

MKTG 720 MARKETING AND STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

Dr. Patrick L'Espeir Decosta

Individual Assignment: (Individual mini Critical Appraisal of a Topic)

IMPORTANT DATES FOR ASSESSMENT TASK 3

Words: 1000 to 1500 words (excluding references)

Work approach: By **group for discussion** about claims in marketing and stakeholder communication and consumer behavior in general

Due Date to **submit list of claims** on Wattle: **Thursday 15.08.2019** at 23.45(Week 4)

Work submission: by **individual** members

Due Date (formative) of **individual** outline: **Thursday 30.08.2019** at 23.45 (Week 6)

Due Date (Summative) of individual final mini- CAT: **Saturday 18.10.2019** (Week11)

A. Overview of the Individual Critical Appraisal of a Topic (mini-CAT)

N.B. This is **NOT** a (Big) **CAT** (Refer to CEBMa's Guideline for Critically Appraised Topics (**CAT**) in Management and Organizations available in ASSESSMENTS toggle in your Wattle course site)

This mini-CAT is adapted from the official CEBMa Guideline for Critically Appraised Topics (**CAT**) in Management and Organizations and *is therefore a diluted version* of the **CAT** but with the hope of raising awareness among students of the necessity to critically assess the quality of the evidence or claim that they are supposed to accept without any question.

The goal of the mini-CAT is to help you **learn the steps** involved in assessing “**what is known about**” an intervention, a phenomenon, problematic, claim or practical issue in **scientific literature** by using a *systematic methodology* to “**search**” for primary studies in Marketing, Consumer Behaviour and Stakeholder Communication, and “**critically appraise**” them.

In other words, the mini-CAT assessment wants you to **explore and analyze** the **current state** of the debate [on the practical issue, problematic, intervention, claim or phenomenon] based on **appropriate, deep and comprehensive SEARCH.**

Indeed, this is the opportunity when you will put into practice your database and library search skills honed in your EBM course.

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Learning outcomes of the mini-CAT

1. Identify the problem explicated or implicated in the **statement/claim** provided – **tip**: look for claims that are often offshoots or oversimplification of theoretical explanations
2. Apply the principles of evidence-based management as provided in section C below
3. Explore the current state of the debate on the **question/ claim** at hand
4. Show that you indeed know how to search databases for the right data and information relevant to the mini-CAT question – you may consider looking for meta-analysesⁱ, systematic reviews and/or controlled studies
5. Select the information and evidence that you think are relevant to the mini-CAT question
6. Extract information and evidence relevant to the mini-CAT question based on **year, population, sector, sample size, main findings, and effect size**
7. Assess the trustworthiness of the information and evidence (are they reliable and valid?)
8. Critically analyze the information and evidence collected in view of the mini-CAT question
9. Synthesize the findings of the mini-CAT in a concise statement of a few sentences
10. Reflect on the findings to highlight the limitations of the mini-CAT, the implications for current practice
11. Propose specific recommendations for actions towards the claim based on the findings from the evidence presented in the mini-CAT

For this mini-CAT, you will be required to provide a statement that will require that (i) you go beyond “cause and effect” to (ii) effectively look at how often [frequency/prevalence] the issue at hand as set in the statement or question has been tackled in scientific literature, (iii) at whether what you found in the scientific literature is evidence good enough for marketing practitioners to rely on them in making future decision related to their professional domains, and (iv) you turn into (formulate) an appropriate CAT question related here to procedure, prevalence (frequency), process and procedure.

B. The statement for the mini-CAT – Formulate your own research question

With your group members come up with at least one claim or statement per member in any area of interest to you in the Marketing domain. The statement or claim should be clear, simple and reflective of common knowledge, belief or attitude in Marketing. Group members should help each other write the claims/statements after thorough discussions within the group.

Example

Below is an example of a claim or statement on the effectiveness of tourism policy making (based on theoretical knowledge in the domain)

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“For tourism policy to be effective at a destination, there requires a carefully developed strategic sustainable tourism planning process which requires the involvement of all stakeholders at national, regional and international levels.”

