

Research Article

INSPIRE From the Classroom to the Workplace: Role Clarity and AI Efficacy in Marketing Education

Sarah Fischbach¹, Michael Pettiette², Wangari Njathi¹

¹ Communication, Pepperdine University, USA, ² Business, University of Houston, USA

Keywords: Marketing Pedagogy, ChatGPT, Role Conflict, Pedagogy, role clarity, AI efficacy, Generative AI, Ambiguity

<https://doi.org/10.63963/001c.167012>

Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education

Vol. 34, Issue 2, 2026

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into marketing practice presents new challenges and opportunities for marketing education, yet little research examines how students, faculty, and industry professionals navigate divergent expectations for AI use across institutions. This study addresses that gap using Role Theory from the organizational behavior literature, drawing on three sources: industry data (N = 521), a faculty survey (N = 24), and student survey responses from three universities (N = 574). Industry data suggests AI use in the workplace is still taking shape rather than fully settled; against that backdrop, we hypothesize that AI Efficacy and Classroom AI Preparation both differ across university locations, consistent with self-efficacy theory and Role Theory's expectation that unclear or inconsistent role expectations may be associated with lower confidence and preparation. A related research question asks whether differing Role Clarity across institutions may help interpret these differences. Among spontaneous open-ended comments about AI-use expectations, students more often described ambiguity than clear policy understanding. Synthesizing these insights, the paper introduces the INSPIRE Model, a framework for adaptive AI integration in marketing curricula, and calls for further research testing classroom interventions.

Introduction

AI's ubiquity and exponential growth, particularly in the field of marketing, are fast evolving: from automated personalization, creative design, and customer-journey mapping to data-driven performance tracking.

In marketing, GenAI is inevitable. All ads will be created by machines. All ads will be placed by machines. All ads will be seen by machines. What are we doing to get ready? All the players including Marketing Professionals, Professors, and Students need to have clearly defined expectations and roles related to GenAI sooner rather than later, so that we can tackle this together. (Greg Stuart, CEO of MMA Global)

Building on research emphasizing the need for classrooms to adapt to evolving industry standards (Reavey et al., 2021), this study introduces the organizational behavior concept of Role Conflict into the marketing classroom to deepen the understanding of student and instructor experiences. Adopting new technologies remains a central priority in marketing education (Crittenden et al., 2019), with generative AI emerging as one of the most recent tools influencing the field. Students' GenAI use is shaped by motivation and self-esteem, as well as concerns about automation (Pavone, 2025).

AI tools such as ChatGPT remain imperfect but increasingly influential in marketing practice (Guha et al., 2024).

MMA Global and its Marketing Organization Strategy Think Tank (MOSTT) work with academia to address concerns in the changing market. For example, MMA Global has collaborated with researchers on work examining the organizational capabilities needed to improve marketing effectiveness (Rodríguez-Vilá et al., 2020) and the organizational changes needed to address AI-mediated consumer search (Pettiette & Whitler, 2026). The think tank research collected by MMA Global (Rodríguez-Vilá et al., 2025; Rodríguez-Vilá & Bharadwaj, 2024) addresses the needs of the marketing industry in terms of AI. These industry findings indicate that professional norms around AI usage may differ sharply from the academic environments in which students are trained, reinforcing the cross-contextual nature of Role Conflict this study examines.

The MMA Global dataset (N = 521) offers useful comparative insight, with more than 80% of respondents in managerial roles across financial services, retail, and technology sectors. The MMA industry survey identified task efficiency and cost reduction as the most common AI applications. Table 1 provides examples from an MMA white paper and data analyses illustrating how organizations are leveraging AI to achieve these outcomes (Rodríguez-Vilá et al., 2025; Rodríguez-Vilá & Bharadwaj, 2024). Taken together, these practitioner data suggest that GenAI is being applied across a wide range of marketing tasks, rather than within a single clearly bounded use case. This range of applications

