

# **MEASURING CHINESE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MARKETING PROGRAM**

**Dr. Nasim Z. Hosein**, Northwood University, Midland, MI, USA

## **Abstract**

This paper uses two attitude-measuring models in comparing the attributes of the marketing education program, observable and abstract, in terms of their relative importance to students' attitudes toward the marketing program. The data were analyzed by using Chi Squared test and Anova tests. The findings are that students' attitudes are more closely related to the program's observable attributes than to the abstract attributes. The findings should facilitate in developing a promotional campaign which will incorporate and emphasize the significantly important attributes of the marketing program. The findings also demonstrate the effectiveness of the models to measure student attitudes in any vocational area.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to measure Chinese students' attitudes towards the marketing courses and also to measure their perception of a career in marketing. This paper would be the first in a series measuring and comparing students across various countries taking the same marketing courses. Based on these findings, educators can adjust or modify their marketing programs for better results. This, research-based information can provide vocational educators with information about students' attitudes and expectations of the marketing program so that they can develop the appropriate promotional packages to inform and attract students. The use of effective models to measure students' attitudes can provide researchers with results that teachers and other educational leaders can easily implement. Research can recognize and support in resolving issues in education programs that have led to declining enrollments that may be due to students' insight about courses and their career path.

It is clear that the higher education sector is becoming more competitive and that there are greater expectations placed on institutions to meet the needs of students. Some of the approaches used to address this issue in higher education include quality assurance schemes (Centre for Education and Development and Support 2004), a marketing concept in which the student is viewed as a consumer whose expectations are to be met, and studies of student satisfaction (Elliot and Shin 2002; Gremeler and McCollough 2002). The study of large classes presents many complex issues, (Cuseo 2007) as large classes is usually a combination of students across various disciplines. Thus, the view may be a bit distorted as students may have a different reason or point of view about the marketing class they are taking since marketing is not their major field

of study. This paper focuses solely on students who are in upper level marketing classes whose major field of study is business.

Marketing theory and research support that consumers' attitudes toward product attributes influence their purchasing behavior toward those products. Consumers form those attitudes based on their image of the product from the dual perspectives of its tangible and symbolic attributes.

Attitudes are defined as, "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). (Lutz (1981, p. 234) defined attitudes as representing covert feelings of favorability or unfavorability toward an object, person, issue, or behavior. People learn attitudes over time by being in contact with the object directly (experience) or through receiving information about the object. Consumers use learned attitudes as a guide to their behavior with respect to the attitude object, giving rise to consistently favorable or unfavorable forms of behavior. Attitude measurement can provide understanding of purchase tendency towards a particular brand or service. Attitudes are assumed to be a sign of behavior. If a person is favorably predisposed toward a brand or service that should lead to favorable behaviors with respect to the brand service, or in this respect favorable behavior towards the marketing program.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify how students at a Chinese university feel about particular attributes of the marketing program and their attitudes towards the marketing courses. Specifically, the study addresses the following research objectives:

1. What is their interest in the marketing courses offered in the program?
2. What is their evaluation of the marketing courses offered in the program?
3. How do the marketing courses compare to other business courses?
4. Why did they choose a marketing course?
5. What is their view of marketing as a career?

This study identifies how students feel about particular attributes of the marketing education program in China, and then assesses the association of each of those attributes and also the students' attitudes towards a career in marketing.

The findings will also demonstrate the effectiveness of the programs from a student's perspective and thus help educators to develop effective promotional campaigns to attract and retain students in the program.

# **Methodology**

## **Instrumentation**

The research study was empirical in nature with a questionnaire being used, sent via e-mail to students in the upper level marketing courses at the end of the semester. The development of the instrument required two basic sets of information: observable attributes of the marketing education program, and abstract attributes of the program, as perceived by students. In addition, an overall student attitude toward marketing as a career was needed. The questionnaire consisted of items or statements that measured the observable attributes of the program, abstract attributes of the program, and students' overall attitudes toward marketing courses or the marketing program.

## **Attributes**

The sets of attributes were constructed based on the findings from an extensive review of related literature from both marketing and non-marketing education. A set of global attitude statements regarding the marketing program was generated from literature review. The resulting instrument was endorsed by a panel based on their expertise in survey research and on their experience in conducting similar research in the past.