A CAT of the above statement would require that I

1. **Use** the steps of the mini-CAT as described below to
2. **Write** an analytical essay that
3. **Discusses** (using critical and analytical thinking) whether the above statement is correct, to eventually
4. **Synthesize** (conclude and reflect) my findings based on evidence in the scientific literature **about whether what is spelled out in a tourism plan is effectively integrated and implemented in tourism policy.**

C. Steps when writing the mini-CAT (1 to 9) or (1 to 11):

1. **Ascertain the requirement or goal of the mini-CAT question** – provide in the **Introduction** a background that explains the rationale for the mini-CAT (why you are doing a mini-CAT), for the problem it is identifying, and for why the question being asked is important. **In this case, you will have to come up with the question that according to you reflects the mini-CAT.** Specify the rationale for the mini-CAT by addressing the context (in the example I use: tourism sector, planning function at destination, policy function at different levels, characteristics of these two functions), the elements/factors involved and relevant to the problem at hand. [, it would be important that I “reflect” on how these contextual elements together with the stakeholders at the different levels can provide deeper insights in the issues suggested by the mini-CAT.] If necessary, you may develop supplementary questions to help you answer the main question of the mini-CAT.
2. **Search for studies relevant** to the professional context of the question (*In my example:* destination management? levels of planning?) as a way to focus the question and to effectively search for the most relevant evidence. As **a reviewer, ask pertinent and relevant questions to search for studies that are relevant to the context described in the background/introduction.** *In my example:* Questions may include the following:
 - a. Who may be affected by the outcome of this mini-CAT? [Planners? Policy-makers? Managers at destinations? Destinations? Tourists? Governmental departments? Regional organizations? Supranational organizations? Hotels? Attractions?]
 - b. What type of alignment and integration among the articles – in relation to the claim - are you looking for here? Are these articles talking of marketing management techniques, methods that are holistic, sustainable and address somehow either integrally or peripherally the claim you put forth? What are the articles about when you try to link and connect them with the claim? Etc.

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- c. Are there articles out there that consider comparable issues, problems or systems and phenomena related to the claim? How different are they? How would you qualify or characterize the differences? Are they at the level of premises, rationale, theory, method, analytical frames, etc.?
- d. What are the articles trying to accomplish, improve or change? Are their purpose and objectives in line with the outcome they were set to achieve? Are the results in the articles showing dissonance? Are they cognizant of the limitations of the research/study they are presenting?
- e. In which kind of organizations or circumstances are these studies being carried out? Are the units of analysis individuals, companies, institutions, governments, celebrities, brands, products, product lines, etc.?

Tackling the above questions will also help you determine whether the *findings of a study will be generalizable and applicable in the context of your mini-CAT*. In effect, the questions will help answer the question of whether the **Population**, type of **Intervention**, **Comparison**, **Outcome**, and **Context** (PICOC) of interest to the mini-CAT (identified in the lists of questions) are so different from the ones in the studies that come out of your search that their results may be difficult to apply and integrate in your answer.

3. **Define the criteria you will use to identify studies you will include in your mini-CAT.** In other words, pre-specify the criteria for including and excluding studies. You will use these criteria when reviewing the abstracts and/or section and/or full text of those studies that come out of your search. The criteria for inclusion should be guided by your mini-CAT question and objectives. The criteria define the studies that the search strategy is attempting to locate. Examples of inclusion criteria:
 - a. Date – period of publication of types of articles you are looking for
 - b. Language – all articles in English only and other languages if you can speak and write them
 - c. Type of studies you are looking for: empirical studies? Quantitative studies? Qualitative studies? Mixed-method studies? [remember – what is your research question?]
 - d. Study design: What types of study design do you intend include in your search of scientific articles?
 - i. Systematic reviews or meta-analysis
 - ii. Cross sectional studies (surveys) with frequency
 - iii. Case studies, case reports, traditional literature reviews, theoretical papers
 - e. Measurement: what did the studies use as measures? Effects? Presence or absence of processes? Frequency? Correlations?
 - f. Outcome: alignment, integration, implementation, dissonance, inefficiency,
 - g. Context: consumption, market, segmentation, international marketing, social media, mobile marketing, digital marketing, generational demand, etc.
4. **Conduct a structured and transparent search for all relevant studies** in the international research literature using tourism and business related databases at the university. I am arranging for a library to come present a session of information on how

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to search the library databases for the information you require. This will be a skill that is lifelong and that you will use throughout your studies and later on in life.

5. **Apply the following generic search filters to all databases during your search:**
 - a. Scholarly journals that are peer reviewed
 - b. Published in the period 1980 to 2017 for meta-analyses and the period 2000 to 2019 for primary studies
 - c. Articles in English
 - d. Combine different search terms, such as “social marketing” “integrated marketing communication,” “consumer research” etc.

Remember to make the search you have conducted transparent, verifiable and reproducible. *In other words, document the search process preferably in the form of a table that shows which search terms were used, how search terms were combined, and how many studies were found at each and every step.* See page 11 of CEBMA’s guideline to the CAT.

