolling in tertiary institutions in both countries. In the New Zealand tertiary sector, government funding dropped from 64% to 46% of universities' revenue between 1994 and 1999, whereas student numbers rose from 198,632 to 219,734 during the same period (NZVCC 2000). There has been an ideological shift to market principles in the Australian higher education sector as well (Currie and Vidovich 2000). The government contribution as a percentage of universities' revenue dropped from 62% to 46% in Australia, whereas student enrollments increased from 585,435 to 686,267 during this period (AVCC 2002).

METHOD

The study was first conducted in New Zealand and was later replicated in Australia. Surveys were used for collecting data from convenience samples drawn from one New Zealand and one Australian university. Focus groups and a review of the literature provided input for identifying the items to be

included in the self-administered survey instrument. Research assistants administered the self-completion surveys in class. The data were collected between 1999 and 2000 from the New Zealand sample ($n = 174$) and between 2000 and 2002 from the Australian sample ($n = 170$). Factor analysis was used to identify the reasons underlying students' decision to major in marketing.³ A principal components factor analysis employing Promax rotation was conducted with each country's sample using the 28 variables identified from the literature and focus groups.⁴ Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to explore possible differences in respondent preferences by country, gender, and age of the respondent.

Two focus groups were conducted at the New Zealand university. Each focus group comprised eight volunteer undergraduate marketing students enrolled in a market research unit. The participants were asked to discuss the reasons behind their selection of marketing as a major in their undergraduate degree. The variety of job prospects available to marketing graduates, reputation of the academics at the marketing school, influence of the introductory marketing course, scope for using marketing knowledge in running a business, students' personal interest in the subject area, the variety of courses offered by the marketing school, and fit of marketing with the students' other major were the main themes identified in the focus groups. None of the focus group participants mentioned the influence of either parents or peers as a reason for their choice of marketing. Australian respondents' responses to the open-ended question "Why did you select marketing as a major?" on the survey were compared with the New Zealand focus group results to check the generalizability of focus group outcomes. The results were very similar. In both samples, respondents suggested several faculty-level and discipline-related factors as the reasons behind their selection of a marketing major.

The survey questionnaire included three sections. In the first section, respondents were asked to indicate if they had selected marketing as a major in their undergraduate degree and to name their second business major, if they had one. The second part of the questionnaire served as input for the factor analyses and contained a series of statements (see appendix) about the reasons behind students' selection of a marketing major. Item content in this section was informed by the focus group outcomes. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the 28 items on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*). The Australian respondents were given the additional response option of "not a reason." Demographic questions formed the third part of the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to provide information about their age, gender, year of study, and their order of preference for marketing and various other majors.

Given the objectives of the study, the population was identified as undergraduate students with marketing as one of their majors. Since exposure to an introductory marketing

unit was considered as a possible reason behind the selection of a marketing major, students who were in their 2nd or later years of the undergraduate degree were treated as the population. Both samples selected were from universities that had established business schools and were generally representative of this population. Marketing students at both the institutions had the scope to choose marketing and any other business discipline as majors in their undergraduate degree. The New Zealand sample was drawn from a large business school at a government-funded university. The New Zealand university had about 11,000 students in 2000. Students had the option of selecting their majors from functional business areas such as accounting, communication, economics, finance, human resource management, management, management systems, and marketing. The second sample was drawn from the business school at a major regional government-funded Australian university. The Australian university had around 13,000 distance-education students and around 3,500 on-campus students in 2000. The Australian students also had the option of selecting their major from functional business areas such as accounting, agribusiness, economics, finance, human resource management, management, and marketing.