Table 1. Industry Use of AI: Highlighting Efficacy and Cost Reduction

Accelerated Task Efficiency	Lowering Costs
• Creation of promotional messages (N = 84, 16%) • Generating content for owned channels (N = 74, 14%) • Enhancing customer-facing chat and support (N = 59, 11%) • Generating intelligence on competitors and brands (N = 59, 11%) • Discovering new growth opportunities (N = 57, 11%)	• Discovering opportunities in new markets (N = 62, 12%) • Managing marketing projects and processes (N = 61, 12%) • Informing product development strategies (N = 57, 11%) • Generating promotional messages (N = 55, 11%) • Producing content for owned channels (N = 54, 10%)

raised a related educational question for our study: whether students are being given sufficiently clear and consistent expectations for how AI should be used across classroom and workplace contexts.

According to the MMA dataset, approximately one out of every ten businesses collaborated with university students on projects integrating AI into the classroom. This is important because faculty and students are applying these skills in the classroom and learning to use the tools expected in industry. [Table 2](#) provides insight into how industry leaders see the biggest differences when utilizing AI in the workplace.

The technology is transforming industry processes and prompting educators to reconsider how marketing curricula prepare students for AI-driven contexts. Recent analyses characterize this as a technology-augmented era reshaping both marketing and marketing education (Grewal et al., 2025; Pettiette et al., 2026a). Firms across sectors, ranging from fashion, consumer goods, hospitality, beverages and more, now employ generative AI for content creation, personalization, and campaign optimization (Graham, 2024; Ivanova, 2025; McMahon, 2025; Powell, 2025; Sloane, 2024; Springer, 2023). This research helps address a gap in the literature on how to integrate AI into the classroom to improve students' AI efficacy as they enter the job market (Pettiette et al., 2026a, 2026b).

While AI technologies present substantial opportunities for innovation in marketing education, they also introduce new pedagogical and ethical complexities. On one hand, AI can foster creativity, adaptive learning, and personalized feedback, supporting the development of digital literacy and higher-order thinking skills (Grewal et al., 2025; Mucharraz y Cano et al., 2023). On the other hand, uncriti-

cal or excessive reliance on AI tools risks undermining deep learning by automating tasks that traditionally require reflection, analysis, and synthesis. Scholars have cautioned that such over-reliance may inhibit students' ability to develop original thought and judgment, particularly when AI is used as a substitute rather than a scaffold for learning (Athaluri et al., 2023; Pavone, 2025). These dual dynamics underscore the importance of guiding students toward intentional, reflective use of AI as both a tool and a topic of learning.

RQ1: Role Clarity, Conflict, and Ambiguity

This study is guided by one overarching research question, with formal hypotheses developed after the theoretical framework is presented. RQ1 asks to what extent differing levels of Role Clarity across institutions might plausibly contribute to between-institution differences in AI Efficacy and Classroom AI Preparation. We explore this descriptively through three independent sources: industry benchmark data, a supplementary faculty survey, and a coded thematic analysis of students' open-ended survey responses, reported in the Results section.

The MMA Global dataset provides a benchmark snapshot of workplace GenAI use; its range of applications prompted us to consider whether students encounter similarly varied expectations in educational settings. Building on that benchmark, we draw on student and faculty survey evidence to examine where academic AI-use expectations appear aligned with, or misaligned with, emerging professional norms. To examine this issue, we bring together an industry benchmark, faculty perspectives, and student survey responses to consider how AI-use expectations move

Table 2. Industry Drivers of GenAI Integrated into the Workplace

Industry Leader Tasks	N (% of Respondents)	Examples of Task Improvement
Data infrastructure & quality "Making sure clean, tagged first-party data is available"	39 (7.5%)	Data quality is foundational. Marketers view accessible, clean, and structured data as essential for effective Gen AI use.
Talent acquisition / new roles "Hiring prompt-engineers and data scientists into the team"	36 (6.9%)	AI adoption is people powered. Hiring new roles and upskilling existing talent are as important as choosing tools.
Leadership commitment & mandates "C-suite directive to experiment with Gen AI in every campaign"	34 (6.5%)	Mandates matter. Clear executive direction fuels experimentation and removes adoption friction.
Training & education programs "Rolling out bootcamps and certifications for marketers"	34 (6.5%)	Structured learning pays off. Organizations that formalized Gen AI education saw broader internal uptake.
Test-and-learn culture "Running small proofs-of-concept before scaling"	32 (6.2%)	Experimentation builds confidence. A culture that rewards small-scale testing helps reduce risk and resistance.

between workplace and classroom contexts. The study concludes with considerations for educators on how AI-use expectations might be clarified across courses, and outlines directions for further research on Role Conflict and AI efficacy in marketing education.