6. **Select the studies from the large number of studies your search** would yield by screening them to check that they meet the inclusion criteria as defined in step 3 above. Screening is done in two stages:
 - a. **Review the abstracts** - read the abstracts found through the searching. Compare each abstract against the inclusion criteria and if the abstract meets the criteria then the full study should be read.
 - b. **Review full studies** – Skim through the main sections of the full article to compare against the inclusion criteria
7. **Extract data and information of the studies you will include in your mini-CAT** by collating the results and other information of the studies included. From each study, information relevant to the CAT question, such as year of publication, research design, sample size, population (e.g. industry, sector, type marketing or advertising activity, levels of organizations, etc.), outcome measures, main findings, effect sizes, weaknesses and the final level of trustworthiness (see step 7 below) should be reported, preferably in the form of a clearly structured table (See example in CEBMA’s guideline for the CAT on p. 14).
8. **Critically appraise the studies you have included in your mini-CAT** by determining whether they are trustworthy (i.e. valid and reliable) or not and rank their level of appropriateness. Simply put, at this stage you need to judge the methodological appropriateness. Unlike the CAT’s classification of articles which is based on determining the methodological appropriateness of effect studies and impact evaluations (see p. 15 in CEBMA’s guideline for the CAT), the mini-CAT question in this assignment does not necessarily examine cause-and-effect relationship but rather a non-effect or non-impact question related to the prevalence or frequency of phenomenon (how many/how often do people/organizations...?). To that effect, a cross sectional study may

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be the most appropriate study design (Petticrew and Roberts, 2003). In other words, just the research design (and not the statistical jumbo mambo) should give you an idea of the quality of the studies for which you are looking. You will need to demonstrate **critical and analytical appreciation** of the study designs you found in meta-analyses, critical reviews and journal articles, methods used, samples, and frequency measurement (% , no. of times, averages, etc.)

9. Provide an overview of the (list of) main findings relevant to the requirements of the mini-CAT question by
 - a. providing an overview of the most common definition(s),
 - b. Presenting the main evidence from the mini-CAT, including its level of trustworthiness and effect size in the form of a table (intellectually engage with what you wrote in step 7)
 10. Conclude your mini-CAT by synthesizing the main findings on the CAT question in a very concise statement that actually answers the question. Tell us in the conclusion whether the scientific literature that you have scoured support the claim made in the statement set for this essay
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11. Explicitly describe any limitations of the mini-CAT you have conducted and discuss how they possibly impacted the findings of the assessment – these limitations may be related to the search approach, search terms, the extraction of data, the findings and the answer to the question
 12. Spell out clearly the implications of your findings and based on the evidence found, what would be your specific recommendations for action for the professional context involved.

D. Structure of your mini-CAT essay

The following is merely one suggested frame/structure for your mini-CAT essay. You may want to take a completely different approach with a different structure but make sure you that you can effectively show you are achieving the requirements of the mini-CAT and successfully demonstrate you have fully considered and implemented the steps involved in the mini-CAT. To that effect, you **may consider including in the appendix** tables that will explicitly show:

- (i) the terms (alternative and academic) you looked for to define the major constructs in the mini-CAT question – use thesaurus, synonyms (related to b. search descriptions part of your essay)
- (ii) the search terms you finally **select** and the principles you used for your selection,
- (iii) the search queries from the major tourism databases specifying the results for (a) each (separate) of the search terms selected and (b) the terms in combination

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- a. **Introduction** – relates to steps 1, 2 [overview, rationale to the mini-CAT, the issue/problem at hand and developing related research question]. Remember to show that you know how to identify the problem here and focus the question
- b. **Search descriptions** – relates to steps 3, 4, 5 & 6 and related tables of studies selected and data extracted in the appendix. At this point you should give us a snapshot table of your search terms, combinations of search terms and no. of results. You may have a separate snapshot table for (i) terms and alternative terms used from thesaurus, (ii) search terms selected and principles used for selection, and (iii) search queries from the major tourism databases
- c. **Critical Appraisal and presentation of findings**-- relates to steps 7 & 8
- d. **Conclusion**
- e. **Limitations**
- f. **Implications**
- g. **References**
- h. **Appendix with snapshots of all the tables that you think will provide granular details of the information that you searched**

See examples of mini-CATs in various domains will be made available in the toggle for the mini-CAT assessment.

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Patrick L'Espoir Decosta

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ⁱ *Meta-analysis refers to the analysis of analyses. I use it to refer to the statistical analysis of a large collection of results from individual studies for the purpose of integrating findings. It connotes a rigorous alternative to the casual, narrative discussions of research studies which typify our attempts to make sense of the rapidly expanding literature (Gene Glass, 1976).*