The demographics of each sample closely matched respective national averages (see Table 1). The New Zealand sample comprised a higher proportion of female (56%) than male (44%) respondents, consistent with the New Zealand educational scene, where female students outnumbered male students both at the graduate and postgraduate level. The Australian sample comprised approximately equal proportions of female (48%) and male (52%) respondents, which was comparable with the Australian national higher education sector. The age distribution was skewed toward the younger age-group in both the data sets, as was expected of the student samples. Both the New Zealand sample (87%) and the Australian sample (74%) comprised a large proportion of 18- to 23-year-old students. Both samples were comparable with their respective national student age distributions. The New Zealand sample was drawn almost equally from the 2nd-, 3rd-, and 4th-year students of the 4-year degree program, ensuring that the views of students from all the years were represented in the results. Unlike the New Zealand sample, a substantial proportion (34%) of the Australian sample constituted distance-education students. The Australian sample was also almost equally drawn from the different years surveyed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reasons behind Students' Choice of Marketing Major

The factor analysis results from the two samples were largely similar (see Table 2), despite the possible impacts of country-specific, university-specific, faculty-specific, and

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF THE NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIAN SAMPLES

Demographic Characteristic	New Zealand		Australia		
	Sample (n = 174)	National ^a Average	Sample (n = 170)	National ^b Average	
	%	n	%	n	%
Gender					
Male	44.5	77	45.3	86	44.8
Female	55.5	96	54.7	81	55.2
Missing		1		3	
Age					
18-20 years	42.2	73	44.2	102	32.2
21-23 years	45.1	78	27.9	22	19.2
24-29 years	8.6	15	13.3	14	17.4
29 years	4.0	7	13.7	29	25.7
Missing		1		3	
Year of study					
2nd year	25.4	43	32.5	54	
3rd year	34.7	60	28.9	48	
4th year	37.6	65	13.9	23	
5th year	2.3 ^c	4	17.5	29	
5 years ^d	NA	NA	7.2	12	
Missing		2		4	

SOURCE: New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (2000) and Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (2002).

a. In 1999.

b. In 2000.

c. New Zealand students take 4 years to complete their degree, with students enrolled in the honors program taking 5 years to complete their degree.

d. The Australian sample comprised distance-education students who generally took more time to complete their bachelor's degree than the stipulated 3 full-time equivalent years, which would be taken by an on-campus student. New Zealand students take less than 5 years to complete their degree.

school-specific factors on students' choice of major.⁵ Seven interpretable factors were found for both samples. The variance accounted for by the seven factors in each sample was similar, and the communalities of most variables were consistent across the two samples. Furthermore, similar variables were loading on similar factors in both the samples. The coefficient of congruence values for all the factors having similar item composition between the two samples were very close or equal to +1.0 (between 0.97 and 1.0), indicating that the factors revealed by the two samples were highly similar.⁶ The factors were named as Match with Other Major, Utility of Marketing Knowledge, Introductory Units, Intrinsic Motivation, Course Variety, Variety of Career Prospects, and Academic Reputation. Scores on each factor were produced by averaging all defining items for the factor (see Table 2).

The factor Match with Other Major was related to the ease with which students could combine marketing with any other major in their degree. Variables that referred to the usefulness of marketing knowledge in running a business, in jobs, and in real life loaded on the factor named Utility of Marketing Knowledge. The factor Introductory Units was related to students' exposure to introductory marketing courses and the lecturing style of academic staff in the introductory units. The

factor Intrinsic Motivation referred to students' interest in the subject area. The factor Course Variety referred to the wide variety of units offered by the marketing school. The factor named Variety of Career Prospects was related to the variety of career opportunities offered by marketing. The factor Academic Reputation referred to the quality and reputation of the academics.

Overall Importance of the Factors within Each Sample

Figure 1 summarizes the mean level of importance of each factor within the two country samples. The factor Intrinsic Motivation was ranked most important by students in both samples, followed very closely by the factor Utility of Marketing Knowledge. The factors Course Variety, Variety of Career Prospects, and Match with Other Major were considered of nearly equal importance after Intrinsic Motivation and Utility of Marketing Knowledge, by the New Zealand students, whereas for Australian students, Variety of Career Prospects and Match with Other Major were ranked nearly equal in importance. The factors Academic Reputation and Introductory Units were the least important factors for the New Zealand students, whereas Academic Reputation was the least important factor for the Australian students.