Bringing Role Theory into the Classroom

Role theory explains patterned behavior by locating people in social positions and emphasizing the expectations attached to those positions (e.g., instructor, student) and to their relationships (e.g., course to course, class to workplace) (Biddle, 1986, 2013). Roles are broadly defined as behavioral expectations associated with positions in a social structure and serve as norms for evaluating appropriate conduct (Anglin et al., 2022; Biddle, 1986). Canonical reviews identify several complementary perspectives: structural-functional (roles as rules that organize social systems) and symbolic-interactionist (roles as interpreted and negotiated in interaction), as well as organizational and cognitive strands that foreground expectations, identity, and coping with role strain (Anglin et al., 2022; Biddle, 1986). These perspectives jointly clarify why changing AI policies across courses can generate different perceived demands, while students simultaneously interpret and negotiate those demands as part of transforming their role identities as learners and future marketers.

We adopt Role Theory as the primary framework because the central phenomenon under study, specifically inconsistent AI expectations across courses, faculty, and workplaces, is fundamentally about conflicting role demands across social contexts, which Role Theory is purpose-built to explain (Anglin et al., 2022; Biddle, 1986; Harnisch, 2012). Role Theory distinguishes between “role taking,” in which actors conform to existing expectations, and “role making,” in which actors creatively reconstruct their roles in response to conflicting or vague demands (Harnisch, 2012; Turner, 1962). When AI policies differ across courses and between academic and professional contexts, students are compelled toward role making; they must negotiate incompatible expectations rather than simply enact a stable role.

A similar dynamic may operate at the student level: when AI-use expectations are inconsistent across institutional contexts, students may have difficulty forming stable Role Clarity, which may be associated with lower AI efficacy (Anglin et al., 2022; Pettiette, 2018).

This distinction also clarifies what makes the present moment in marketing education distinctive. Ewing and Ewing (2017) demonstrated that experiential learning methods alone are insufficient to produce work-ready marketing graduates unless students’ underlying role-identity standards are first realigned, a process that requires consistent, program-wide feedback that resolves rather than amplifies Role Conflict. Similarly, Amigo and Lloyd (2021) found that experiential learning environments place students, faculty, and workplace supervisors simultaneously in liminal, in-between role states that generate productive but also destabilizing identity uncertainty. The introduction of GenAI into the marketing classroom intensifies precisely this kind

of liminality: students are neither fully “AI users” nor fully “non-users,” and neither academic nor professional norms yet provide a stable role to inhabit. We therefore position experiential learning as a complementary within-course mechanism (described further in Method) and Role Theory as the overarching lens for explaining why students’ AI efficacy varies systematically across institutional contexts.

Contemporary role-theory reviews emphasize that conflict and enrichment are not opposite ends of a single continuum but conceptually distinct, with different predictors and outcomes (Anglin et al., 2022). In the classroom, students, particularly when encountering new technologies, may receive conflicting guidance on how to apply new skills. Classroom activities and assignments grounded in experiential learning help students build confidence through doing, observing, thinking, and planning as they prepare to enter the workplace (A. Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Prior studies have also used experiential learning to design classroom assignments (e.g., Fischbach & Guerrero, 2018). As AI enters the classroom, students may experience conflict when rules for AI use differ across courses, but they may also benefit when AI-supported practices in one course build confidence or skills that transfer to another. This type of conflict is common during technological disruption, especially when expectations are poorly communicated or unevenly implemented (Horst & Moisaner, 2015). Clarifying these distinctions through the lens of Role Clarity helps explain mixed student reactions to classroom AI and suggests when policy differences are more likely to be experienced as stressful versus growth-promoting. A summary of recent research on role theory can be found in the [Table 3](#).

