

Software Used in Principles of Marketing: What are the principles? And would software help?

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Before using software for principles of marketing, it would be helpful to provide a list of marketing principles. Randy Schultz and I tried to do this, but we could find neither grounded principles nor even sensible principles in our study of marketing textbooks (see full-text paper at <http://jscottarmstrong.com>). Indeed, when I ask students who have completed basic marketing courses to describe useful principles that they have learned, they are unable to do so. This occurs even when I use alternative wording such as “Describe a useful technique or concept that you learned in marketing.” I get answers such as “I learned how to think about marketing,” “buy low and sell high,” or “I learned that advertising is important.” You can easily replicate my findings. Start an advanced course in marketing by giving students ten minutes to write about useful marketing principles that they learned in their basic marketing course. Ask them to submit this anonymously as it can be embarrassing.

Although principles do not appear in basic marketing principles books, useful principles in marketing do exist. I have begun a website for listing principles and I invite additional nominations on that site. My feeble start is provided at <http://marketingprinciples.org>. John Rossiter has also organized an international team of experts to address this issue.

Once marketing principles have been identified, one might ask whether software can contribute to learning. I have spent much of the past ten years on developing a decision support system for my advertising courses (you are welcome to use the system in your courses; it is located at <http://advertisingprinciples.com>). While the system seemed to help, I have now concluded that it is not the most efficient way to transmit the content. Why? Because most students act like clerks who have to respond to a decision support system. They do this with no desire to understand. For example, at one point, about one-third of the system became inoperative; despite this, all students in the class continued to provide inputs and were unaware that their inputs had no effect on their summary reports. As a result, I have spent the last year converting the decision support system into a book. So far, the book seems to work better than the decision support system.