BLOGGING FOR REFLECTION: THE USE OF ONLINE JOURNALS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN REFLECTIVE LEARNING

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Reflective learning has long been studied in many disciplines. A primary way that reflective learning has been taught is through journaling. With the advent of e-learning, journaling has moved to the Web in the form of blogs. The current paper reviews the current state of journaling and blogging research with specific recommendations for marketing education. A study is presented in which 350 student blogs, representing 15,951 separate journal entries, were rated for reflective learning content. The students were also asked what form of learning they experienced when journaling. The study supported the idea that blogging is a useful tool in marketing education.

Marketing educators are often faced with the challenge of making the material they cover relevant to their students. Rather than seeing market behavior and interactions as something that happens "out there," marketing education should seek to help the students see themselves as part of the marketing exchange. The current paper discusses one particular e-learning tool within the context of its ability to achieve this specific educational outcome. The tool is blogging, and the desired educational outcome is reflective learning. Reflective learning is the process through which students interact with and apply what they are learning to their own life and experiences (see Kennison and Misselwitz 2002, p. 239). Blogging for reflective learning occurs when some stimulus, situation, or experience is given to a student and the student then relates them to other prior experiences, knowledge, or values. In the current paper, I discuss how blogging can help create reflective learning. The goal of the current paper is to aid marketing faculty as they evaluate blogging for its ability to achieve their specific educational goals and to provide guidelines that will help them enhance the reflective learning process.

REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

As pointed out by Pavlovich (2007), reflective learning is more the state of mind with which a student approaches the material than it is the resolution or conclusions that the student draws from having "learned" something. Thus, the ability to think deeply about the material and draw connections to what one already knows is the key to reflective learning. Since Schön published his seminal book *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön 1983), a considerable literature has emerged on the importance of developing the ability of students to engage in reflective learning (Morrison 1996). Schön (1987) has convincingly shown that in many fields, professional development is substantially improved when people develop the ability to engage in reflective learning. The ideas of Schön have even become part of a number of practitioner accreditation programs (Pee et al. 2002). The importance of reflection to marketing educators is increasingly recognized within the marketing education literature, but conceptual and empirical research on reflection is quite limited (Aitken and Deaker 2007; Carroll 2006; McInnis-Bowers, Chew, and Bowers 2010; Peltier, Hay, and Drago 2005). Helping students link course work with experience through reflection improves the students' learning by increasing their understanding of the concepts presented and their ability to apply those concepts in a wide variety of settings (Lee and Sabatino 1998).

Evidence suggests that a very good way to encourage reflection is to have students express their thoughts on what they are learning while they are learning it (Lew and Schmidt 2011). Usually this takes the form of some written assignment such as journaling. Reflective journals are defined as "written documents that students create as they think about various concepts, events, or interactions over a period of time for the purposes of gaining insights into self-awareness and learning" (Thorpe 2004, p. 328). Instructors across a variety of academic disciplines are using such writing assignments to encourage reflective learning (Dyment and O'Connell 2010; O'Connell and Dyment 2011). According to Pavlovich, Collins, and Jones (2009),

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reflective journaling requires a different set of skills than does traditional content-based learning in that journaling encourages students to tap into intelligences other than just linguistic and mathematical/logical (see Gardner 1985). Students do not focus solely on the acquisition of knowledge, but rather on the connection of the material with other life experiences and existing understanding. Reflective journals have become popular in higher education because they allow students to examine their experiences, assumptions, and beliefs about the subject matter at hand (Minott 2008). O'Connell and Dyment (2011) stated that "the literature is unequivocal in its contention that students profit from journaling" in its ability to promote creativity and critical reflection. Thus, journaling can be a very important part of a marketing education because it teaches students to be reflective learners and not just passive recipients of marketing knowledge (Cunliffe 2004; Pavlovich, Collins, and Jones 2009; Peltier, Hay, and Drago 2005).

ADVANTAGES OF ONLINE BLOGGING

With the advent of the Internet and classroom management software, reflective journaling has moved online. Consistent with Wolf (2010), I use the terms *blogs* and *online journals* interchangeably, though blogs often refer to the accumulation of multiple journal entries. Compared with paper journals, online blogs have several advantages (Dantas and Kemm 2008). One of the biggest advantages of online journaling is that it gives the instructor much greater control over the timing of the journaling. For reflection to occur, it is imperative that the timing of the reflection coincides with the presentation of the material being reflected upon. With paper-based journals, this often requires giving up class time for journaling. With online blogs, instructors can open up and close the journaling assignment to correspond with the time that the material is presented, even if it is an out-of-class assignment.