TABLE 2
RESULTS OF FACTOR ANALYSES OF REASONS FOR CHOICE OF MAJOR IN THE TWO SAMPLES

Factor	Defining Variables	New Zealand Sample		Australian Sample	
		(n = 174)		(n = 170)	
1. Match with Other Major	X ₄	0.87		0.75	
	X ₁₁	0.91		0.78	
	X ₁₉	0.73		0.88	
	X ₂₅	0.92		0.90	
	Cronbach's alpha		0.86		0.97
2. Utility of Marketing Knowledge	X ₆	0.76		0.91	
	X ₁₂	0.62		0.58	
	X ₁₃	0.84		0.87	
	X ₁₇	NA		0.59	
	X ₁₈	NA		0.89	
	X ₂₁	0.90		0.76	
Cronbach's alpha		0.80		0.88	
3. Introductory Units	X ₁	0.92		0.87	
	X ₉	0.79		0.85	
	X ₁₀	0.56		0.58	
	X ₂₄	0.77		0.73	
Cronbach's alpha		0.82		0.90	
4. Intrinsic Motivation	X ₂	0.82		0.58	
	X ₈	0.91		0.74	
	X ₂₃	0.80		0.84	
Cronbach's alpha		0.82		0.81	
5. Course Variety	X ₇	NA		0.82	
	X ₁₄	0.76		0.89	
	X ₂₀	0.81		NA	
	X ₂₆	0.68		0.47	
Cronbach's alpha		0.73		0.79	
6. Variety of Career Prospects	X ₃	0.91		0.94	
	X ₁₅	0.69		0.60	
	X ₂₈	0.52		NA	
Cronbach's alpha		0.72		0.65	
7. Academic Reputation	X ₅	0.87		0.91	
	X ₁₀	NA		0.52	
	X ₁₆	NA		0.77	
	X ₂₇	0.74		0.72	
Cronbach's alpha		0.64		0.87	

NOTE: Extraction method = principal components analysis; rotation method = Promax; NA = these variables did not load onto the respective factors.

Variations in Factor Importance with Respect to Respondents' Country, Gender, and Age-Group

Since the study was conducted in two countries, it was important to understand whether there were differences between the groups from the two countries in terms of the degree of importance attributed to the set of identified factors. Previous researchers (e.g., Smart, Kelley, and Conant 1999) had observed that marketing student needs were becoming more diverse with growing proportions of women and mature-age students in the cohorts. The conjecture was that gender and age were important demographic variables, which could help marketing educators in their school-level and faculty-level marketing (e.g., promotion) decisions. Accordingly, a three-way MANOVA was conducted using respondents' country (Australia or New Zealand), gender

(male or female), and age-group (18-23 years or 24 years and above) as independent variables. The dependent variables were the seven factor scores.

Table 3 presents the results of this MANOVA. The three-way interaction between country, gender, and age was nonsignificant. All the two-way interactions, between country and gender, between country and age, and between gender and age, were nonsignificant. The multivariate main effects for both gender and age were nonsignificant at the .05 level. That is, the importance attributed to the reasons behind the selection of a marketing major did not differ significantly between the male and female students, and the differences between the 18- to 23-year-old students and 24-year-old and older students were nonsignificant.

However, there were significant differences between the Australian and the New Zealand samples regarding the



