

Shifting the challenge to students in an International Marketing class: The value of having students write teaching cases

Véronique Boulocher-Passet, Senior Lecturer in Marketing, University of Brighton Business School
Mithras House, Lewes Road, BN2 4AT, Brighton, U.K.
Email: V.Boulocher-Passet@brighton.ac.uk

Abstract:

In this paper, the author describes an experience of assigning Masters students' in an international marketing class with the writing of a teaching case study and its pedagogical note. The written case was the major deliverable of the term, valued at 75% of the students' grade. The author sought student insights into the learning benefits they derived from this assignment through a reflective report. Students' evaluation of the complementary use of teaching case studies, both as a traditional method of analysis in class and as writing one for an assignment, was also assessed. Results show that having students write teaching cases is of great value to students themselves. Students identified as benefits of this experience many of the learning benefits already underlined in the literature on student-written cases. Non-previously identified benefits of writing a teaching case study came also from analysis. Students highlighted how writing a teaching note eased and strengthened their understanding of international marketing concepts, challenged them, provided originality and novelty as well as gave them confidence. They finally emphasized how in class discussion of various teaching case studies was complementary to writing their own teaching case study.

In this paper, the author describes an experience of assigning Masters students' in an international marketing class with the writing of a teaching case study and its pedagogical note. The written case was the major deliverable of the term, valued at 75% of the students' grade. The purpose of this study was to address the following questions: What were student perceptions of teaching case study assignment as a learning activity? To which degree did students believe writing a teaching case study contributed to their learning? Did writing this case study and teaching note help student better understand theory and concepts of international marketing? Did the method enhance student engagement? How does it compare with traditional case study method in terms of learning benefits? The author sought student insights into the learning benefits they derived from this assignment. Students' evaluation of the complementary use of teaching case studies, both as a traditional method of analysis in class and as writing one for an assignment, was also assessed.

Although various aspects of the assignment may have been tried before by other academics, literature review shows no other research on such a tool being used in an international marketing class parallel to a traditional teaching approach using case study analysis method, thus acknowledging for the innovative aspect of this learning experiment. The article is divided into four sections. First, we briefly review what is involved in student case writing and acknowledge the merits of the few experiences using student self-developed cases as described in the literature; second, we describe the project's background, outline the design of the module and the overall process of guiding students through the assignment, present the study's methodology, and how we assessed student learning benefits. The third section reports data analysis from a reflective report on learning requested of all students after the module. The fourth section reports on students' perception of the complementary use of teaching case studies within the module. The final section contains discussion and conclusions.

Going beyond traditional case study method with student-generated cases: a literature review

Traditional case study method

The case method has endured as an effective pedagogical tool in business education for more than a century (Ashamalla & Crocitto, 2001). In business studies, a case describes an actual situation and involves a decision, a challenge, an opportunity, a problem, or an issue faced by a person or people in an organization. Cases require the reader to "step into the shoes" of the key person in the case and to make a decision, solve a problem, analyze a process, or confront a situation (Leenders et al., 2001). Traditional case teaching, because of its focus on real-world problems and critical reasoning, is unquestionably valuable to business teaching for bridging class and company. One major benefit of case analysis is its capacity to heighten the relevance of theoretical material (Ashamalla & Crocitto, 2001) because conceptual material has to be made practical, and practical situations have to generate new conceptual insights (Ross et al., 2008). Business cases can be seen as powerful and memorable illustrations of common business problems, and useful to demonstrate how management theories can help analytically

disentangle the causes of complex business phenomena and provide general recommendations (Foster & Carboni, 2009). Case analysis is also helpful in developing decision-making skills because cases often require the generation and evaluation of alternative courses of action (Gilmore & Schall, 1996). More generally, the strengths of using the case method in the classroom are widely accepted as the development of problem-solving (analytical and critical-thinking) skills, the addition of realism to theory application that enhances students' involvement, the development of interpersonal and communication skills and the encouragement of greater student responsibility for learning (Henson et al., 2003). Specifically, the case method may be used to:

- gain illustration of particular points, issues or managerial principles;
- provide managers with a neutral situation in which they are free to explore problems (because they are not their own);
- relate theory to practice;
- confront the complexities of specific situations;
- develop analysis and synthesis;
- develop self-analysis, attitudes, confidence, responsibility;
- develop interpersonal skills, communication and listening; and
- develop judgment and wisdom and enliven teaching. (Jennings, 2002, p. 656).