In a similar way, blogs provide a major advantage in that the entries are date-stamped. Research has shown that reflection develops better when it becomes part of a regular habit (Dyment and O'Connell 2010). In the blogging assignment in my class, I have students read five days per week and reflect on their reading. Before I had access to journaling software, I had my students bring their journals to class and I would literally date-stamp them with an ink pad. Even then, it could be as many as five days between classes, so I had no way of making sure that they were indeed journaling on five different days every week. With online journals, instructors can know exactly which days the students submitted their journals. This can be used, among other things, to make sure that the students are journaling at regular intervals.

Another advantage of online blogging versus paper journals is that the instructor can check the progress of the blogs at any point and provide feedback or make adjustments to the assignment. To check the progress of paper journals, they would need to physically be taken up and handed back. For this to happen, students needed to be informed when their journals were to be collected, the process needed to be planned in advance, and it took up class time to do so. There was also the logistical hassle of moving and storing the journals while they were being checked. It also created the problem that when the instructor has the journals in his or her office, the students do not have them in their possession and thus they cannot journal. With online journals, an instructor can log on to the classroom management software at any time and see how the assignment is progressing.

A further advantage of online blogging versus traditional journals is that the journal entries are submitted in text files rather than paper form. The digital form makes them easier to read and the computer format makes them available for the use of plagiarism prevention software. As time progresses, students are becoming more accustomed to communicating online and submitting assignments on the Internet. Of course this comes with the disadvantage that students must be near an electronic device (computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone) to submit the assignment. However, this disadvantage is becoming less of a problem, as such electronic devices are becoming more pervasive and students' comfort level with e-learning increases (see Bristow et al. 2011; Strauss and Hill 2007).

A final advantage of online blogging is the set of instructor tools that often come in the classroom management system. These differ based on the specifics of the classroom management system used, but some tools are typical of most systems. For example, blog grades can automatically be entered into the grade book, which creates easier administration for the faculty member and immediate feedback for the students. Blogs can be peer reviewed and other students can comment on their peers blogs. This, of course, is at the discretion of the instructor. There are also different levels of anonymity that can be assigned to blogs. None of these tools are available in traditional paper blogs.

With all these advantages for the instructor, it is important to consider whether or not moving journals online affects the quality of the assignment. Lucas and Fleming

(2012) conducted a study that compared online and paper journals. They found no difference in the structure, language, or level of reflection between online and hard copy journals. They noted an overall preference of students for hard copy journals. Though these preferences should be a consideration, the real concern should be the quality of the reflection that occurs.

USING BLOGS IN MARKETING EDUCATION

Very little research has been published on journaling or blogging in marketing education. Carroll (2006) presented an example of a reflective learning assignment in marketing, but it was not journaling based. Nonis, Philhours, and Hudson (2006) conducted research on journaling in a marketing class, but the purpose was to improve time management and not to engage students in reflective learning. Aitken and Deaker (2007) used journals to help students engage in reflection, but these journals were sound recordings. Given that there are many areas of marketing that are well suited for reflective learning, it would be useful to incorporate blogging assignments into marketing classes to encourage such reflective learning.

Listed below are nine common marketing classes and a sample blogging assignment for each. These can be used as examples of how blogging can get students to relate their experiences to the learning objectives of the class. Note how broad these assignments are. Students are reflecting not just on the specific course material or reading assignment; they are also reflecting on their own reactions to advertisements, the inferences they are making about marketing research questions, the dynamics of their marketing strategy group, their own problem-solving skills, and so forth.

Also, for some of these assignments, samples of good and problematic journal entries are presented (space limitations prevent samples for all of the assignments). Due to privacy concerns, these are not verbatim from actual student entries, but they do accurately represent the types of errors that I have seen in journal entries. The problem entries include the *paraphrase* (simply repeating in different words what was written in the book), the *book report* (discussing the class material without reflection), *dear diary* (talking about one's experiences without directly relating these experiences to the material), the *third person* (discussing how the material relates to a hypothetical third-person and not the student's own life), and the *news report* (providing a narrative of an experience without reflecting on what actually happened).

Principles of Marketing

Sample Assignment: Once every week, based on the material covered in class, reflect on how marketing affects your daily life and what it would be like if the aspect of marketing discussed in class or in the book was not part of the world in which we live.

Nonreflective Entry 1 (Book Report): The text states that marketing channels reduce the number of exchanges that must occur when shopping. This happens when middlemen are introduced who can deal with several suppliers for the consumer and who can also deal with many consumers for a supplier. This is done through assorting (bringing products together) and sorting out (making specific assortments available to the consumer).

Nonreflective Entry 2 (Dear Diary): I went to the store the other day and I realized how many different products there were from so many different suppliers. It made me glad I did not have to travel around to each of these firms to buy the products they produce.