The focus group interview was conducted with the experts in the field to focus the instrument in the direction of understanding the marketing students and measuring the program from their point of view.

## **Observable Attributes**

The next part of the instrument involved the observable attributes of the program. In order to measure the observable attributes of the program, a scale was used which has been used successfully in the measurement of self-perception and self-expression of the marketing course.

The ideal self-perception was obtained by asking students to rate why they chose this marketing course, how confident they are in what they are learning and their evaluation of the course taken. The idea of self-expression is obtained when students rate how they compare the marketing course to other business courses and their interest in the course and the relevance to their career. For this attribute, several measurement scales were used, from; 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, as well as a scale of 1 = very unlikely to 5 = very likely. They were then asked to

rate the extent to which they believed that the marketing education program possessed each construct under this attribute.

### **Abstract Attributes.**

This part of the instrument measures the students' perceptions of the abstract attributes with respect to the marketing course. Students were asked to rate the importance of their perception of the program with regards to their career. For this attribute, the measurement was on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. They were then asked to rate the extent to which they believed that the marketing education program influenced this construct in this attribute.

### **Student Research Analysis**

The research was conducted on six main levels, namely:

1. Students' interest in marketing
2. Students' confidence in their marketing ability
3. Students' evaluation of marketing courses
4. Students' comparison of marketing courses to other business courses
5. Students' reason for choosing a marketing course
6. Students' perspective towards a career in marketing

For all the following data analysis, the number and percentage represent the students who answered in the positive for each question, either agree/strongly agree or likely/very likely.

#### **Students' interest in marketing**

Students were asked what their actual interest is in the subject of marketing.

Although many students were interested in understanding the basics of marketing, some are interested in marketing because of career choices or using the knowledge in the future. The variety of answers given suggested that students have some interest in understanding the subject, but it is at best rather fragmented, as some are interested because of the subject matter and some because of career choices.

Table I Interest in Marketing ...

Response	Number/Percentage of Respondents
Understanding principles of marketing	372 (67.26%)
Understanding advances in marketing	486 (87.88%)
Pursuing a career in marketing	362 (65.46%)
Using marketing knowledge in the future	495 (89.51%)
Working on assignments/projects	340 (64.48%)

### Students' confidence in their marketing ability

Students were asked about their understanding and ability to discuss marketing concepts.

Although many students were confident in their understanding of marketing, some also have the skills and knowledge to analyze and explain marketing concepts. The variety of answers given suggested that students have some confidence in the subject and that they understand the concepts but it also suggests that students seek knowledge through business examples.

Table II Confidence in Marketing Ability ...

Response	Number/Percentage of Respondents
Understanding of marketing concepts	339 (61.30%)
Ability to write about marketing concepts	179 (32.37%)
Ability to explain about marketing through discussion	316 (56.80%)
Analyzing case studies	252 (45.74%)
Understanding concepts through the business examples	485 (87.14%)

### Students' evaluation of marketing courses

Students were asked to evaluate the marketing course on their learning.

Although many students evaluated the course based on their learning, most indicated that reading the text was helpful in their learning, some indicated that assigned homework was of little help to them. The variety of answers given suggests that students have a preference for the method of learning as some preferred to read while some preferred to use the Internet.

Table III Evaluation of Marketing Course ...

Response	Number/Percentage of Respondents
Reading the text	419 (75.76%)
Doing assigned homework	274 (49.91%)
Research on Internet	463 (83.73%)
Participating in class discussion	361 (65.28%)
Writing reports	287 (51.89%)
Working on final project	344 (62.21%)

### Students' comparison of marketing courses to other business courses

Students were asked to compare the current marketing courses to other business courses taken previously.

Many students evaluated the course based on how challenging, interesting, and demanding it was compared to other business courses. Most indicated that they strongly agree that the course was as challenging as other courses, while less indicated that they had control of the pace of the course. The variety of answers given suggests that students didn't see much difference between the marketing course and other business courses and that most will recommend the course to other students.

Table IV Comparison of Marketing Course to Other Business Courses...