A method that has limits

However, the case method does have its drawbacks. Using the case study method in class presents many challenges for teachers, among which Henson et al. (2003) cite such difficulties as becoming a facilitator rather than the “provider of answers,” accepting a higher level of flexibility in the classroom, managing conflict, and using class time “inefficiently” are some of the topics frequently discussed in training sessions for case teachers. On student’s side, most pedagogical case-study methods used today are published cases (Forman, 2006), many of whom feature large companies or situations that students may find difficult to envision encountering in their future careers (Eschenfelder, 2011). Also, case studies are often unlike the business world in that the essential facts are preassembled and the reasonable alternative courses of action are often implied (Kennedy et al., 2001). Greiner et al. (2003, p. 405) found that “today’s case teaching approach appears to be heavily deductive, with instructors guiding students, sometimes unintentionally, to ‘answers’ that confirm the validity of concepts being taught” instead of serving as an open-ended discussion of problems and solutions. For marketing faculty using case studies in class, volatile environments create challenges to incorporate case studies in the classroom, that are relevant, interesting, and at the same time, account for the velocity of the changing marketing environment (Forman, 2006). The case method also limits students to the role of analyst (Swiercz, 2003), where they are passive observers responding to facts and events as reported by a distant third party (Bailey et al, 2005). Another drawback is therefore the inadequate engagement of some students in the case study process when it is used as the basis for class discussion (Miner, 1985). Some wonder whether any learning takes place after class discussion, especially considering the large amount of time that may have been devoted to analyzing a case (Ashamalla & Crocitto, 2001). The overly aggressive student who tries to dominate the

discussion, the shy student who is reluctant to contribute in front of the class, and the unprepared student who cannot contribute to the discussion are also identified as three challenges of using the case method (Frey & Keyes, 1985). Moreover, the effectiveness of the case analysis may be diminished if a particular case is perceived as irrelevant or uninteresting to the learner (Ashamalla & Crocitto, 2001). Marketing students tend to prefer active, applied, real-world pedagogies. Bridges (1999) examined preferences among marketing research students, finding that hands-on, interactive, real-world learning activities, such as live cases, were preferred.

Student-developed case study method

Several researchers have explored techniques to extend the traditional use of published cases further and enhance its impact on students. Among them, Moberg (2006) encouraged students to capture stories from practitioners they know, Henson et al. (2003) developed web-based cases for use in marketing courses. Indeed, an emerging area of interest and research has recently focused on students as case researchers and case writers. Some researchers encourage having students write case studies as an adjunct to reading and analyzing published cases (Bailey et al., 2005; Forman, 2006; Vega, 2010). In contrast with published case studies, the student-developed case study method can draw on students' own lived experiences. Student-written cases are powerful pedagogical tools that can lead to improved understanding of business situations, more informed analysis, emphasis on reflection, and clearer expository writing, all of which are critical skills for business students (Vega, 2010). Writing a teaching case study challenges the writer: clear communication, creativity, and research skills, among others, must be developed. It can be considered a pedagogy that fully engages students in their education and enlists their mind and talent (Bailey et al., 2005), and makes students learn by assuming the role of a teacher (Ross et al., 2008). Students are moved from the comfort of a traditional teacher-centered received education to an active, engaged experience (Kennedy et al., 2001), a more active learning experience that requires students to assume a variety of different roles — researcher, interviewer, writer — some of which can be quite new to students (Swiercz, 2003). Some universities even encourage faculty and graduate student collaborations in the preparation and publication of cases, often as a major component of the academic program, for example, the Harvard Business School or Darden School at the University of Virginia (Ross et al., 2008). Research that has been published in the field, however, is scarce and describes mainly experiences of using live cases (Forman, 2006; Vega, 2010) or student life/workplace experience (Ashamalla & Crocitto, 2001; Bailey et al., 2005; Foster & Carboni, 2009) as a basis for case writing.

As table 1 demonstrates, most publications in the field focused on cases generated by groups of students, not individuals, and did not include any teaching note or analysis of the case study. Only two studies (Henson et al., 2003; Forman, 2006) on student-generated cases related to marketing courses, and none to an international marketing class. Only one experience (Ross et al., 2008) included the writing of a teaching note to accompany the student-generated case study. Most identified experiences of having students write a case study did therefore not completely shift the challenge to students. To our knowledge, ours is therefore the first research to present a formal framework to include writing by the students of an individual teaching case study and its teaching note

within an international marketing module, thus placing students “into the shoes” of an instructor.

Table 1 – Different research designs on student-generated cases

Source	Subject involved	Students' level	Based upon	Individual or group assignment ?	Included Teaching Note ?
Ashamalla & Crocitto (2001)	Principles of Management	Undergraduate	Life/work experience	Individual	No
Henson et al. (2003)	Strategic Marketing	MBA	Firm assigned by teacher	Group	No
Bailey et al. (2005)	Human Resources Management	Undergraduate	Life/work experience	Group	No
Forman (2006)	Introduction to Marketing	MBA	Firm supplied by teacher	Group	No
Laditka & Houck (2006)	Business Ethics	Graduate	Life/work experience	Individual	No
Ross et al. (2008)	Strategic Management	Undergraduate	Self identified company	Group	Yes
Foster & Carboni (2009)	Leadership	MBA	Life/work experience	Individual	No
Vega (2010)	Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management	Undergraduate	Firm supplied by teacher	Group	No

Research in the field indicates that student-written cases approach is a rich pedagogical tool to reach diverse learning objectives. It benefits to teachers by providing dynamic, timely case material with wide-ranging information that add realism in the classroom at little or no monetary outlay (Henson et al., 2003). Table 2 summarizes its numerous benefits for students, as described in the literature. Those relate to the nature of experience that was observed. For example, only cases written by teams of students helped develop communications skills. No such skill was cited as a benefit when the case was written individually.