Reflective Entry (Good Integration): The text states how marketing channels reduce the number of exchanges needed. I had never thought about that before I went to the store yesterday. As I was looking at my shopping cart, I realized I had 24 items in it that were manufactured by 22 different firms. These companies were probably located all over the country (if not all over the globe). There would have been no way I could have possibly done my shopping if not for the assorting and sorting out functions provided within marketing channels.

Consumer Behavior

Sample Assignment: Every week of the semester, reflect on a specific product you purchase or have purchased. Think about how the internal factors, external factors, or decision-making factors discussed in the book and/or in class that week affected your purchase and use of the product.

Marketing Research

Sample Assignment: Every week [or day], answer one question from this survey [hand a survey out to the students]. Reflect on your thought process as you are answering the survey question. Based on your reflections, discuss how you

may or may not actually be answering the question that is being asked by the researcher.

Nonreflective Entry (Third-Person): This question is a double-barreled question in that it actually asks two questions in one. As such, it is unclear to a respondent and the researcher which question is being answered. This question should be split into two questions or shortened so that it only asks one question.

Reflective Entry (Good Integration): I think this is an example of a double-barreled question. That confused me because although I think the question wanted me to express my opinion on the color of the packaging, it could have been asking me about the layout of the pictures and the text. I love the color (that shade of blue is actually my favorite color). However, I think there are real problems with how readable the text is. So what should I do? If the research is just interested in color, I would give this a seven, but if he or she is interested in the overall design, I would probably give it a two.

Advertising/Promotions

Sample Assignment: Every day, as you are watching television, surfing the Internet, reading a magazine, going through your mail, or riding in your automobile, take note of one advertisement that catches your attention. Reflect on what it is about that advertisement that caught your attention and whether it focused your attention in such a way that it made you more likely to consider buying the product. Reflect on how your response is or is not effective from the standpoint of effective promotion within the context of the material being covered in the book and/or in lecture.

Nonreflective Entry (News Report): This weekend, I took the interstate to Atlanta to visit my family. Near Tifton, I noticed a big blue billboard for a life coach. I noticed it more than any other billboard on my trip. It was blue and it had a picture of a man on it. The words "Life Coach" were written in big yellow letters. It also had a Web address. The most noticeable part of the advertisement was the picture of the man.

Reflective Entry (Good Integration): This weekend, I saw a big blue billboard with a picture of a man and the bright yellow words "Life Coach." Though I saw a lot of billboards, this one caught my eye more than any others.

I think it was the picture of the guy on the billboard that made me notice it. He seemed to be warm and friendly but still professional. I assume he is the life coach and they want me to visit his Web site that was listed on the billboard. I think a life coach would be useful. I always have questions about finances, relationships, careers, and so forth, that I need answered. However, I cannot see how this billboard would get me to visit the Web site. Did they expect me to stop my car, break out my laptop and go to it? The domain name was too long to remember. Thus, even though it caught my attention, I do not think it was effective in getting me to visit their Web site.

Professional Selling/Sales Management

Sample Assignment: Every day, read 15 minutes from a people-skills book that is commonly read by salespeople (e.g., *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie). Reflect on how you could use the skills discussed in the book to change how you are interacting with others in your life.

Nonreflective Entry 1 (Paraphrase): Dale Carnegie says that we should not argue because we never win. If we win the argument, we lose the goodwill and if we lose the argument, we lose the argument. So either way, we have lost.

Reflective Entry (Good Integration): Dale Carnegie says we should not argue because even if we win the argument, we lose the goodwill. That is what happened to me last week. My roommate and I got into an argument. I showed him exactly how he was wrong and I won the argument. Unfortunately, now we barely speak to each other. I need to figure out a way to get my point across without having it blow up into an argument.

International Marketing

Sample Assignment: Every week, reflect on a purchase you recently made and the factors that go into that purchase based on the material in the book and/or in lecture. Also, each week, select a different country. Throughout the semester, you should select countries from all major regions of the world. If you were living in that country, how might have that purchase been different? Would you have even made that purchase? Why or why not? Be sure to include in your reflections as much of the material as possible that we have covered up to that point in the semester.

Electronic Business/E-Marketing

Sample Assignment: Find an e-commerce Web site and visit it every day this week. Make sure it is for a product or service where someone like you is within the target market. Reflect on how your interaction with that Web site is changing, evolving, and maturing as you continue to visit it over time. Based on the material covered in class and in the book, try to figure out what the strategic direction of this Web site is and reflect on whether your continual interaction is bringing you closer to the response desired by this e-commerce company.