Response	Number/Percentage of Respondents
Marketing course was more challenging	320 (57.86%)
Marketing course was more interesting	323 (58.41%)
I learned more in this marketing course	302 (54.61%)
I had more control over the pace of learning in this course	265 (47.92%)
I had to prepare more for this marketing course	307 (55.51%)
I would take more marketing courses	352 (63.65%)
I would recommend this course to other students	391 (70.70%)

### Students' reasons for choosing a marketing course

Students were asked the reason why they chose their current marketing course.

Although many students evaluated the course based on how interesting and convenient the marketing course was to them, most indicated that they strongly agree that the course would be helpful to their careers and would provide a better career base for them. The answers given suggests that students had a variety of reasons to choose the marketing course and that most chose because of career reasons rather than curriculum selection or recommendations.

Table V Reasons for Choosing this Marketing Course...

Response	Number/Percentage of Respondents
Course was more interesting	436 (78.84%)

It provides a wider career base	403 (72.88%)
Allows flexibility to specialize in my career	429 (77.57%)
Fits in with other courses	383 (69.26%)
Prior knowledge of marketing	356 (64.37%)
It is a popular subject	283 (51.17%)
It was compulsory	250 (45.20%)
It was recommended to me	214 (38.70%)

### **Students' viewpoint towards a career in marketing**

Students were asked their point of view towards a career in the marketing field.

Although many students evaluated the course based on their career path and how the marketing course will help them in the future, most indicated that they strongly agree that the course helps them in their understanding of marketing concepts, even though they would not pursue a career in marketing. The variety of answers suggests that students had many reasons to believe that choosing this marketing course would be either helpful in the future or with their careers.

Table VI Viewpoint Towards a Career in Marketing ...

Response	Number/Percentage of Respondents
Course helps in understanding marketing concepts	470 (84.99%)
Helps in choosing a career path	332 (60.04%)
Find a job after graduating	371 (67.09%)
Advances chosen career field	370 (66.90%)
Useful in the future	421 (76.13%)
Some marketing knowledge is required	415 (75.05%)
I will pursue a career in marketing	184 (33.27%)

## **Methodology**

### **Sample and data collection**

The research study was empirical in nature, with a questionnaire being e-mailed out to the students near the end of the semester. For the Chinese students the survey was completed at Shantou University, Shantou, China.

The questionnaire method was selected for its low-cost outlay and ease of issue, especially in the student research survey. Personal interviews, although considered the most reliable method for qualitative data research, were not considered feasible owing to their high cost in terms of time

needed. The student questionnaire was given to all students in the upper level marketing class, 553 students, in their final week in the course. It consisted of a combination of both open and closed questions, including a few of a qualitative nature, making a total of 45. This was answered by the students, then sent to me via e-mail, with a response rate of 87 per cent.

### **Research Hypotheses Concepts:**

1. Students' interest in marketing
2. Students' confidence in their marketing ability
3. Students' evaluation of marketing courses
4. Students' comparison of marketing courses to other business courses
5. Students' reason for choosing a marketing course
6. Students' perspective towards a career in marketing

The research hypotheses are directly related to the student's intended major and choices of marketing subjects. The research attempts to measure if there are differences between the students' intended major, choice of classes and their observable and abstract attributes.

The following hypotheses were developed based on the assumption that different groups of students based on their major field of study exist in terms of their benefits sought from a marketing course. Thus:

H1. Student groups seeking different benefits (payback) from a marketing course will display differences in demographic characteristics in terms of (a) gender, (b) age, and (c) year of study.

H2. Student groups seeking different benefits (payback) from a marketing course will display differences in student characteristics in terms of (a) interest, (b) confidence, (c) evaluation, (d) comparison, (e) reason for choosing, and (f) career perception

H3. Student groups seeking different benefits (payback) from a marketing course will display differences in the amount of hours of study in (a) preparing for a marketing course and (b) preparing for all courses.

The following hypothesis was developed based on the assumption that there will be differences in students' responses due to demographical and behavioral characteristics for each of the tested construct cluster: (a) observable, and (b) abstract. Thus:

H4. Students will display differences due to their demographical and behavioral characteristics in response to each of the measured construct clusters in terms of (a) interest, (b) confidence, (c) evaluation, (d) comparison, (e) reason for choosing, and (f) career perception



## Data Analysis

Univariate analysis ( $\chi^2$  test and Anova) was used to test the significance of means between groups within the study. Before analyzing the data, an examination of the results was performed to describe the sample size and frames and to present the results of the survey.