Table 2 – The benefits to students of student-written cases approach

STUDENT-WRITTEN CASES APPROACH...	LITERATURE
Bridges the gap between theory and practice	– Ashamalla & Crocitto (2001) – Bailey et al. (2005) – Vega (2010)
Develops students’ research skills	– Henson et al (2003) – Forman (2006) – Vega (2010)
Develops students’ critical thinking skills	– Henson et al (2003) – Bailey et al. (2005) – Forman (2006)
Develops students’ problem-solving skills	– Henson et al (2003) – Forman (2006)
Develops students’ communication skills, writing and/or oral	– Henson et al (2003) – Bailey et al. (2005) – Forman (2006) – Vega (2010)
Develops students’ interpersonal skills (when used in teams)	– Henson et al (2003) – Vega (2010)
Develops and/or strengthens students’ synthesis and analysis abilities	– Henson et al (2003)
Provides a more active student-centered learning environment	– Henson et al (2003) – Laditka & Houck (2006) – Ross et al. (2008)
Deepens the learning experience	– Ashamalla & Crocitto (2001) – Ross et al. (2008)
Makes learning last longer	– Ashamalla & Crocitto (2001)
Increases students’ interest, motivation and correlated involvement	– Ashamalla & Crocitto (2001) – Vega (2010)
Fosters students’ creativity and original thinking	– Bailey et al. (2005) – Forman (2006) – Vega (2010)
Enhances students’ tolerance for ambiguity	– Bailey et al. (2005) – Vega (2010)
Enhances students’ responsibility	– Henson et al (2003)
Is rewarding	– Ross et al. (2008)
Helps students develop their personal and professional networks (useful for future interviews and professional interactions)	– Forman (2006) – Vega (2010)

Given all those benefits acknowledged in marketing as well as other business subjects, the author aimed to test this student-written cases approach in an international marketing class at Masters' level, by assigning the writing of an individual teaching case study and its companion teaching note as the major deliverable of the term. The first objective was to identify the learning benefits for students of such an approach, and compare them with the benefits as identified within the literature so far. The second objective was to compare this approach with more standard case study teaching and discuss the differences in learning benefits. Both methods were therefore included in the module. The remainder of the article describes not only how the experience happened in the module, but also the overall process of guiding students through the assignment as well as the methods and results of a research into the learning benefits students experienced in writing a teaching case study and its teaching note compared to use of traditional case study method in class.

Introducing student-written cases in an international marketing class

Context overview

The experiment took place in the Global/International Marketing Module taught by the author within the Msc in Marketing course of a British University. This module was a compulsory 20 credits module for students who wished to graduate within the International Marketing Pathway, and could also be chosen as an optional module by students following other pathways. The class each year contained 12 to 20 students mixing different nationalities and cultures. Objectives of the module were to develop a thorough understanding of international marketing theory and its key concepts, appreciate its complexities, develop understanding of possible strategies and plans for a mix of international and global economies. Announced learning outcomes for the module were ability to:

- Recognize and critically apply the internal and external factors determining and influencing international marketing strategies,
- Distinguish between the different country, industry, market and company size characteristics and assess their impact on global marketing strategies,
- Recognize the critical importance of alternative cultures, attitudes and cognitive processes,
- Utilize and apply an analytical and critical perspective,
- Apply, with rigour, theoretical constructs, frameworks and knowledge to practice and understand how practice informs theory.

Module was weekly taught for 3 hours during 10 weeks and different themes studied within each session, which started with a presentation of main theories and concepts accompanied by lots of examples from practice. Second half of the session was dedicated each time to discussion on one case study using traditional case study method. Two sessions towards the end of the module were entirely devoted to accompany individual work on writing teaching case studies (see table 3).

The teaching case study assignment

Assignment brief that was used for the module is shown in Appendix A. The individual written teaching case study was the major deliverable of the term, valued at 75% of the students' grade. Making this assignment an individual one was preferred by the instructor to avoid team-related pitfalls such as tourism and free riding behaviours. Assignment consisted also of a group case study presentation and discussion so as to motivate students to also engage with traditional case study method, and a reflective report so as to collect valuable feedback from students on the experience.

Table 3 – International Marketing module outline

Session 1 - The decision to internationalise
Session 2 - Deciding which markets to enter
Session 3 - International markets entry strategies
Session 4 - Group case study presentations
Session 5 - Product decisions in an international context
Session 6 - Pricing decisions in an international context
Session 7 - Individual work on writing teaching case study
Session 8 - Distribution decisions in an international context
Session 9 - Communication decisions in an international context
Session 10 - Individual work on writing teaching case study

The individual case-study assignment was reviewed in detail during the first class session of the term. The instructor provided general guidelines about what a teaching case study is, how it differs from a research case study, how to write one, what it includes, provided also a document to refer to (see Appendix B), and made available to students numerous different sorts of teaching case studies they could examine, as well as the SWIF Learning guide by Swiercz (2003). When possible, the teaching note was also provided. Students were required to submit a brief description of their case study to the instructor by the third week of the term. Students could send their questions via e-mail whenever they had some and/or needed guidance. To succeed, students had to forge conceptual links between their teaching note and their case narrative.