Marketing Cases

Sample Assignment: At the start of this class, you will be given a structure for solving cases in marketing. As with any structure, it can serve as a useful guideline, but how it is applied to a specific case may vary depending on the situations faced in the case. Once you have finished your analysis of the case, reflect on how useful this structure was for clarifying the issues, identifying internal/ external impact factors and constraints, developing alternatives, and selecting a course of action. Reflect on how the framework helped you understand the case and work toward a possible solution to the problem at hand. Also, reflect on why some aspects of the framework might not apply in this specific situation. The emphasis of your entry should be toward the critical evaluation of the structure based on your own personal experience in working with the case.

Marketing Strategy

Sample Assignment: Part of any group assignment is developing the ability to work within a team. Every week, reflect on the interactions of your team. Try to observe who emerges as leaders and why. Toward the start of the assignment, try to understand what potential skills each person brings to the project and as the semester progresses, reflect on whether or not this person is utilizing these skills. Reflect on the strengths and weakness of your team and how to get the diversity of skills involved to address your weaknesses. Reflect on what you are doing to help ensure that everyone in the group is actively participating. In addition, should conflict emerge in your group, pay particular attention to how that conflict emerges and how it is resolved. Your journals should not be seen as an opportunity to talk about people in the group that you like or do not like. The focus should always be on the dynamics of the group as it relates to achieving the ultimate goal of a high-quality product. Thus, always relate each entry back to how the dynamics you are observing are moving you closer to or further away from the goal of the group. Also reflect on what you might potentially do to help the group move toward a desirable end.

TRAINING STUDENTS TO BLOG

It is important to understand that simply giving students a blogging assignment does not ensure reflective learning. Substantial research has been conducted on the effectiveness of using journals (either online or paper) to achieve reflective learning. Whereas some journaling assignments have been shown to be very effective in obtaining reflective learning (e.g., Sumsion and Fleet 1996; Williams et al. 2002), others have produced disappointing results (Dyment and O'Connell 2010, 2011). Several studies have shown students' journals to be mere descriptive accounts of what they are supposed to be reflecting upon (e.g., Minott 2008; O'Connell and Dyment 2004; Richardson and Maltby 1995; Wessel and Larin 2006). The empirical evidence strongly shows that unless the instructor is very clear about what is expected from students, the assignment will not yield the desired educational outcome of reflection (O'Connell and Dyment 2011; Sharma 2010). Teaching students how to complete a journaling assignment is of critical importance if one wants them to actually engage in reflective learning (Dyment and O'Connell 2003; Moon 2006). Few students intuitively know how to engage in reflective journaling (Epp 2008; Morrison 1996; Spalding and Wilson 2002). McInnis-Bowers, Chew, and Bowers (2010) found that with training, there were substantial improvements in students' perceived ability to engage in reflection. So what does such training entail? There are four important components in effective blog training.

Technology Training

Depending on how familiar students are with the classroom management system, some training may be needed to train students on the technology of blogging. Even if students are very familiar with the technology, some direction may be needed as to the acceptable use of the technology. This includes whether attachments can be submitted and whether the HTML editor should be used.

Goal Clarity

The most important part of the online blogging assignment is the quality of the instruction on the assignment itself (Sharma 2010). This begins with framing the assignment in a way that the students see it as important (McInnis-Bowers, Chew, and Bowers 2010, Lee and Sabatino 1998). As Chandler (1997) points out, we must make sure our students do not just understand how to journal, but that they understand the why of journaling. If journals are not properly framed and students are not told why they are doing the assignment, it may be perceived as busy work or, as was cleverly described in Shor, "a pointless ritual wrapped in meaningless words" (1992, p. 83).

Form Training

Since students may have never had experience with blogging, time must be spent helping them understand what a good blog will look like. Spalding and Wilson (2002) used samples of reflective writing to help their students understand the difference between reflective journaling and simple descriptive writing. Dyment and O'Connell (2010) describe a technique that gives students progressively less structure in their assignment. Another approach is to use class discussion to train reflective learning. Sumsion and Fleet (1996) warn against providing too tight of a structure for the students to follow (e.g., a "formula" for reflective writing). They note that this can result in students submitting simplistic material that fits the formula rather than the more complex reflections that are often difficult to capture in simple instructions.

Clarity of Expectations

Students are interested in how the assignment will be graded (McGarr and Moody 2010). Instructors should be clear in their own minds what they desire from their students. This does not necessarily mean that the instructor has perfect clarity the first time the assignment is given to a class. Kaynama and Keesling (2000) and Hume (2009) discuss their experience of letting their journaling assignments evolve over time as they repeat and refine them semester after semester.