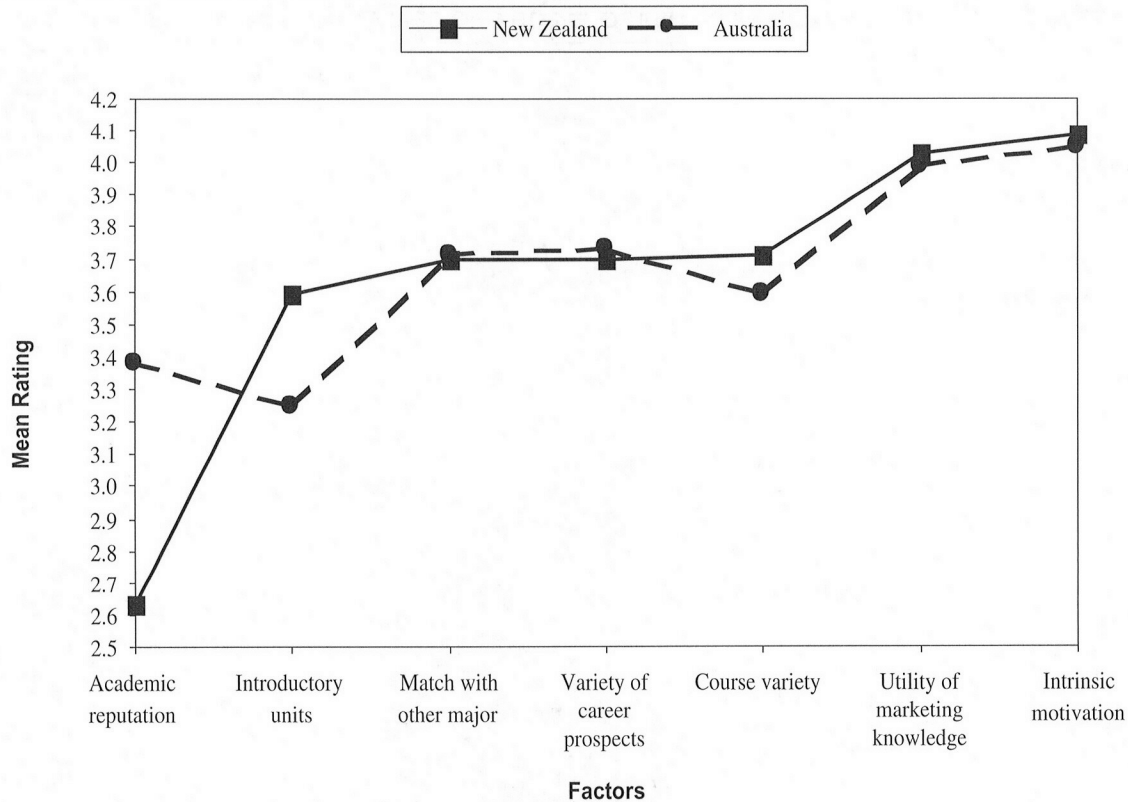


FIGURE 1: Overall Mean Importance of the Seven "Reasons" Factors for the Two Samples

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF MULTIVARIATE TESTS FOR COUNTRY, GENDER, AND AGE-GROUP DIFFERENCES IN FACTOR IMPORTANCE

Effect	Wilks's Λ	Exact F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p	MV ^a
Country \times Gender \times Age	.960	1.957	7	326	.060	.040
Country \times Gender	.978	1.072	7	326	.381	.022
Country \times Age	.982	.875	7	326	.526	.018
Gender \times Age	.942	1.380	7	326	.157	.029
Country	.729	13.446	7	326	.001 ^b	.224
Gender	.981	.892	7	326	.513	.019
Age	.968	1.559	7	326	.147	.032

a. MV indicates multivariate.

b. Deemed significant using $\alpha = .05$ as the decision criterion.

importance attributed to the reasons to select marketing as a major. The multivariate main effect for country was significant and accounted for a reasonable (22%) amount of the variance in the dependent variables. The importance of only two of the factors (Introductory Units and Academic Reputation) varied significantly between the two samples. Univariate *F* tests showed that New Zealand students considered Introductory Units as a significantly more important reason influencing their selection of a marketing major compared with the Australian students (New Zealand mean = 3.59; Aus-

tralian mean = 3.25), $F(1, 332) = 10.920, p = .001$. Academic Reputation was a significantly more important reason for the Australian students compared with the New Zealand students (Australian mean = 3.38; New Zealand mean = 2.63), $F(1, 332) = 43.352, p < .001$.