Method and design of the research

The research conducted was exploratory and qualitative in nature. In order to evaluate the benefits of the experience, the author captured students' thoughts on the whole module through a 1500 words reflective report they had to write at the end of the module and submit one week after submitting their teaching case study. The whole population of module participants submitted a reflective report for two consecutive years, the experience having been tested first in 2014 with great success and therefore renewed within the same module in 2015. All reports were analysed. 17 reflective reports were collected in 2014 and 13 in 2015. Table 4 presents the characteristics of the population.

Table 4 – Characteristics of study population

	Cohorts		TOTAL
	2014	2015	
GENDER			
- Male	5	5	10
- Female	12	8	20
- TOTAL	17	13	30
CONTINENTAL ORIGIN			
- European	4	8	12
- Asian	11	5	16
- American	2	0	2
- TOTAL	17	13	30

What were student perceptions of teaching case study assignment as a learning activity? To which degree did students believe writing a teaching case study contributed to their learning? Did writing this case study and teaching note help student better understand theory and concepts of international marketing? Did the method enhance student engagement? How did it compare with traditional case study method in terms of learning outcomes? Those were the questions we were looking answers to in the reflective reports. We wondered whether the personal challenges and rewards of case study writing we experienced as faculty could be experienced as well by students in an international marketing class and if case study writing could be developed into an effective pedagogical tool to enhance students' learning.

In order to analyse the reflective reports written by students, the author used qualitative content analysis of those narratives by classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represented similar meanings (Weber, 1990). In order to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study, the reports were read through several times to obtain a sense of the whole (Tesch, 1990). Using a conventional approach, each report was then considered a unit of analysis, and categories of learning outcomes of writing a teaching case were sought after within each report by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts. In this initial approach, the author avoided using preconceived categories, allowing categories to flow from the data and new insights to emerge. Knowledge generated from the content analysis was based on participants' unique perspectives and grounded in the actual data (Miles & Huberman, 1994), with the aim to identify and categorise all learning outcomes as experienced by the students. Because prior research about learning benefits of student-generated cases existed, the author used as a second step of the analysis a more directed approach to content analysis, so as to validate or extend the list of benefits drawn from existing literature. All highlighted passages were categorized using the within literature predetermined categories. Any text on learning benefits of writing a teaching case study that could not be categorized with this initial category scheme was included in a new category.

Students' reactions and learning experience: the benefits of writing a teaching case study

Students in their reflective reports underlined many different benefits of writing a teaching case study as an assignment. Many of those benefits corresponded to some benefits identified in other experiences related within literature. They however also revealed other benefits of the experience that may be related to the different approach as used by the author in this international marketing module. Presentation of the findings hereafter includes many quotations in the words of the students.

Identified benefits of writing a teaching case study that support literature

Our students, in their reflective reports, acknowledged most of the benefits of having students write their own cases as identified by other researchers. We present those benefits from most cited to least cited and illustrate them with passages from the reports. For ethical reasons, names have been removed.

→ *Increases students' interest, motivation and involvement.*

This is the main benefit underlined by students in their reflective reports. Nearly all students expanded on how writing a teaching case study motivated them a lot. Some related it to the fact that the method reflected a real-life approach:

“My favourite pieces of work are those, which take a more real-life approach, allowing me to apply the theoretical knowledge to realistic scenarios. I find that this not only motivates and interests me but also encourages me to study and research more into the subject. I found this teaching method to be very effective, the only other method that would match this would be a live case”

“Case studies are close to our life, it means I have more motivation”

This was an outcome of other researches as seen in the literature review. However, if being able to choose their own topic of case study was not identified within other studies as a benefit of student-written cases, it was the first reason our students underlined to justify their interest and involvement in the assignment, with such comments as:

“Writing the case study was a pleasure for me as the company I had chosen was really something that interested me”

“The reason why I felt more involved in the project I was supposed to develop myself is that I was able to freely choose what I would want to write my case study about (...) The company I chose comes from my native country and I have used their products for a number of years (...) Picking my own subject was engaging and I was very interested in broadening my knowledge in regards to this particular company”

Interestingly enough, the author assessed that out of 30 students involved in the research, 17 students submitted a case study on a company from their own country looking to expand internationally or on an international company entering their own country; 7

students chose a company and/or activity sector they were very interested in for their future work; only 6 students had no such rationale for choosing their case study. Flexibility in the choice of topic is therefore an important factor to increase students' involvement in the task. Time they dedicated to the assignment clearly witnessed their level of motivation:

“Because I was actually involved in the writing of the case, I learned more and spent more time analysing the company and the issues at hand”

“Searching for information for the case study was an involving investigation (...) this method is more time requiring than other”

→ *Deepens the learning experience.*

Compiling the case study also helped students reinforce concepts previously learned in the module. More than half the students wrote about how writing a teaching case study consolidated their learning:

“Case study writing helped me have a long understanding and memorising of the adaptation/standardisation debate regarding marcoms in international context. It strengthened my learning process and long-term memory with a real-life example of the theory”

“This self-writing method helps students deepen their memory”

They compared the experience with other types of learning experiences they already had had to underline this deeper reflection:

“Writing a case study required me to think deeper and more logically (...) compared with just reading books, it seems not that abstract, more practical, student can get a deeper impression (...) Through the teaching case writing process, it is same as kind of revising”