Table VII Characteristics of the Sample

Variable		Male 220(39.8)	Female 333(60.2)	Total
Age	20	40 (42.6)	54 (57.4)	94 (16.99)
	21	83 (36.9)	142(63.10)	225 (40.68)
	22	39(23.0)	131(77.0)	170 (30.75)
	23+	58(90.6)	6(9.4)	64 (11.58)
Year of Study	2	74(36.8)	127(63.2)	201 (36.35)
	3	99 (36.8)	170(63.3)	269 (48.64)
	4	47(56.6)	36(43.4)	83 (15.01)
Major of Study	Marketing	94(37.9)	154(62.1)	248 (44.85)
	Management	34(61.8)	21(38.2)	55 (9.94)
	Other	92(36.8)	158(63.2)	250 (45.21)
Hours preparing for Marketing course	<5	140(36.0)	249(64.0)	389 (70.34)
	5-10	80(61.5)	50(38.5)	130 (23.51)
	10-15	0(0.0)	16(100.0)	16 (2.89)
	>15	0(0.0)	18(100.0)	18 (3.26)
Hours preparing for all courses	<5	36(57.1)	27(42.9)	63 (11.39)
	5-10	129(59.7)	87(40.3)	216 (39.06)
	10-15	3(6.9)	42(93.3)	45 (8.14)
	>15	52(22.7)	177(77.3)	229 (41.41)

### Reliability.

After the study was conducted and all data were collected, a Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was conducted for the observable and abstract attributes. A very good alpha of .70 was secured.

The Cronbach's alpha was used for the attributes because these are indicators of one general or global construct (e.g., interest in the marketing courses offered). These attributes are found in Table VIII.

Table VIII. Attributes of the Marketing Program

**Observable Attributes:**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha (correlation coefficient)</b>
<b>Interest</b>	Understanding the principles of marketing.	0.82	<b>0.72</b>
	Working on marketing projects	0.82	
<b>Confidence</b>	Your understanding of marketing concepts.	0.88	<b>0.71</b>
	Your ability to write about marketing concepts	0.88	
<b>Evaluation</b>	Participating in class discussions	0.72	<b>0.74</b>
	Working on marketing projects.	0.72	
<b>Comparison</b>	The marketing course was more challenging	0.60	<b>0.72</b>
	The marketing course was more interesting	0.75	
	I would take more marketing courses.	0.78	
<b>Choice</b>	It allows me more flexibility in my career	0.84	<b>0.70</b>
	It offers me more career choices	0.79	
	I had prior knowledge of marketing	0.74	

**Abstract Attributes:**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha (correlation coefficient)</b>
<b>Career</b>	In helping me choose a career path	0.83	<b>0.71</b>
	In helping me find a job after graduating	0.80	
	In helping me advance in my chosen career field	0.75	

## Results

### H1: Segment profiles based on demographic characteristics

For H1,  $\chi^2$  test was performed to determine if the resulting groups differ in demographic characteristics.

Based on the results of analysis, a chi-squared test was performed to determine if the three groups differ in demographic characteristics. The results showed that the groups had differences in gender ( $\chi^2 = 12.44$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), age ( $\chi^2 = 83.77$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and year of study ( $\chi^2 = 33.33$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), supporting H1a-c.

In terms of gender, all three groups had similar percentages of male and female. It can be stated that mostly females attended marketing and other business courses as compared to other non-business majors. In terms of age, the marketing group had the largest percentage of all the ages except for the 22 and 23+ year olds, which was more dominant in the 'other' group. Data indicates that the younger students tend to favor the marketing program and thus marketing courses. In terms of year of study, marketing students had the largest group in year 2 of study whereas years 3 and 4 was dominated by the 'other' group.