Marketing Majors' Relative Preferences for Different Majors

Marketing was the most popular first-choice major for the New Zealand marketing students followed by accounting,



TABLE 4
MARKETING MAJORS' RELATIVE PREFERENCES FOR VARIOUS MAJORS^a

Major	New Zealand Sample ^b				Major	Australian Sample ^c			
	First choice (n = 139)		Second Choice (n = 138)			First Choice (n = 164)		Second Choice (n = 162)	
	n	%	n	%		n	%	n	%
Marketing	72	51.8	43	31.2	Marketing	108	65.9	58	35.8
Accounting	17	12.2	9	6.5	HRM	31	18.9	61	37.7
Communication	16	11.5	21	15.2	Agribusiness	7	4.3	8	4.9
Economics	7	5.0	8	5.8	Management	6	3.7	12	7.4
Management systems	6	4.3	12	8.7	Accounting	2	1.2	7	4.3
Finance	5	3.6	4	2.9	Communication	2	1.2	2	1.2
HRM	5	3.6	17	12.3	Economics	2	1.2	10	6.2
Management	3	2.2	5	3.6	Law	2	1.2	4	2.5
Others	8	5.8	19	13.8	Finance	1	0.6	0	0
					Psychology	1	0.6	0	0
					Others	2	1.2	0	0
Total	139	100	138	100	Missing	6		8	
Missing	17		18						

- a. Recall that both samples comprised only students who declared marketing as one of their chosen majors.
- b. In the New Zealand sample, 157 students responded to the question on relative preference for different majors. Out of them, 80% (139) indicated that they had relative preference for different majors, whereas 20% (18) indicated that they had no relative preference for different majors.
- c. In the Australian sample, 164 students responded to the question on relative preference for different majors. All of them indicated that they had relative preference for different majors.

communication, economics, management systems, finance, human resource management, and management (see Table 4). For the Australian marketing students, marketing was also the most popular first-choice major followed by human resource management, agribusiness, management, economics, and accounting.

Communication, human resource management, management systems, accounting, economics, management, and finance were the popular second-choice majors for the New Zealand marketing students. For the Australian marketing students, human resource management, management, economics, agribusiness, and accounting were the popular second-choice majors.

The results of the present study suggest that marketing majors in Australia and New Zealand more often select marketing as a first-choice rather than as a second-choice major. The proportion of students who selected marketing as their first choice was significantly higher than that of the students who selected marketing as their second choice in both the samples. In the New Zealand sample, 52% of students selected marketing as their first choice, whereas only 31% selected marketing as their second choice. In the Australian sample, 66% of students selected marketing as their first choice, whereas 36% of students selected marketing as their second-choice business major. For both the samples, a z test for proportions established that the proportion of students who selected marketing as a first-choice major was significantly higher ($p < .001$) than that of the students who selected marketing as a second-choice major.

A significantly higher proportion of students chose marketing as their first-choice major compared to any other discipline, relative to a model that assumed no explicit preference for any major (random choice model), in both the New Zealand ($\chi^2 = 207.2, df = 8, p < .001$) and the Australian samples ($\chi^2 = 581.7, df = 10, p < .001$). That is, the proportion of students who selected marketing as their first-choice major was higher than that of students who selected any other discipline as their first-choice major in both the samples. In the New Zealand sample, the proportion of students who selected marketing as their first choice (52%) was much higher than the proportion of students who selected any other discipline such as accounting (12%), communication (11%), and economics (5%) as their first choice. In the Australian sample, the proportion of students who selected marketing as their first choice (66%) was also much higher than the proportion of students who selected any other discipline such as human resource management (19%), agribusiness (4%), and management (4%) as first choice.

The proportion of marketing majors who selected other disciplines as a second-choice major was significantly higher than that of students who selected marketing as a second-choice major in both the samples. In the New Zealand sample, 69% of students selected other areas as their second-choice major, whereas marketing was selected as a second-choice major by 31% of the students. In the Australian sample, 64% of students selected other disciplines as their second-choice major, whereas 36% of the students selected marketing as their second choice. For both the samples, a z test for propor-



tions established that the proportion of students who selected other disciplines as a second-choice major was significantly higher ($p < .001$) than the proportion of students who selected marketing as a second-choice major.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study investigated the selection of a marketing major in a different decision context, that is, where students were able to select more than one business major in their undergraduate degree. This research provided some new findings as well as supported findings from previous studies. The two samples revealed the same set of factors underlying marketing students' decision to major in marketing. The results suggested that the advantage offered by the marketing major to combine it easily with other business majors is a reason behind the selection of marketing. The marketing major was perceived to provide knowledge that is useful in running a business. Marketing majors perceived that marketing concepts are practical and widely applicable in business settings. Exposure to introductory marketing courses in the initial phase of a business degree was also likely to influence students to opt for a marketing major. Diversity in the portfolio of units offered by a marketing school seemed to be another reason affecting students' decision to select a marketing major. The results also supported the view that students choose a marketing major in the hope of a wide variety of career prospects. Reputation of the academics in the school was also a reason why students select a marketing major.