Among those experiences, case studies used traditionally to discuss in class were mentioned:

“You get deeper understanding writing a teaching case than discussing case studies in class, difference is the attention point, you pay greater attention when you write the case study (...) student-developed case is a deep learning method, not a surface learning like case discussions, where I would just read the case, read the questions then scan and skim the article”

as well as academic essays:

“I personally believe it was more efficient in consolidating the in-class learning than other academic-orientated assignments. (...) Writing the teaching case study was more efficient in assimilating all concepts than academic essays, this is especially due to the fact that there is a practical element to it”

→ *Bridges the gap between theory and practice.*

Half the students spontaneously tackled this benefit of having written a teaching case study, with such comments as:

“Developing case studies is a good way to connect the theory and the practice”

“Student-developed cases are better than other methods to connect theories and practice”

Students valued the focus on practical and illustrative aspect of a real company that writing a teaching case study brought them:

“The case study writing assignment gave me the opportunity to connect theories and principles learnt in class (such as Hall’s communication context and Hofstede’s cultural variables) with a concrete case. Therefore the practicalities of such theories have been further enlightened through the research of how Nestle’s brand Kit Kat applied such concepts in real practice”

making *“this assignment the perfect mixture of theory and practice-oriented work”*.

If most students saw writing case study as a good pedagogical tool to help understand theory more easily:

“It made it easier to understand how certain concepts work”

one student on the contrary saw it as a good tool to make theory more difficult and realistic:

“When you look at the theory everything seems easy to understand and even obvious however, in the real life all that list of factors you need to consider when planning a marketing strategy turn to be more complex as unexpected variables come up, and some of them are controllable however others not, and you must adapt your strategy to that context, if you want to success”

→ *Is useful for future interviews and professional development.*

Many students stated in their reflective reports that having developed a teaching case study was valuable for their future career. First and foremost, they acquired skills needed in the business world:

“A self-developing case study gives me a chance to put myself as a status of a teacher (...) it will be very helpful for my future career if I work as a marketer or teacher (...) the knowledge and practical skills that I learned from this course will benefit my whole life”

“From a personal perspective, the two theories (Hofstede and Hall) will help me to become a better research manager dealing with international colleagues”

This, they think, prepared them for future work:

“With a scenario close to what I may encounter in my future work, case study writing will help me work through the difficulty and work out sensible and practicable solutions (...) drawing conclusions informed me and prepared me for my future experience (...) case study writing offered me the opportunity to explore the real business world”

“I saw this quasi-field based research as good preparation to my future work since it enabled me to follow the development of an international marketing strategy and be aware of its different actors” (Astrid)

→ *Develops and/or strengthens students’ skills.*

Students, in the process of writing a teaching case study, had the opportunity to develop their research abilities more, as they attested in their reflective reports:

“I was able to utilise several research methods to compile the teaching note and the teaching case”

“Writing this case study gave me great opportunity to do market research and some ground work”

These research skills they viewed as particularly valuable for their future assignments:

“I believe this case study writing encouraged me on how to do a research for a specific topic or company by gathering data and information and this could prove crucial because it might help better on how to do my future assignments and also my dissertation”

Students also developed their analysis and synthesis skills:

“This kind of case study writing activated me to practice to analyse information, how I will have to do in real life in the future, it added to my analyzing skills”

“Writing the teaching note has improved my skill to come straight to point and to only focus on important aspects. Due to the word limit, I was forced to cut down my answers to the questions hence only including the most important facts and arguments. I believe that this is quite important to practice since once I will start working, I will have to use this skill in order to bring forward my ideas in a concise, but also comprehensive manner”

A few students only mentioned how writing a teaching case study helped them develop their critical thinking abilities:

“During the case study writing process, I had to think about which strategies were adopted by the company, why they took that strategy, how they applied that strategy in the real business, and analysed the results with critical thinking”

“Associating those different product characteristics specific to the Japanese market with the cultural aspects of this country has allowed me to think critically by making connections between those two aspects to establish the bigger picture”

Since students did not have to present their case study orally, the assignment only enabled them to strengthen their writing communication skills, as one of them underlined in his reflective report:

“By working on this assignment, I have developed my writing skills since I had to prepare a case study which was expected to be academic and understandable at the same time. Thus I gained valuable experiences in an attempt to craft a well-balanced case study”

→ *Makes the learning experience last longer.*

As identified in the literature review, having students write a case study had the benefit of making their learning experience last longer. Our students shared this viewpoint and gave several reasons why:

“Writing a case study is a very intensive and enduring thought process, making it a longer lasting learning experience compared to, for example, listening to a lecture. In particular the upcoming challenges while defining the case study and finding a way to deal with them leaves a sticking learning experience”

“I think that my learning achieved by doing this assignment will last longer compared to others, since I do believe in learning by doing. If someone was to ask me how companies could analyze prospective foreign markets to enter, I am convinced that I can give him/her a comprehensive answer, even in a few years from now”

Most students linked this to their involvement and the effort they made:

“I am sure this task will have a long lasting impact on my learning progress, probably longer than other teaching methods. As soon as you are asked to create something step-by-step by yourself you get more involved in the whole process and put more effort in the implementation of the task and therefore the outcomes are better and the impact from the task on your learning progress is larger”