BLOGGING CONSIDERATIONS

Though training students on reflection is the most important part of an effective blogging assignment, there are other important considerations. First, it is important that the assignment is set up in such a way that it will not consume too much of the instructor's time in grading. Substantial evidence exists that shows that online courses are more time consuming for faculty than are traditional classes (Bocchi, Eastman, and Swift 2004; Eastman and Swift 2001; Freeman 2008; Palloff and Pratt 1999; Patel and Hayes 2002). This can be of great concern when bringing a blogging assignment into a class, particularly a larger class (Close, Dixit, and Malhotra 2005). My experience has been that the greater clarity I develop in terms of what I specifically want to see in a student's journal, the less time I need to spend grading it. This is another reason why it is important when setting up the blogging assignment to clearly understand what is desired from the students.

The number of journal entries required of students needs to be given thoughtful consideration. Anderson said that as the number of journal entries he required increased, his students began complaining that they were being "journaled to death" (1992, p. 302). McGarr and Moody (2010) and O'Connell and Dyment (2011) warned that overburdening students with too many journals may lower the quality of the reflection, as students simply try to get through the assignment.

Another major factor to consider is whether the journals should be made public and thus available to the other students or kept private with only the instructor having access to them. Pavlovich (2007) noted that students may voice very personal and private details of their lives, which would not appropriately be shared with the whole class. If this is likely to happen, then journals should probably be kept private. On the other hand, Wolf (2010) said that students reported enjoying reading the writings of others more than they did writing their own entries. So if students are not expressing things that may be personal in nature, making the journal entries public may make them a learning experience for all.

A third major consideration is whether in-progress feedback should be provided to students so they will know how well they are doing on the assignment. In teaching reflective learning within the context of global marketing, McInnis-Bowers, Chew, and Bowers (2010) made extensive use of e-mail feedback loops, not just from the instructor but also from other students. They found this to be very useful in improving the quality of reflection. On the other hand, Bain et al. (2002) found that supervision in the project did not improve students' reflection. If feedback is given, Bain et al. (2002) suggest it should stay focused on the quality of the reflection rather than on the content per se. When

providing feedback, it must be remembered that a barrier to reflective learning can be the student's desire to converge too quickly on one right answer (Sumsion and Fleet 1996). Showing students where their conclusions may be wrong has the potential to focus their attention more on getting the "right" answer and less on the many factors that might influence their reflections.

These are not all the factors to consider when setting up a blogging assignment. To help in looking at the alternatives and considerations when laying out a blogging project, Table 1 presents 10 things to consider, alternatives available, and factors that affect which alternative is selected. This can provide a useful starting point for anyone who is considering implementing a blogging assignment into his or her class.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

To assess the effectiveness of blogging in a marketing education setting, a research study was conducted that evaluated actual student journals and assessed what kind of learning these journals fostered. The first purpose was to see whether the approach discussed in this paper was capable of producing reflective learning as shown in the students' online journals. The second purpose was to see whether the students perceived that the journals were creating higher-order learning. This was accomplished through studying the journals of three different groups of students and through asking these same three groups of students about their journaling experience.

Three classes taught at a medium-size primarily residential state university were selected for the current study. One was a lower division (freshman/sophomore) core curriculum class taught in a large section format (293 students finished the semester). The focus of the class was success, primarily in business but also other areas such as sports, education, public administration, and so forth. It was split almost evenly between business and nonbusiness majors. It will be referred to here as the "perspectives" class. Though this was not a marketing class, it did allow us to look at journaling in the preparatory classes leading up to formal marketing classes. It also allowed us to look at the assignment in a large class format. The second class was an introduction to marketing class intended to be taken at the start of the student's junior year (35 students finished the semester). The third was a professional selling class taught to mostly juniors and seniors following the completion of the introduction to marketing class (38 students finished the semester). Thus, classes at all stages of a student's mar-

keting education were explored, as were both large and medium class sizes.

In the perspectives class, the journaling assignment was not attempted by 16 students (5 percent of the students completing the class). All of the students in the other two classes attempted the assignments. Altogether, 350 students submitted blogging assignments, each with multiple journal entries, thus resulting in a total of 15,951 separate student submissions being evaluated by the current research. Surveys were completed by 255 of the perspectives students (87 percent), 29 of the intro students (83 percent), and 36 of the sales students (95 percent). Note that nine of the perspectives students completed fewer than 10 percent of the required journals and so they were eliminated from the analysis.