O'Brien and Deans (1995) noted that the *flexibility offered by a marketing degree* was one of the reasons why students opted to study marketing. Our results suggested that students also selected marketing because of the ease with which they could combine it with their other majors. Smart, Kelley, and Conant (1999, p. 213) noted that the number of nontraditional students who faced "severe time constraints as they attempt to work and raise families while matriculating for degrees" was increasing. It makes much sense for students to select majors that are compatible with each other in such an environment.

The factors identified in the present study confirmed or extended previous findings. The factor Utility of Marketing Knowledge extended the findings of Juric, Todd, and Henry (1997) to the selection of a marketing major. Juric, Todd, and Henry found that gaining business focus or joining a family business was a reason behind marketing students' selection of an introductory marketing unit. The factor Introductory Units extended the work of earlier researchers (e.g., Keillor, Bush, and Bush 1995; LaBarbera and Simonoff 1999; Newell, Titus, and West 1996) and showed that such units in the curriculum played a role in influencing students' decision to choose marketing as a major. The factor Intrinsic Motivation confirmed the findings of previous research (e.g., Juric, Todd, and Henry 1997; McCullough, Tansuhaj, and Ronarithivichai

1987), which showed that students selected courses based on personal interest in the area.

The factors Course Variety and Variety of Career Prospects identified in the present study suggested that marketing majors are driven by variety in their selection of the marketing major and extended Stafford's (1994) findings. Stafford noted that marketing students' choice of course electives was driven by students' interest in *variety* (p. 31). Furthermore, the factor Variety of Career Prospects was consistent with the findings of previous researchers (e.g., Keillor, Bush, and Bush 1995; Newell, Titus, and West 1996). Tom, O'Grady, and Swanson (1995) also found that *employment potential* was a reason behind marketing students' decision to major in marketing. The factor Academic Reputation identified in the present study confirmed the findings of Newell, Titus, and West (1996). Schmidt, Debevec, and Comm (1987) also found that quality of the academics was a reason behind marketing majors' decision to select a college.

Stafford (1994) noted that three groups of factors influence students' decision to select a major, those related to career, reference groups, and personal interest. Our results differed from Stafford's and suggested that students were influenced by two types of factors, those related to career and those related to the interest in the subject. It is interesting to note the absence of factors related to reference groups. Thus, the results of the present study suggest that the reasons behind the selection of a marketing major are country or institutional specific.

In addition, the results indicate that Intrinsic Motivation and Utility of the Marketing Knowledge were the most important reasons for the Australasian marketing students selecting marketing as a major. The importance attributed to the remaining factors varied within the samples. This finding contrasts with O'Brien and Deans (1995), who noted that 1st-year marketing students considered *career prospects* and *flexibility offered by a marketing major* as the most important reasons behind their selection of a marketing major. O'Brien and Deans conducted their investigation in the United Kingdom with 1st-year marketing students as the sample, whereas the present study was conducted in Australasia with a sample that constituted almost equal proportions of students from various years of the undergraduate degree (excluding 1st-year students). The results of the present study suggest that the importance marketing students attributed to various factors is country or institutional specific.

Previous studies found that career-related factors had greater importance on choice of a major compared with non-career-related factors such as *course work, curriculum, and faculty reputation* (LaBarbera and Simonoff 1999, p. 5). However, the results of the present study suggested that factors related to career were less important than non-career-related factors. Incidentally, Schmidt, Debevec, and Comm (1987) also found that academic criteria (e.g., Quality of Faculty) were more important than nonacademic criteria for

(U.S.) marketing majors when selecting a college. This suggests that the relative importance of career and non-career-related factors with respect to selection of a major varies by the country or institution where the study is conducted.