“The results will definitely be longer lasting considering a lot of time and effort needs to be put into completing such a task”

→ *Fosters students’ creativity and original thinking.*

Some students also valued this benefit, as per statements within their reflective reports:

“I preferred writing the case study because it allowed a greater use of creativity (...) it was a chance to use not only concept but also creativity and fantasy coherently with the marketing content”

According to them, they were forced to develop original thinking due to the innovative type of task writing a case study is, compared to other assignments they are given:

“Writing this case study helped me to adapt to a new task and forced me to create a strategy for solving it”

“I had to think more from a teacher’s point of view, and this opened my mind to new ideas and a greater understanding of the marketing module (...) It forced me to think outside of the box and try a new writing style”

→ *Is a rewarding experience.*

Writing a teaching case study made also one student spontaneously proud of himself:

“Once you managed to put the pieces together, the finished case study is something you can look back on and be proud of”

Other benefits identified that enrich the literature

Our students also identified in their reflective reports other benefits they perceived of writing a teaching case study, that were not apparent in the literature on this topic as developed by other researchers.

→ *Eases and strengthens understanding of concepts.*

Many students underlined in their reflective reports how the writing of a teaching case study helped them better understand international marketing and its concepts generally:

“My understanding of international marketing concepts has strongly increased when I had to apply my knowledge to a company”

“Through case study writing assignment I understood international marketing concepts better than before”

Some students were specific about the concepts they had gained more understanding about:

“From the case study writing process, I have learned deeply about entry modes’ decisions and how those can affect the degree of a company’s control of marketing programme”

“I built the questions related to the international market choice and new entry strategy, so I myself could also get deeper knowledge about these issues when answering those questions. It could be considered as learning the same new knowledge twice”

Some others mentioned how they had gained better knowledge of some particular foreign markets and cultures:

“The understanding I gained of the Japanese market and of cultural adaptations will help me in strategic and international thinking. It was also interesting for my personal

learning and interest to discover the Japanese market under a new light and gain a deeper understanding of what constitutes such a different culture from own”

“Writing my own case study has helped me gaining more in-depth insight of the Chinese consumer electronics industry as well as a comparative overview of the US-American industry from an international perspective”

Students were unanimous to underline that this result was achieved thanks to the writing of the pedagogical notes to accompany the teaching case study:

“Writing a teaching note helped me understand better about international marketing because when I wrote it, I had to think of the objectives or purpose of the case study”

“More than the case study the teaching note helped me to understand international marketing concepts, because in order to ask questions to the students I had to apply the concepts to my specific situation/decision to define the questions and the desired answers”

Some underlined how writing the teaching note encouraged them to read more:

“Writing the teaching note allowed me to apply concepts learnt in class from my own contemplation, and also aided my understanding of such concepts through reading more about them in academic books to ensure I have a variety of aspects covered”

“Teaching note increased my understanding of international marketing concepts. Before I designed teaching note, I had to make sure I understood well. Therefore, I read some articles, books, and researched online”

→ *Challenges students.*

A benefit many students agreed derived from writing a teaching case study is that it challenged them, although in very different ways. Some were challenged from the start with choosing the topic and company of the case study:

“For this assignment, the most difficult for me was to choose a subject and a company. They are so many interesting marketing strategy cases and so many companies that I find it hard to make a decision”

“Concerning the case study writing process I have to say that I found it quite difficult to find a company and a corresponding theme that I was really interested in. At first, I had a few companies in my mind but after researching I had some difficulties to decide which company and theme to choose”

Others were challenged to understand the nature and/or structure of a teaching case study:

“I remember the first day when the teacher gave us the list of the assignments. I was in shock because I did have no idea what it could be. (...) It was completely new for me, and this unfamiliarity writing in this style has made the process an authentic challenge”

“Write a self-developing case study brought a great challenge for me (...) the process of it is challenging and difficult, I had to explore and understand the structure of a case study to understand how to develop a clear context”

Because students were not familiar with the method, writing a teaching case study was a real challenge for them:

“The core thoughts and the framework of my teaching case appeared more concise and clear as writing a teaching note. The first reason was mostly because I was unfamiliar with the method”

Writing the teaching note was also particularly difficult for some students:

“Teaching note was probably the hardest part of the assignment, finding the questions was the hardest part (...) it was really hard to find questions that were not too easy or difficult but that could be answered with the help of the case study”

Finally, searching for data constituted a main challenge for some:

“However, it was a challenge when I chose to write about an event that had just happened since there were very few amount of secondary information and it was not easy to get primary information from the company. (...) Because the company had recently entered the market, there was not any significant event and business figure”

→ *Provides originality and novelty.*

Students had never had the opportunity in their experience as learners to write a teaching case study before and found this type of assignment different, quite original and novel compared to the assignments they were used to:

“I also really like that the assignment on this module is different from other assignments. (...) Student-developed cases are a good alternative to common assignments because it is something different and I assume that most students have not yet written their own case study”

“It was the first time that I had an assignment about a case study creation. I think this kind of assignment is very interesting in the way that students need to have a different point of view; student become the teacher”

Novelty even brought some excitement in the task for some:

“Honestly speaking, in the beginning I was a bit skeptical regarding the case study assignment. This was mainly due to the reason that I have never engaged in such a task before. However, looking back now I have to say that it was a challenging, but at the same time exciting type of assignment”

→ *Brings confidence.*

Another benefit of writing a teaching case study that was not apparent with other types of student-written cases as described in the literature is that it gave more confidence to some

students. For some, they gained more confidence in their acquired knowledge:

“I believe this assignment made me quite confident with my knowledge on the topic in comparison with what I knew before”

“In the writing process, I had to do a number of research that led me to a wide range of specialist knowledge, especially in the Vietnamese coffee industry”

Others gained some more confidence in their abilities to use their knowledge within a job context:

“Writing the teaching case study has prepared me in way that if I get involved in international marketing during my career, I will approach the subject with more confidence”

“In my opinion, it allowed students to analyze the problem as the role of the worker, which meant students would be able to exercise the ability to work in the future”

Finally, some Chinese students were more confident than with group work and group discussions, and so appreciated the exercise more:

“Compared with class discussion, I like teaching case study writing more. Since I felt more relax when I was alone. This helped me get more confidence and gave me enough time to gather and organise my thoughts as well as information”

“When I was writing my personal case study, it made me feel more comfortable to apply the knowledge which was learned in the class into my writing without the burden to discuss with others (...) with case discussions, it is less likely I answer the questions in class as I am more introverted, having been taught in China to listen more than engage in class”

The specific benefits of adding in class case study discussions

Many benefits of the traditional case study method as used to discuss in class that were identified by the students had also been identified as benefits of writing an individual teaching case study. Students mentioned mainly increased interest and involvement in class, a better understanding of concepts and theory through practical examples as well as increased critical thinking skills.

Two benefits that seemed specific to in class case study discussions and students did not identify when talking of the individual assignment were however underlined. First, using case studies as a basis for class discussion brought students an exchange with other students that was beneficial in many ways like stimulation, increased cross-cultural awareness and open-mindedness, or more thinking:

“As every people had their own opinion towards particularly issue, many different thoughts occurred during discussion and I found that I was easy to stimulate by the creative ideas from my peers”

“The discussions help me to extend my horizon and to be more open-minded for other perspectives or cultural approaches, which I probably would not have thought of”

Second, students mentioned how the traditional case study discussed in class encouraged them to be active participants:

“Students are invited to actively participate, by listening, reading and discussing case studies”

“These encourage learners to be active thinkers”

One interesting result of our analysis is that many students underlined in their reflective reports the complementarity of including within the same module case study discussions in class and writing a teaching case study as an assignment, that brings synergy effects:

“In my opinion the class work and individual work were complementary. The class discussions using case studies enabled to support the writing process, as the case studies were actual examples for our assignment (...) For me, one important benefit of having discussions on case studies is the opportunity to improve and think about our individual work”

Case study discussions in class helped students write their teaching case study:

“Class discussions helped me organize my ideas for writing. For instance, before I started writing, I was thinking about the purpose of the case study, the questions I should design. Through the class discussions, it allowed me to become more efficient when building my proposal. The process of writing totally linked to what I learned in class”

The link that students underlined was however unidirectional, no student mentioned how writing a case study parallel to the module running could have helped them with discussing the case studies.

Concluding comments

Our research provided insight into students' perceptions of writing a teaching case study and its teaching note as an assignment in an international marketing module. With any such research, it is difficult to discern whether those perceptions were impacted by any number of other factors such as the instructor, colleagues in the class, other portions of class curriculum, or other personal factors. Other limit of the research might be seen in the fact that reflective reports were analysed. Some might consider students would in such a situation not give any negative comments. Nonetheless narrative comments from students reflected a pedagogical approach that was greatly appreciated by students and which demonstrated some significant outcomes for improved learning about key

international marketing concepts. Results show that having students write teaching cases is a new approach to educational practice of great value to students themselves. Students identified as benefits of this experience many of the learning benefits already underlined in the literature on student-written cases. Non-previously identified benefits of writing a teaching case study came also from analysis. Students highlighted how writing a teaching note eased and strengthened their understanding of international marketing concepts, challenged them, provided originality and novelty as well as gave them confidence. The learning benefits compared to standard case study teaching method are therefore different in the way that students go deeper into analysis when writing their own case study and pedagogical note. Students did not mention as benefits of traditional case-study method any challenge or originality as they found with the assignment. If they emphasized how in class discussion of various teaching case studies was complementary to writing their own teaching case study, those two methods did not help them develop the same skills. Writing a teaching case study was more demanding in terms of outside research and analysis and a more useful professional experience. Taking the perspective of an instructor when developing the teaching note resulted in deeper understanding of the concepts. By moving the focus from the teacher to the student, the case writing assignment demanded continuous active learning, that students found rewarding. Whereas some students admitted to be less involved with standard case study method as used in class.