Table IX. Profiles based on Demographics

Variables	Group 1 (Marketing) n1 (%)	Group 2 (Management) n2 (%)	Group 3 (Others) n3 (%)	Pearson ( $\chi^2$ )
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	94 (42.73%)	34 (15.45%)	92 (41.82%)	12.44*
Female	154 (46.23%)	21 (6.31%)	158 (47.45%)	
<b>Age</b>				
20	62 (65.96%)	8 (8.51%)	24 (25.53%)	83.77***
21	132 (58.67%)	20 (8.89%)	73 (32.44%)	
22	42 (24.71%)	17 (10.00%)	111 (65.29%)	
23+	12 (18.75%)	10 (15.63%)	42 (65.63%)	
<b>Year of Study</b>				
2	192 (95.52%)	9 (4.48%)	0	33.33***
3	44 (16.36%)	36 (13.38%)	189 (70.26%)	
4	12 (14.46%)	10 (12.05%)	61 (73.49%)	

\*  $p < 0.05$     \*\*  $p < 0.01$     \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

### H2: Segment profiles based on students' characteristics

For H2, ANOVA test was performed to determine if the groups differ in students' characteristics: observable and abstract variables. To determine if the students seeking different benefits from marketing courses differ in observable and abstract characteristics, ANOVA tests

were conducted (Table X). When the three groups were compared in observable characteristics, no differences were detected for interest and choice variables among the groups. However, differences existed in confidence ( $F = 2.20, p < 0.001$ ), evaluation ( $F = 4.99, p < 0.001$ ), and comparison ( $F = 4.98, p < 0.001$ ). (Table X) Thus,  $H3b$ ,  $H3c$  and  $H3d$  were supported, while  $H3a$  and  $H3e$  were not.

When the three groups were compared in abstract characteristics, the variable showed no differences in career decisions, not supporting  $H2f$ .

Students showed no difference among the groups in being confident about taking a marketing course and in their evaluation of the course. When compared to other business courses no difference was shown, as they may be expecting all courses to be similar in content and learning. Regarding abstract outcomes, there were major differences among the groups as possibly only marketing students would display a greater tendency towards marketing as a career.

Table X. Profiles based on Student Characteristics

	Group 1 (Marketing) N= 248	Group 2 (Management) N= 55	Group 3 (Others) N=250	F Values	P Values
<b><i>Observable Construct</i></b>					
Interest variable	4.12	4.01	3.96	2.20	.112
Confidence variable	3.73	3.21	3.78	4.99	.007
Evaluation variable	3.88	3.28	3.80	5.01	.006
Comparison variable	3.85	3.12	3.80	4.98	.008
Choice variable	3.84	3.80	3.92	2.84	.071
<b><i>Abstract Construct</i></b>					
Career variable	3.90	3.87	3.84	0.31	.734

### **H3: Segment profiles based on students' effort in marketing courses**

For H3,  $\chi^2$  test was performed to determine if the groups differ in students' effort in terms of hours studying (Table XI)

When the three groups were compared in the amount of hours spent preparing for courses, the results showed that there were differences in the groups

When the three groups were compared on both levels: hours studying for marketing courses and all courses, differences were detected among the groups. The groups showed differences in preparing for marketing courses ( $\chi^2 = 45.25, p < 0.001$ ), and preparing for all courses ( $\chi^2 = 74.20, p < 0.001$ ), supporting H3a-b.

Students showed differences among the groups in that marketing students prepared more for their courses whereas the 'other' group prepared more for other courses.

Table XI. Profiles based on Student Efforts

	Group 1 (Marketing)	Group 2 (Management)	Group 3 (Others)	Pearson ( $\chi^2$ )
<b><i>Hours preparing for Marketing courses</i></b>				
<5	162 (41.65%)	50 (12.85%)	177 (45.50)	
5-10	70 (53.85%)	5 (3.85%)	55 (42.31%)	
11-15	0	0	16 (100%)	
>15	16 (88.89%)	0	2 (11.11%)	45.25***
<b><i>Hours preparing for All courses</i></b>				
<5	2 (3.17%)	4 (6.35%)	57 (90.48%)	
5-10	114 (52.78%)	32 (14.81%)	70 (32.41%)	
11-15	22 (48.89%)	5 (11.11%)	18 (40.00%)	
>15	110 (48.03%)	14 (6.11%)	105 (45.85%)	74.20***

\*  $p < 0.05$     \*\*  $p < 0.01$     \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

#### **H4: Construct profiles based on students' characteristics**

For H4, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if the groups differ in students' characteristics: differences among the construct clusters, both (a) observable and (b) abstract (Table XII)

This test was used to determine whether there were differences in the reflection of the constructs across the students' different demographic profiles and behavioral characteristics. The dependent variable was each of the individual constructs among the observable and abstract clusters: (a) interest, (b) confidence, (c) evaluation, (d) comparison, (e) reason for choosing, and (f) career perception. The independent variable being each of the demographic profiles and behavioral characteristics such as: gender, age, year of study and number of hours spent studying for marketing and all courses.