Role Conflict: In the Classroom

Role Conflict and Role Clarity have been examined in the marketing classroom in relation to job performance and the role of the sales professional (Donnelly & Ivancevich, 1975). In organizational behavior, Role Ambiguity has also been linked to reduced self-efficacy in stressful work contexts (Tang & Chang, 2010). An important note regarding perception: experienced Role Clarity, conflict, and ambiguity are largely measured by perception of the people evaluated in the academic literature (Pettiette, 2018). Research suggests that Role Conflict, and the reduced Role Clarity associated with it, can diminish individual creativity and innovativeness (Donnelly & Ivancevich, 1975; Lyons, 1971; Pettiette, 2018; Tang & Chang, 2010). Therefore, considering the introduction of AI into the marketing classroom, Role Conflict arises when individuals face incompatible expectations across roles, whereas Role Clarity reflects mutual understanding of responsibilities and norms (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Tang & Chang, 2010). For students and faculty, inconsistent AI-use policies across courses exemplify such conflict. For example, a student encountering one AI policy in one professor’s course and a contradictory policy in another’s, while simultaneously facing equally divergent expectations in industry settings such as a guest lecture, an internship, or a part-time job, confronts the kind of incompatible, ambiguous signals that plausibly give rise to this role-conflict phenomenon. The Role Conflict and Role

Table 3. Recent Role Theory Literature Review

Article	Area of Research	Key Insights
Anglin et al. (2022)	Management Research	Understanding how roles are created, communicated, interpreted, and changed is essential for explaining employee behavior, leadership effectiveness, workplace relationships, and organizational outcomes in modern organizations
Biddle (2013)	Social Development	Human behavior is best understood through the interaction of role expectations (what others expect), role identities (how individuals see themselves), and role behaviors (what people do). Together, these three elements explain how individuals' function within organizations and society.
Floyd & Lane (2000)	Management Research	Cornerstone to how middle managers drive innovation and manage strategy implementation in complex industries. It is most relevant to established, complex organizations that must balance daily operations with the need to innovate.
Harnisch (2012)	Leadership/ Foreign Policy Research	Role theory remains one of the primary analytical tools used to bridge Foreign Policy Analysis (which focuses on human decision-makers and cognitive biases) with International Relations theory (which focuses on structural and material power).
Horst & Moisander (2015)	Media Management Research	Middle managers play a critical role in continuously balancing and navigating three interconnected paradoxes that emerge from the ongoing conflict between established organizational practices and the need for innovation and change.
Shalley & Gilson (2004)	Leadership Research	Research explores when workers are intrinsically motivated by an encouraging culture and autonomous tasks, they naturally become more curious, cognitively flexible, persistent through obstacles, and willing to take the conceptual risks required for breakthrough innovation.
Tang & Chang (2010)	Management Research	Managers must actively minimize role ambiguity by providing highly detailed job descriptions, explicit performance metrics, and transparent feedback loops. Organizations should invest in training programs designed to boost self-efficacy, equipping workers with the psychological resilience needed to handle uncertainties.

Ambiguity dynamics discussed above suggest that institutional context matters for how students experience AI in the classroom, motivating the hypotheses below.

H1: Self-Efficacy and AI

We hypothesize that AI Efficacy differs across university locations (H1), tested via a Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's post hoc comparisons (Table 4). This is consistent with Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy framework, under which confidence develops through learning experiences, feedback, and contextual cues. Because institutional environments differ in how AI is introduced, supported, and normalized, students' AI Efficacy is expected to vary across university locations.

H2: Classroom AI Preparation and Role Clarity

We further hypothesize that Classroom AI Preparation differs across university locations (H2), tested via a Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's post hoc comparisons (Table 5). Role Theory suggests that clearer and more consistent expectations can help students understand how emerging tools fit within their academic and professional roles. Because institutional approaches to AI guidance may differ, students' perceived Classroom AI Preparation is expected to vary across university locations, a possibility explored further under RQ1, introduced above.