In all three classes, students were given the assignment to select one or more books related to the class material and read from these books five days per week. They were then instructed to maintain a private online blog, journaling about their reading in a reflective manner. This assignment was similar to the one described under the sales section of sample marketing blogging assignments. Detailed instructions about the expectations were given in the syllabus, in class, and in the classroom management software system at the point where students opened up their blogs. Because the perspectives class was large, three videos (total length 33 minutes and 30 seconds) were posted in the journaling section of the classroom management system explaining the assignment. In the two smaller classes, class discussion was used to reinforce reflective learning and the journaling assignment.

These blogs were then rated on the following scale by the instructor of the class: 1 = little or no evidence of reflection in the journal entries; 2 = some reflection of the reading, but reflection was not extensive; 3 = most of the journaling consisted of reflections on the readings; and 4 = extensive reflection on the reading. Also, data was collected on the number of journals completed and the average length of each journal entry (in characters).

At the end of the semester, students were asked to fill out a survey that rated their journaling experience in the class. This survey included questions about how useful they thought the assignment was and their opinion on how they thought the assignment should be structured. Information about other aspects of the class was also collected. The surveys were administered through the online classroom management system and students' answers were anonymous, though the instructor did know which students completed the survey. Class credit was given for the completion of the surveys.

Table 1
Ten Major Considerations When Setting Up a Blogging Assignment

Type of Consideration	Possible Choices	Factors to Consider
Privacy: Should it be private or open to other students?	Private or open to be read by other students	How confidential is the material, how concerned should students be about peer criticism, how much can students gain from other students' perspectives and criticisms, and so forth?
Frequency: How often should students be required to blog?	Daily (with or without days off), weekly, or when specific readings are assigned	What material is the assignment tied to and do you want students to develop a habit of reflection?
Length: How long should their blogs be?	No length given, average length across posts, or an expected length for each post	How much do we want to force students to reflect, do we want students writing just to meet a word count, and do we want students to write more when they have more to say?
Content: What content will be expected to be included in their blogs?	Specific content expected within narrow guidelines versus students having substantial latitude in content within only broad guidelines	To what extent is there a "right" answer or approach, or is the assignment more focused on students going through the process of reflection and thinking?
Training: How will the criteria and content expectations be communicated to students?	Lecture, in class discussion, showing good and bad examples, online videos. . . .	How much class time can be devoted to training, how much training will students need, or can students learn from examples of good and bad blogs?
Criteria: What criteria should be used to judge the blog?	Reflection, integration of two or more concepts, factors to consider in making a marketing decision. . . .	What is it that we want students to reflect upon and how should they engage in that reflection?
Writing Style: Should grammar/style be a criterion?	Graded based on grammar/style and content or graded based on content only	When doing the assignment, do you want the student's thoughts to flow freely or do you want them to be thinking critically about writing style at the time of creation?
Review: Should they be reviewed and returned or should they only be looked at once the assignment is over?	No review until assignment is over, reviewed individually during the assignment, or reviewed individually but feedback only given at the aggregate level to the whole class	How much time (faculty time and class time) is available to review the blogs, are students able to complete the assignment correctly without review and feedback, and how desirable is it for the students to change the way they approach the assignment during the semester?
Feedback: How much, what kind, and when should feedback be given about the students' blogs?	Substantial versus sparse feedback, feedback on style, grammar, content, and so forth, and feedback given during the assignment versus only after the assignment is over	How much should students' reflection be constrained by faculty expectations and how much do we want students trying to blog the "right" answer?
Technology: Which technology tools will best be suited for achieving the blogging objectives?	Classroom management system, personal Web pages. . . .	What classroom management system tools are available and would students want to make their entries open beyond the class?

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

To assess the reliability of the ratings of the reflective content of the journals, the rate–rerate intrarater comparison approach discussed by Dierdoff and Wilson (2003) was used. According to Viswesvaran, Ones, and Schmidt (1996), the two most frequently used approaches to assessing the reli-

ability of performance evaluations are interrater comparisons (comparing two or more raters of the same performance) and intrarater comparisons (comparing two or more ratings of the same rater). Each provides their own unique set of advantages and challenges. Interrater comparisons have independence of ratings, but they introduce variation due to differences between raters. Intrarater comparisons do not

Table 2
Ratings of Journals by Class

	Perspectives		Intro.		Sales		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Little or no evidence of reflection in the journal entries (1)	4	1	0	0	0	0	4	1
Some reflection of the reading, but reflection was not extensive (2)	8	3	10	29	3	8	21	6
Most of the journaling consisted of reflections on the readings (3)	125	45	15	43	28	74	168	48
Extensive reflection on the reading (4)	140	51	10	29	7	18	157	45
Total	277	100	35	100	38	100	314	100

Notes: $\chi^2 = 41.36$, $df = 6$, $p < .01$.

have a problem with such interrater differences, but they do have the potential to be biased based on the raters' knowledge of prior ratings. To assess the reliability of the ratings of the journals, there was much greater concern with interrater comparisons because to complete such ratings, one of the raters (the instructor) would be very knowledgeable of the nature of the assignment and the other rater would not. Thus, the instructor rated all of the students' journals and then rerated a random sample of them three months later (40 total, with 20 being selected from the perspectives class and 10 each from the other two classes). Given the large number of journals rated and the lag between rating and rerating (three months), it was felt that intrarater bias emerging from remembering previous ratings was minimal.

