

# EXPLORING HOW AUSTRALIAN SPORT MARKETING STUDENTS READ JOURNAL ARTICLES

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## Abstract

### AIMS

Reading and comprehension are an integral part of education. This paper investigates the issues undergraduate students in a sport marketing class face in reading journal articles for structure and meaning. A secondary aim is to explore whether a learning framework developed by the authors would further assist the reading of journal articles required in a subject.

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Reading is not a simple task for many students. It is not just about their text processing skills or their ability to decode textual material to extract its meaning; rather, reading is an "active, complex process of making meaning in which a reader draws information from several sources and concurrently constructs a representation of a text's message" (McLoughlin, 1995, p. 29). Many university students experience challenges in education, in learning particular academic discourses and the development of professional literacy (Alexander, Schallert and Reynolds, 2009). Reading and comprehension of advanced reading material is essential for students in tertiary education, and reading academic journal articles is required to advance their knowledge in different disciplines. How students actually read these journal articles and whether they comprehend what they have read is often a source of conjecture for teachers (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison and Archer, 2001).

### METHOD

Students in a third year undergraduate sport marketing class were provided with an article to read, followed by a learning framework to support their reading. Subsequently they were questioned about both the article and the support framework, covering four main parts to assist with their reading. These four parts represented a main focus review; identification of three major authors; a brief description of each of the three identified authors' contributions and; description of the main implications of the paper (McCrudden and Schraw, 2010). In total, 26 students participated in this study.

### RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results and discussion of the investigated issues students in a sport marketing class face in reading journal articles and the use of a learning framework can be categorised under five themes as mentioned below:

#### 1. Usefulness of the exercise

Two students admitted they did not do the reading, while only one student expressed a negative comment about the exercise generally. All other comments expressed were positive, for example, "Very helpful to determine main themes plus implications for the sport". This suggests that students can benefit from what McCrudden and Schraw (2010) describe as 'relevance instructions' that direct students to what to read within articles and how to read the articles.

#### 2. Usefulness of identification of authors

In terms of author identification the response was mixed with half of the respondents commenting on the difficulties they experienced, for example, "It [learning framework helped] did but the authors were difficult to find. The themes were easier to find". Other, more positive comments included "It encouraged me to go back over the article to identify the authors and their main points which I now remember." This is consistent with the suggestions from past research that the clarity of purpose, assistance in finding journals and guidance in how to read for knowledge structure and meaning are important in assisting students' comprehension (Rourke et al., 2001; Willison and O'Regan, 2007).

#### 3. Usefulness linking to assignment work

Responses were very positive overall. Comments such as "Easy to see what info is presented in the article" were made. Biggs' (2003) concept of constructive alignment proposes that academics need to make sure there is an alignment between any learning task's objectives and its assessment criteria, which seems to fit here.

#### 4. Application of key themes

Again, responses were very positive with remarks, such as, "It helps analyse the requirements". This suggests that students used the learning framework as a support tool in appreciating how academic journal articles embody research in their disciplines (Rourke et al., 2001; Willison and O'Regan, 2007).

#### 5. Future use.

Student's possible use of the learning framework in the future generated mixed responses but generally there was a positive vibe. Comments broadly included that it 'assisted' the student, it 'encouraged them to summarise', and it 'helps clarify and provide information'. This suggests that a supportive learning framework to facilitate students'

mental files or prior knowledge-prior to their reading (Keene and Zimmerman, 2007) is very important to their reading and comprehension.

#### CONCLUSION

This pilot study identifies that sport marketing students at a tertiary institution in Australia believe that they need support in reading discipline-specific journal articles and using a learning framework provided for them can ensure that they better comprehend the reading of these journal articles.

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