ENHANCING CREATIVITY IN STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS THROUGH INTUITIVE DIGITAL MIND-MAPPING AND JOURNAL-KEEPING

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How do we teach students to develop creative solutions to common business and marketing problems? We set out to identify the answer to this basic question by engaging in a systematic examination of two tools that promise to do just that. Yet, the proliferation of online tools that promise to enhance student creativity has also created a conundrum for instructors themselves. While it is interesting to experiment with innovative teaching methods with our students, it is also important to scientifically assess the efficacy of such tools and the benefits to our students through performance improvements on actual assignments. Following Flores and Frankwick's (2013) proposal, we tested two "intuitive thinking" tools (mind mapping and journal keeping) in a classroom setting in order to examine the extent to which they could "activate" a student's intuition to develop a more creative outcome. Specifically, the purpose of our study elicited unconscious thought by students as a means of developing creative intuitions through the use of digital mind mapping and journal keeping. These tools relate to the most popular and useful tools for becoming aware of intuitions (Sadler-Smith & Burke, 2007).

Unconscious Thought Theory (UTT) (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006) states that complex decisions can be better approached through the unconscious and many studies have shown that unconscious thought can lead to superior decisions when compared to conscious thought (See Strick, et al., 2011 for a recent meta-analysis). UTT further suggests that individuals consciously acquire as much information as possible and then leave the weighting and integration of it to the unconscious to arrive at a later judgment. It is stated that intuition is often the result of this process and that intuitions are usually very useful (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006). Interestingly, research has also shown unconscious thought to be goal-directed (Bos, Dijksterhuis, & Baaren, 2008) and that appointing a goal to the unconscious can to some extent steer the intuitive process (Strick & Dijksterhuis, 2011). Unconscious thought is much more powerful than a simple distraction in which the thought process is passive. Unconscious thought is an active thought process (Bos, et al., 2008) that can better organize information in memory (Dijksterhuis, 2004).

The two tools that we chose to use in this study (digital mind mapping and journal keeping) relate to intuition, but also allow us to activate and monitor goal-directedness via students' online engagement with the tools. We are conducting our study by asking students to complete an assignment for an International Marketing class that involves developing a creative marketing strategy related to a case. After turning in their papers, students will be given the opportunity to revise their assignments using one of the two tools discussed above. Both tools are in digital platform, which facilitates the investigators' monitoring of student contributions. No investigator intervention will be made beyond the initial instructions provided to students. We will conduct pre- and post-tests on intuition as well as collect ratings on their assignment's creativity using previously established intuition and creativity scales. Our aim is to measure any noticeable differences in intuitive preferences and levels of creativity in their outputs through the use of such tools.

Our study addresses the need for developing educational tools and processes that encourage not only critical thinking, but also creativity (Eriksson & Hauer, 2004). Based on our findings, we will make recommendations regarding the integration of creativity tools in marketing courses. The study attends to different learning styles, fosters student development, performance and assessment, as well as leverages innovative teaching methods.

References Available upon Request