Intrarater reliability is typically assessed using Pearson correlations (Dierdoff and Wilson 2003). The rate–rerate correlation in the current study was 0.76. Though it would have been desirable for this to be over 0.80, it must be considered that the ratings were often blurred in those journals that were close calls between two categories. Though most times a journal could easily be placed in one of the four categories, there were some journals that seemed to be on the line between two categories. It should be noted that there was perfect rate–rerate consistency, with 27 of the 40 blogs rated (68 percent) and in all instances where there was rate–rerate incongruence, the two categories were right next to each other (e.g., 2 and 3). There was not one instance where the incongruence was separated by more than one category (e.g., 2 and 4). Thus, it was concluded that the rate–rerate reliability was within an acceptable range.

Table 2 presents the ratings of the students' journals. With the exception of four blogs in the perspectives class, all of the students showed some degree of reflection in their journals. There was more reflection in the perspectives class than in the two smaller classes ($\chi^2 = 41.36$, $df = 6$, $p < .01$). This is attributed to the more extensive training, including the video training that was available only to the perspectives class.

Table 3 presents the percentage of journals completed by class. Only 19 percent of the students completed all journals and almost one-quarter of the students completed less than half the assigned journals. The relationship between journals completed and class was not significant ($\chi^2 = 5.96$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.428$). The data were split into quartiles to see whether there was a relationship between class and length of journal. No significant relationship was identified ($\chi^2 = 10.81$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.095$).

In the survey, students were asked to rate the daily journaling in terms of its ability to encourage them to remember, understand, apply, and think about the material they read. Note that students were asked to rate each of these in a separate question. Table 4 presents a comparison of their answers to these four questions. As can be seen, there was a relationship between what learning outcome students were rating and how they rated the journaling assignment's ability to achieve that objective ($\chi^2 = 34.8$, $df = 9$, $p > 0.01$). Students tended to see greater value in the assignment's ability to make them think about and apply the material than in its ability to help them remember and understand the material. Most students (60 percent) saw this assignment as either extremely helpful or very helpful in getting them to think about the material. Only 16 percent of the students did not think it was helpful at all in getting them to think about the reading. That is in contrast to 39 percent who thought the assignment was extremely or very helpful in getting them to remember the material. Thus, this assignment was generally perceived as encouraging them to think about the material they read and not to just learn it.

Table 3
Percentage of Assigned Journal Entries Completed

	Perspectives		Intro.		Sales		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Less than 50%	72	25	8	23	5	13	85	23
From 50% to 84%	102	35	8	23	13	34	123	34
From 85% to 99%	67	23	8	23	14	37	89	24
100% or more	52	18	11	31	6	16	69	19
Total	294	100	35	100	38	100	366	100

Notes: $\chi^2 = 5.96$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.428$.

DISCUSSION

The selection of e-learning tools should emerge from educational outcome objectives. The current paper discussed the e-learning tool of blogging to achieve the specific educational outcome of reflective learning. Blogging is not necessarily the appropriate assignment to achieve many educational objectives. If reflective learning is one of an instructor's goals, however, then blogging is certainly an e-learning tool worth considering.

The current research was encouraging in that it supports the findings of others that when students are adequately trained, blogging can indeed lead them to engage in reflective learning. Both the journals submitted by the students and their own perceptions corroborated this finding. After being adequately trained, almost all of the students showed some degree of reflection in their journal entries and 25 percent of them showed extensive reflection. When asked to evaluate their blogging experience, about one-third of the students felt that it was not helpful at all in obtaining the basic education objectives of remembering and understanding. It is interesting to note that this is about the same portion of students identified by Bristow et al. (2011) who had a negative attitude toward e-learning after having taken a class online. However, these numbers drop significantly to 26 percent for the blogging assignment helping students apply the material and 22 percent for it helping them think about the material. It is interesting to consider whether the negative e-learning perceptions identified by Bristow et al. (2011) might decrease as faculty incorporate more e-learning assignments that students perceive as helping them with reflection and application.