Method

This research draws on a survey of students across three universities to examine the hypotheses using classroom-based AI learning activities. We incorporate workplace data

from MMA to highlight professional expectations. This use of secondary-source evidence is consistent with prior work on improving marketing curricula (Reavey et al., 2021). Survey data provides the primary empirical tests in educational settings; the MMA dataset is used as a contextual benchmark that informs interpretation of role expectations and highlights where classroom norms may conflict with workplace norms. To provide additional descriptive context on the faculty perspective, a brief supplementary survey was administered to marketing faculty at the Marketing Educators Association. Given the small sample size ($N = 24$) and exploratory nature of this component, results are treated as descriptive triangulation only and are not used to test hypotheses.

The primary quantitative outcomes analyzed in this study are AI Efficacy and Classroom AI Preparation. AI Efficacy refers to students' self-perceived confidence in their ability to use AI tools effectively in academic and marketing-related contexts. This construct is adapted from Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy framework, later applied in ethical research contexts (Fischbach, 2018), and is contextualized here for educational technology use. Classroom AI Preparation refers to students' perception that their coursework is preparing them for an AI-driven marketing future, based on the survey item "Do you feel your classroom is preparing you for an AI marketing driven future?" Both constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." Experiential learning is not treated as a measured construct in the present study; rather, it served as the pedagogical rationale for designing two applied AI-based marketing tasks, the Email A/B Testing assignment and the LinkedIn A/B Testing assignment (Appendix B and Appendix C), consistent with Kolb's (A. Kolb & Kolb, 2005) em-

phasis on active, applied tasks as a vehicle for experiential learning. Role Clarity, Role Conflict, and Role Ambiguity are explored descriptively through RQ1, drawing on the between-institution comparisons reported in the Results, the qualitative faculty survey data, industry benchmark data, and open-ended student responses (see Appendix E for illustrative examples and Appendix F for the complete coded response set). These exploratory analyses are used to interpret the institutional differences observed in H1 and H2, not to test a causal mechanism; the analysis was not specified in advance.

The complete survey instruments, including AI-related classroom assignments and corresponding student tasks, are provided in Appendix A. Collectively, these datasets provide a comprehensive exploratory view of AI integration across educational and professional contexts, allowing for comparison among students' learning experiences, industry expectations, and faculty perspectives on teaching and policy development.

Student ChatGPT Study

Participants completed a structured AI-based learning task followed by a survey assessing AI Efficacy, Classroom AI Preparation, and open-ended perceptions of AI use in classroom contexts. For the ChatGPT study, students completed the AI Email or LinkedIn Marketing assignment described above. The two assignments were procedural variations designed to provide students with comparable, hands-on AI-based marketing tasks (Appendix B, Appendix C); assignment type is described further in those appendices. The assignment was launched consistently across three universities: (1) University A is a small private school in the West, (2) University B is a large public school in the South and (3) University C is a large private school in the Midwest. Data were collected from Spring 2024 through Spring 2025 semesters.

Results

To examine differences in the two outcome variables (Classroom AI Preparation and AI Efficacy) across the grouping variable of university location, non-parametric analyses were conducted. Due to violations of the normality assumption and the ordinal nature of the data, a series of omnibus Kruskal-Wallis H tests were performed. For all significant omnibus tests, post-hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted using Dunn's test. To maintain family-wise error rates and protect against Type I errors from multiple comparisons, significance values for all pairwise tests were adjusted using Bonferroni correction. Statistical significance for the omnibus tests was evaluated at the $p = .05$ level. All statistical procedures were performed using SPSS statistical software. A total of $N = 574$ participants were included in the study. Of the 574 participants, 10 did not report a university affiliation and are excluded from institution-level comparisons; 2 left all open-ended items blank and are excluded from the qualitative coding denominator ($N = 572$). All students completed the assignment and survey through the online Qualtrics survey platform with a completion rate