We would therefore like to encourage our colleagues in marketing to use this method, where students generate rather than simply receive knowledge. Our experience of using it for two years has proved very beneficial to students, although very challenging for them. Our first recommendation would be to blend within the same module standard case-study discussion with case study writing as an assignment. By analyzing various case studies, students get an insight into various types of case studies and various writing styles that helps them develop their own. Students should also be explained thoroughly what a teaching note is and examples of such notes should be provided to guide them. We would also recommend to have students choose their case study, the topic and company they wish to write about, as this proves to be very motivating for them. The freedom and flexibility in the choice of topic provides some originality and represents a real asset of the experience. Students recommended in their advice to the tutor the organisation of a short presentation in class of their individual case studies half way, saying they would value the feedback from other students. This recommendation will be included into the module next year and we also aim, as future research, to reflect on students' difficulties as viewed by faculty. Other action would be to test this method with undergraduate students.

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Appendix A

Global/International Marketing – MKM18

Assignment brief

For this module you must complete three pieces of work, two of which are being assessed:

- 1. First piece of assessment involves a 15 minutes – team oral presentation of a case study debriefing to the class (worth 25% of the mark)**

Each team will be assigned one case study among:

- Herborist, a Chinese personal care brand goes abroad
- Sarbec Cosmetics: International Expansion in India

One session will be devoted to teamwork on the case study and preparation of a 15 minutes-oral presentation to be presented in class on the following week. Each team must prepare to defend their analysis and choice of strategy.

- 2. Second piece of assessment involves the submission of an individual 3,250 – 3,750 words teaching case study (worth 75% of the mark).**

One of the following themes (all studied and discussed in class) will have to be illustrated via a concrete teaching case study:

- Theme 1:** The decision whether to internationalize
- Theme 2:** Deciding which markets to enter
- Theme 3:** Decision regarding foreign market entry mode
- Theme 4:** Product brand decisions in an international context
- Theme 5:** Pricing decisions in an international context
- Theme 6:** Distribution decisions in an international context
- Theme 7:** Communication decisions in an international context

Firstly, you are required to select one of the above themes. Secondly, select an organization of your choice and discuss how the organization has dealt with the above theme-related issues in an individual teaching case study style paper. The organization can be in any industry and can be based in any country although it must be involved in some international trade.

You are required to present a narrative of the situation and decision questions faced by the firm in a paper of no more than 2,750 words (excluding references/appendices), justifying your data with reference to the academic literature and other evidence gathered (market research). We will expect a clear, well-written and referenced case study in good English using appropriate subheadings. We would expect that the best cases will contain some primary data and therefore in selecting your theme and organization, you may want to consider contacts you have (for example, with past and current employers and via friends and family). A case ought not be written without having its educational objectives and general teaching plan clear. This is why you also need to provide a teaching note (maximum 1,000 words) that encompasses the major guidelines/answers to the questions highlighted by the case. The teaching note is indeed a separate document from the case study itself that provides an analysis of the case.

3. Third piece of work involves the submission of an individual 1500 words-formative reflective report on personal learning.

The reflective statement is a subjective and personal statement of learning. Its purpose is to help you consolidate the learning gained from the MKM18 module and reflect on the value of the module for your learning, and more specifically on the value writing a teaching case study constituted for you.

Although the reflection is not taken into account in the awarding of distinctions, it forms an important part of your formative assessment and demonstrates your ability to learn from this module.

It should be an honest reflection of your learning. Hereunder are some guiding questions you could wish to answer in your reflective report:

- What did case studies' discussions in class bring you? What did you learn from class discussion of case studies? Give examples.
- What did self-developing a case study bring you? What did you learn from case study writing assignment? Give examples.
- Did you feel less/equally/more involved in the case study writing process than in the class discussions using case studies? Explain why.
- To what degree did the case writing assignment reflect what you learned in class?
- What advice would you give to students doing this assignment next year?
- What advice would you give to the lecturer to improve this assignment next year?

Appendix B

Writing a teaching case study and its teaching note

The two major categories of cases that exist, namely teaching cases and research cases, should not be mixed-up:

- A teaching case often presents a problem for students to solve and is meant to generate class discussion and individual or group analysis.
- A research case is written for the purpose of developing and testing theory and extending concepts and does not leave the reader with a problem to solve.

A teaching business case study should be:

- A snapshot taken at a point in time, written to serve a particular teaching objective
- A narrative of a business situation as faced by a particular person in a particular organization (you become a storyteller)
- An insight on the continually evolving world of management
- A presentation of issue(s) calling for resolution and action

Different types of case studies:

- Field- or Research-Based Cases (decision oriented)
- Armchair Cases (fictional)
- Descriptive Cases (discussion oriented)

A case should assist in 4 objectives:

- Knowledge
- Analytical techniques and good habits of analysis
- A manager's perspective
- Fill a hole in a course/module on a topic of growing importance

Case study format:

- Statement of the problem (opening hook)
- Building the story (background/context)
- Conclusion (closing hook)
- Teaching note

Key elements of a teaching case study:

- The Opening Hook
- The Company Story/History
- The Industry
- The Actors
- The Situation
- Additional information
- The Closing Hook
- Appendices

Key elements of a teaching note:

- Synopsis of the case
- Scope and intended teaching objectives
- Proposed teaching questions
- Full analysis of the case (answers to questions)

After each topical area has been covered in class, students are advised to revisit in the evening their cases and establish any connections that may exist between the theoretical material covered and their narratives.