One concern of the current research was that most students did not complete all of their journals. This could be indicative of a problem of students feeling that they had to journal too often. The current project required five days of journaling per week and students were more inclined to think that three days were appropriate. Perhaps the percentage of students engaging in extensive reflection would increase if the number of journal entries decreased. The relationship between number of journal entries required and the quality of the journals received would be an area for future research. The current research was conducted within the context of reflecting on reading. Further research could explore whether such results are also obtainable with different forms of marketing education.

A substantial body of literature has emerged focusing on blogging or journaling to obtain reflective learning. In this paper, I have reviewed as much of this literature as space allows. Instructors who want to move their students toward reflective learning can be reassured that others have traveled this path before them. Not only can they be assured that reflective learning has been obtained through blogging, but they can gain much from the published experiences of others. The research contained in this paper and elsewhere indicates that blogging is a suitable tool for encouraging and directing students as they develop the ability to reflect.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The current research findings are consistent with what some others have found—that journaling or blogging can encourage reflective learning. However, it must be noted that not all research has found this, and so assigning a blogging assignment does not necessarily result in reflective learning. Though the current study is the first to demonstrate this pedagogical technique in marketing classes, the sample was only taken from one faculty member's classes at one university. Thus, they demonstrate that blogging could occur following certain guidelines as laid out in this paper, but they do not show that structuring this assignment in different ways for different classes would get the same results. Therefore, even though blogging is a promising way to create reflective learning, each individual marketing

faculty member would need to assess their assignment to see if indeed it were occurring in his or her classes.

The results also indicated that students perceived blogging as better able to encourage reflective learning when compared with the learning content. It must be noted that this finding is based on students' perceptions. To ascertain whether blogging actually does target reflective learning, an actual comparison of student with the assignment versus without the assignment would need to be done. This is a potential area for future research and this research can be based, in part, on the extensive literature on assessment.

A final limitation of the research, and to a certain extent the assignment, was that not all students totally completed the required blogs. This is not totally surprising, as other out-of-class assignments are not always completed either. For example, in the three classes studied here, students were required to take online quizzes (9 in the lower-division class, 14 in the sales class, and 20 in the principles class). Less than half the students (42 percent) completed all of the assigned quizzes. The unanswered question here though is whether the logistics of a blogging assignment decreases participation in the assignment. In the classes presented here, for a student to complete all the blogs, he or she would need to read and then get to a computer five days per week. Would students have completed more paper journal entries than they completed blogs? This is an area for future research. Does the percentage of students completing the number of required journal entries increase or decrease when these entries are in the form of computer blogs versus paper journal entries? Further research could look at factors that impact the completion of the assignment. For example, does whether or not a student has access to a computer and the Internet at home affect how successfully he or she completes the assignment?

One finding worth noting regarding the current empirical research is that students in the lower-division (Perspectives) class did better on this assignment than those in the higher-level classes (Intro and Sales). Initially, that finding seems puzzling, in that we generally expect students in upper-division classes to do better on assignments than students in lower-division classes. This could be attributed to the video training that was provided to the lower-division class but not to the upper-division courses. There is another potential explanation that deserves future research. Of these three classes, the one that has the most students with quantitative/analytical majors (e.g., accounting, finance, economics, computers) is the intro class and the one with the fewest such majors is the perspectives class. The data show that the Perspectives class did the best on the

assignment and the Intro class did the worst. Perhaps this is because students who are in the quantitative/analytical majors feel less comfortable and are less able to complete assignments such as this one, which require significant reflection and verbalization. This would be an interesting topic for future research.

CONCLUSION

Technology is changing. However, the need to get students to reflect on the material they are learning will forever be a challenge of marketing educators. The current paper shows how blogging can be used to achieve reflective learning. It can provide many advantages over traditional paper journals. Blogging gives the instructor much greater control over the journaling assignment while not sacrificing the quality of the reflection. Entries can be date-stamped and reviewed at any point in the semester. Additional training can be developed if the entries are falling short. The entries are submitted in text form, which has many advantages in terms of grading and plagiarism prevention. The variety of tools of a classroom management system can be utilized to enhance the assignment. All this can be done while taking up minimal class time. Thus, online journaling seems to indeed be one of those cases where e-learning can provide a superior tool for achieving a specific educational outcome objective and should therefore be considered by marketing educators as a means of achieving reflective learning in their classes.

Over time, additional technology may emerge that will augment or even replace computer blogging. For example, social media may one day replace blogging, or a virtual classroom may replace classroom management systems. Even if this happens, the principles discussed here will need to be followed (e.g., the importance of training, the need to focus on reflection and not just retention or recitation). The form of reflective learning has evolved and it may continue to evolve, but the substance remains the same. Marketing students need a structure in which to relate the subject of their classes to their own lives through reflection.

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