Furthermore, our results suggested that while the degree of importance attributed to the various factors behind the selection of a marketing major varied by the country of the respondent, it did not vary according to the age-group or gender of the respondent.

While O'Brien and Deans (1995) observed that economics and finance/accounting were the most consistently popular *subjects* that the U.K. marketing students combined with a marketing major, our results showed that marketing majors in Australasia selected the second major from a wider array of disciplines extending beyond the functional areas of business such as accounting and finance. The results suggested that human resource management, economics, management, and accounting were among the popular second-choice majors. Our results also demonstrate that in contrast to conventional wisdom (e.g., Hugstad 1997; LaBarbera and Simonoff 1999; Lamont and Friedman 1997), marketing was the most popular first-choice major for both Australian and New Zealand students.

Thus, the principal contribution of this research is that it complements existing research in the area by investigating the reasons behind undergraduate marketing students' selection of marketing major in a new decision context. Another contribution of the study is that the ease with which marketing can be combined with other majors in their undergraduate degree is a reason behind student choice of marketing major. Thus, the factor Match with Other Major provides a new contribution to the literature.

In addition, this study provides empirical evidence of the dimensions underlying marketing students' selection of a marketing major drawing samples from an Australian university and a New Zealand university. Most of the previous studies investigating the reasons behind selection of marketing major were conducted in the regions of North America and Europe. While some of the previous studies used only 1st-year marketing students as their sample, we used samples that had approximately equal proportions of students from all the years surveyed.

It is important to explore the implications of the results for marketing educators across business schools, particularly those schools that have similar environments and where marketing majors can choose more than one major toward their undergraduate degree. The survey results may provide useful input to faculty-level marketing decisions. Marketing majors seem to select their second major from an array of disciplines including nonbusiness areas such as psychology and law (see Table 4). Educators would need to consider students from such a wide range of disciplines as possible targets. In their marketing communications, marketing schools should emphasize the ease with which students can combine a market-

ing major with their other majors. It would also be useful to highlight that a marketing major provides knowledge that would be useful to students in operating a business.

The results indicate that the importance attributed to various factors does not differ by students' age or gender. Despite the diversity of needs expected in the student population (Smart, Kelley, and Conant 1999), marketing educators may not need to tailor marketing communications to students from different age-groups and genders.

Our results suggest that introductory marketing units are a potent factor influencing marketing students' decision to major in marketing. At many Australasian institutions, introductory marketing is a core subject that all business majors have to complete as part of their undergraduate degree. The nonmarketing majors were known to choose their business major early in their undergraduate degree years compared with marketing majors (LaBarbera and Simonoff 1999; Newell, Titus, and West 1996). This provides an opportunity for marketing educators to influence nonmarketing students through introductory marketing units. Academic staff involved in teaching and designing introductory marketing units may need to make the units more attractive and interesting to students, perhaps embedding information relative to some of the factors identified in this study (e.g., Utility of Marketing Knowledge). Marketing educators could also highlight to students that marketing concepts are *practical* and applicable in specific functional job roles as well as in management positions. Since Course Variety and Variety of Career Prospects are relevant factors in choice of major, it would be useful to provide information to students, preferably in the introductory marketing units, on the wide range of careers available in the marketing discipline and to carefully consider the breadth of the portfolio of marketing units offered in their school.