For the Interest construct, the tests shows that there were significant differences by the category of age and hours preparing for courses (marketing and all). Older students that had a higher score for this variable than younger students. As for hours spent preparing, students who prepared more for their courses had a higher score for their interest in marketing courses.

For the Confidence construct, the tests shows that there were significant differences by the category of hours preparing for courses (marketing and all). Students who prepared more for their courses had a higher score for their confidence in marketing courses.

For the Evaluation construct, the tests show that there were significant differences among all of the categories: gender, age, year of study and hours preparing for courses (marketing and all). This indicates that each of the demographic and behavioral characteristics showed differences in how they evaluated the marketing course. This indicates that each of the demographic and behavioral characteristics showed differences in how they compared the marketing course to other business courses, except for the year of study.

For the Choice construct, the tests show that there were significant differences among the categories: gender, age and hours preparing for courses (marketing and all). This indicates that each of the demographic and behavioral characteristics showed differences in how they chose the marketing course, except for their gender.

For the Career construct, the tests show that there were significant differences among the categories: gender, age and hours preparing for courses (marketing and all). This indicates that each of the demographic and behavioral characteristics showed differences in how they perceived the marketing course will help their future career, except for their gender.

Table XII. Profiles Based on Demographics and Behavioral Characteristics

Construct/ Demographic and Behavioral Variables	Interest variable	Confidence variable	Evaluation variable	Comparison variable	Choice variable	Career variable
<b>Gender</b>	$F= 1.92$	$F= 1.42$	$F= 29.79^{***}$	$F= 43.96^{**}$	$F= 3.41$	$F= 0.33$
Male	4.10	3.67	3.50	3.47	3.80	3.84
Female	3.99	3.75	3.99	3.99	3.95	3.88
<b>Age</b>	$F= 9.50^{**}$	$F= 0.99$	$F= 11.48^{***}$	$F= 17.84^{***}$	$F= 19.77^{***}$	$F= 9.28^{**}$
20	3.91	3.82	3.53	4.04	4.45	3.91
21	3.86	3.71	3.82	3.53	3.72	3.68
22	3.81	3.66	3.65	4.08	3.69	4.11
23+	4.39	3.77	4.45	3.48	4.20	3.81
<b>Year of Study</b>	$F= 2.51$	$F= 2.01$	$F= 3.17^*$	$F= 1.25$	$F= 26.27^{***}$	$F= 5.45^{**}$
2	4.04	3.69	3.90	3.76	3.66	3.75
3	3.95	3.70	3.75	3.75	3.95	3.95
4	4.20	3.88	3.57	3.93	4.48	4.05
<b>Hours preparing for Marketing course</b>	$F= 34.19^{***}$	$F= 35.68^{***}$	$F= 29.51^{***}$	$F= 24.27^{***}$	$F= 16.96^{***}$	$F= 42.16^{***}$
<5	4.12	3.62	4.16	3.76	3.92	3.65
5-10	3.53	3.53	2.98	3.51	3.56	4.38
11-15	5.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
>15	5.00	4.89	4.11	4.89	4.56	3.89
<b>Hours preparing for All courses</b>	$F= 4.98^{**}$	$F= 20.32^{***}$	$F= 11.56^{***}$	$F= 21.81^{***}$	$F= 15.91^{***}$	$F= 14.69^{***}$

<5	3.67	3.66	4.19	3.27	3.81	3.5
5-10	4.00	3.86	3.78	3.76	4.00	3.93
11-15	4.27	4.33	4.42	4.64	4.62	4.51
>15	4.17	4.57	3.58	3.77	3.66	3.73

\* p<0.05    \*\* p < 0.01    \*\*\* p< 0.001

## Discussion

This study was designed to investigate the relationships of the observable and abstract attributes of the marketing education program to Chinese student attitudes about the program at the university level. Attitude toward the program's attributes is assumed to relate closely to students' willingness to enroll and remain in the program. The relationships were successfully measured through the different groups of students. Past research has measured students' perceptions of only the tangible attributes or of the program itself (Clodfelter, 1984; Reed & Smith, 1985).

