

TEACHING BUSINESS THROUGH MASS MEDIA: A “VICARIOUS LEARNING” EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH

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Extended Abstract
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ABSTRACT

“Nothing in this world can take the place of good old persistence.” - Ray Kroc, played by Michael Keaton in The Founder (2016)

The purpose of this extended abstract is to provide an integrative approach for teaching multiple domains of business, such as management and marketing, through the use of mass media (film and television). Mass media is a form of pedagogy rooted in vicarious learning theory that has frequently been utilized in higher education to enrich students’ ability to meet learning outcomes (Mayes, 2015; Reyes-Santias et al., 2022). Vicarious learning was first introduced by Bandura et al. (1960) to demonstrate that learning can occur through the observation of others’ behaviors and recognition of the consequences of that behavior (Mayes, 2015). Mass media platforms, such as film and television, engage students in the learning process by allowing students to observe and analyze a variety of real or fictitious business scenarios while in a classroom setting.

Previous studies have shown the use of popular movies as being effective in teaching management and cross cultural management concepts. These studies have used full movies (Desai et al., 2018) as well as movie clips (Reyes-Santias et al., 2022) to teach the concepts to students. Desai et al. (2018) reported a significant increase in participants’ cultural intelligence across all four domains (cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and behavioral). Reyes-Santias et al. (2018) found that general management concepts were the most effective to be learned through movies. However, concepts related to Strategy, and certain complex concepts in finance were not easy for the students to identify in the movie and needed more support and guidance from the instructor. Overall, both studies suggested enhanced student learning from the movies, as well as increased engagement and satisfaction for the students.

Burke, Robak and Stumph (2018), suggested the use of movie clips to teach concepts of game theory in an introductory economics course with very positive student experiences as demonstrated in their end of course feedback. Chang (2020) found that using movies can help students learn about diversity. The study found that the richer the stimulus (from text to audio to visuals) the more effective it was in eliciting responses from students such as emotions, attitude towards disabled personality and brand perceptions. These studies provide strong support for the use of films as a pedagogical tool for a business educator interested in making the classroom more experiential.

The authors will discuss their use of the movie The Founder to teach various concepts addressed in two different undergraduate business courses: Principles of Management and Principles of Marketing. The Founder is the story of Ray Kroc, a salesperson who turned McDonalds into the largest restaurant business in the world (www.imdb.com).

The movie was shown in a principles of management course at the end of the semester. Students were asked to identify and analyze examples of management functions that were depicted in the movie, such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Students also examined business ethical dilemmas that were portrayed throughout the movie. Assessments included a written final paper and in-class oral discussions on their findings.

The movie The Founder was also used in a principles of marketing course in a pre/post course setting. Students were asked to watch the movie prior to the beginning of the semester and asked to comment about their “learning of marketing concepts from the movie”. The students were also provided an (optional) opportunity to respond to the same prompt at the end of the semester for extra credit.

The authors will provide practical examples of how they incorporated the film to teach topics of management and marketing. The authors will be presenting examples of writing prompts along with other teaching tools effectively used in these two courses at the ABSEL conference.

This extended abstract will serve as a basis for a more robust research project to identify multiple films and television shows that can be cross-utilized in business courses by instructors in higher education business programs. The authors are in the process of analyzing and synthesizing the data captured from student assessments and will be presenting the findings at the

ABSEL conference. The goal of the future project will be to assist business instructors to provide a more holistic comprehension of management and marketing concepts to their students through multimedia platform pedagogy.

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