Reputation of the academics in the school also influences students' decision to choose a marketing major. The implications for the school would be more emphasis on measures such as communicating the quality of the academic staff to students by providing information about research publications and qualifications of academic staff on school Web pages and in publications. Our results support Schibrowsky, Peltier, and Boyt's (2002) call to marketing schools to "provide a value-added education" (p. 44). The findings of the present study suggest that the adoption of many of Schibrowsky, Peltier, and Boyt's excellent recommendations regarding faculty-related, student-related, and curriculum-related issues would be beneficial to contemporary marketing schools.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

This study employed a single university sample from both New Zealand and Australia. The findings may not be widely generalizable to other marketing schools, and care should be

taken when generalizing the results to other universities and countries. Since the present study investigated a unique/different choice situation where marketing majors had the option to select more than one major, care should also be taken not to generalize the results to other choice situations. Although a large number of earlier studies supported the factors identified here, a broader sampling base could provide greater confidence in the results. Another limitation is that this was a cross-sectional study. Future studies could benefit from longitudinal projects. Since the selection of a marketing major is supposed to be a dynamic process, it would be useful to observe changes in the students' preferences for the major over time.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In this study, we focused on the reasons behind marketing majors' decision to select marketing as a major. Researchers can obtain an improved understanding of students' relative preference for career and non-career-related factors using a trade-off approach (e.g., conjoint analysis) similar to Floyd and Gordan's (1998) study. Future studies could compare the importance of the school, faculty, and university-level factors on students' decision to select marketing as a major. This would help educators understand the relative importance of the factors at various levels. This, in turn, would help them in their marketing and course design-related decisions.

APPENDIX List of Variables

X ₁	I was impressed by the introductory course I took in marketing.
X ₂	I like the subject area of marketing.
X ₃	Marketing graduates have a good chance of getting well-paid jobs.
X ₄	It is easy to combine marketing with my other business major.
X ₅	The marketing department has distinguished lecturers.
X ₆	Knowledge in the marketing area would be useful to run a business.
X ₇	Courses offered by the marketing department cover the marketing function comprehensively.
X ₈	Marketing is my favorite subject.
X ₉	Lecturing style in the introductory marketing course impressed me.
X ₁₀	I enjoyed the lectures given by the marketing faculty.
X ₁₁	It is easy to accommodate marketing with my other business major.
X ₁₂	I can practice the concepts that I learn from marketing in my future job.
X ₁₃	With a marketing major, it would be useful to run any type of business.
X ₁₄	The marketing department offers a variety of courses.
X ₁₅	It enables me to get jobs in a wide range of industries.

X ₁₆	Staff members in the marketing department have experience in the industry.
X ₁₇	It gives me knowledge that I can apply in real life.
X ₁₈	It gives me knowledge required for starting any business.
X ₁₉	It closely matches with my other business major.
X ₂₀	The variety of courses offered by the marketing department are helpful in getting a better understanding of business.
X ₂₁	Marketing knowledge would be helpful in running a business.
X ₂₂	A marketing degree can get me "interesting" jobs.
X ₂₃	It is an interesting area.
X ₂₄	The introductory course I took in marketing generated interest in me.
X ₂₅	It fits nicely with my other major.
X ₂₆	Through the courses offered by the marketing department, there is scope for developing a good understanding of the main areas of marketing.
X ₂₇	Staff members in the marketing department are very helpful to students.
X ₂₈	I would be eligible for a variety of jobs.

NOTES

1. Our thanks to one of the three anonymous reviewers who indicated that the decision situation facing U.S. marketing students is different from that of the Australasian students.

2. We also thank one of the three anonymous reviewers who raised this issue of whether the reasons behind selection of marketing major could be culture specific.

3. Factor analysis requires a minimum of 5 observations for each variable included in the study (Hair et al. 1998). Thus, a minimum of 140 observations were required for the purpose of data analysis, as 28 variables were included in the survey instrument.

4. When the goal is to obtain theoretically meaningful constructs, oblique rotation is considered to be appropriate (Hair et al. 1998). There was no reason for us to assume that the factors emerging would be uncorrelated with each other, hence an oblique (Promax) rotation was adopted. The results supported our decision to use Promax rotation. The average correlation among the identified factors for both the samples was substantial (Australia 0.3; New Zealand 0.31).

5. The term *faculty* is used here as a synonym for a *group of schools*. The term *school* is used as a synonym for a *department*, where the functioning of groups of academics is managed.

6. The coefficient of congruence measures the pattern and magnitude of similarity between the factors being compared, with values closer to 1.0 indicating greater similarity (Rummel 1970, p. 461).

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