The analysis indicated that students' attitudes are more closely related to some of the observable attributes, but not the abstract attributes of the marketing education program. This would not be surprising as only the student marketing group would have a positive attitude towards marketing as a career. Students' attitudes were also closely related to selected observable attributes of the program, such as: confidence, evaluation and comparison of the marketing program. There were some differences among the groups in assessing the interest and choice of the marketing program.

Although university students are not definite about what career routes they will pursue and they may still be influenced to change their future career interests. All students, both those enrolled and those not enrolled in marketing, make up the target market for the marketing education program. They need to be informed and influenced by the benefits of the program or courses. If other students outline some benefits that are either course-related or career-related, then that would be beneficial to the university, even if it's applicable to only one group of students: the marketing students. These students can also influence members of their peer groups to enroll in the program. Marketing students have already been influenced positively and are participating in the program; however, universities must continue to develop effective promotional strategies and program designs to keep them in the program. A positive influence on students to enroll in the marketing program will result in a positive influence toward their peer group, parents, counselors, teachers, and others.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study was to assess the perception of marketing classes by Chinese university students. The study investigated the concept of both the observable and abstract attributes from a students' perspective. The basic scale was comprised of six constructs; Interest, Confidence, Evaluation, Comparison, Choice (Observable) and Career (Abstract). The subjects were divided into groups based on their major: Marketing, Management and Other. The results indicate that



while there is a relationship among the groups on some of the constructs, there is a difference among the groups in terms of career.

An effective promotional campaign should be designed for students. The campaign should emphasize the strongest observable and abstract attributes found for the students in this study. The strongest attributes were that the majority of students, regardless of their major field of study, indicated that enrolling in a marketing course is helpful to their study and knowledge. Whereas marketing students expect the courses to be useful in their career.

The findings of studies such as this one can assist educators and program planners of vocational education to promote and perhaps modify vocational education programs successfully to attract and retain interested students. Furthermore, research can be carried out to measure students' perceptions toward other university programs (e.g., Management program, Accounting program, Finance program), and then determine how those relate to students' perceptions of education programs.

#### Summary of Findings

The participating university students in this study were:

1. male (39.8%), female (60.2%)
2. in the age group between 20 and 23 years old (100.0%),
3. in year of study, 2 (36.4%), 3 (48.6%), 4 (15.0%)
4. majoring in marketing (44.8%), management (10.0%), other (45.2%)
5. spending less than 5 hours preparing for marketing courses (70.3%),
6. spending more than 15 hours preparing for all courses (41.4%),

A limitation of the study, of course, is that only students currently enrolled in the university were included. As a result of this study, it is suggested that further research should compare students from other universities in different countries. This would enhance the value of this method of assessing student perception of marketing courses across diverse backgrounds, culture and scholastic value. Finally, a structural model should be developed to investigate the combination of student evaluation and responses across the various countries.

LV13015

## References

- Centre for Educational Development and Support (2004), Using the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) and Student Evaluation of Subjects (SES) Questionnaires, Centre for Educational Development and Support, Victoria University, Melbourne.
- Cuseo, J. (2007), The empirical case against large class size: Adverse effects on the teaching, learning and retention of first year students, *Journal of Faculty Development*, v21 n1 p5-21 Jan 2007
- Elliot, K. M. and D. Shin (2002), Student satisfaction, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 24 (2), 197-247.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Gremeler, D. and McCollough, M. (2002), Student Satisfaction Guarantees: An Empirical Examination of Attitudes, Antecedents, and Consequences, *Journal of Marketing Education*, 24 (2), 150-60.
- Keil, J. and Partell, P. (1997), The effect of class size on student performance and retention at Binghamton University, Office of Budget & Institutional Research, Binghamton University, Binghamton, New York.
- Lutz, R. J. (1981). A functional theory framework for designing and pretesting advertising themes. In R. J. Lutz (ed.), *Contemporary Perspectives in Consumer Research*. Boston: Kent Publishing Company.