of 98% [University A ($n = 104$), University B ($n = 187$), and University C ($n = 273$)]. Participants included sophomores (33%), juniors (34%), and seniors (31%), with 62% identifying as female.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to evaluate differences in AI Efficacy scores across the three university locations. The omnibus test revealed a statistically significant difference among the locations, $H(2) = 6.46$, $p = .040$. To identify specific differences between the universities, post-hoc pairwise comparisons were performed using Dunn's test with a Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons. The adjusted pairwise comparisons reveal that only the difference between University A and University C was statistically significant (test statistic = -77.43 , adjusted $p = .036$), with University C demonstrating a higher mean rank. No statistically significant differences were observed between University A and University B or between the University B and University C (adjusted $p = .180$). The complete post-hoc pairwise results are detailed in [Table 4](#).

A Kruskal-Wallis test evaluated differences in preparedness scores across the three university locations. Dunn's post-hoc pairwise comparisons with a Bonferroni adjustment revealed that University B differed significantly from both University A (test statistic = -84.41 , adjusted $p < .001$) and University C (test statistic = 71.71 , adjusted $p < .001$). Conversely, no statistically significant difference in preparedness was found between University A and University C (test statistic = -12.71 , adjusted $p = 1.00$). See [Table 5](#) for full details.

Based on the mean ranks, University B demonstrated significantly higher preparedness scores than both University A and University C, which did not differ from each other. A post-hoc Dunn's test with Bonferroni correction was completed for each significant omnibus test to prevent false positives.

Additional pairwise differences also emerged across institutions in perceived preparedness for the future. Together, these findings suggest that institutional context contributes to meaningful variation in students' AI-related experiences and perceptions, with implications for their overall learning. Both hypotheses were supported: AI Efficacy differed significantly across university locations ([Table 4](#), H1), and Classroom AI Preparation also differed significantly across university locations ([Table 5](#), H2). See [Table 6](#) for descriptive statistics by location.

RQ1 asked whether differing levels of Role Clarity might plausibly contribute to the between-institution differences observed in H1 and H2. A coded thematic analysis of students' open-ended survey responses provides one piece of exploratory evidence: in the coding of 47 of 572 students (8.22%) spontaneously described experiencing Role Conflict or Role Ambiguity regarding AI use, compared with only 10 of 572 (1.75%) who described a clear, single understanding of whether AI use was permitted or prohibited in their context, even though no survey item asked about institutional policy directly. Because these responses were spontaneous and not elicited by a direct Role Conflict scale, the percentages should be interpreted as descriptive evidence rather than prevalence estimates. Descriptively, Uni-

Table 4. Dunn's Post Hoc Pairwise Comparisons of Locations Using Bonferroni Correction

Comparison Pair	Test Statistic	Standard Error	Standardized Test Statistic	Unadjusted p	Adjusted p
University A – University B	-52.57	31.38	-1.68	.094	.282
University A – University C	-77.43	30.85	-2.51	.012	.036
University B–University C	-24.87	13.21	-1.88	.060	.180

Note: Significant values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons $p < .05$.

Table 5. Dunn's Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons of University Preparedness Scores

Comparison Pair	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Standardized Test Statistic	Unadjusted p	Adjusted p
University A – University C	-12.71	18.20	-0.70	.485	1.00
University A – University B	-84.41	19.30	-4.37	<.001	<.001
University C – University B	71.71	14.94	4.80	<.001	<.001

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Classroom AI Preparation and AI Efficacy Across University Locations

Location	Classroom AI Preparation <i>Mdn</i>	Classroom AI Preparation IQR	AI Efficacy Median	AI Efficacy IQR
University A	3.00	2.00	2.08	1.02
University B	4.00	1.00	2.50	1.08
University C	3.00	2.00	2.67	1.33

Note: *Mdn*=Median; *IQR*=Interquartile Range. Classroom AI Preparation values are based on the survey item: "Do you feel your classroom is preparing you for an AI marketing-driven future?" rated on the same 5-point scale as AI Efficacy (1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree); raw survey export codes have been rescaled to this 1-5 metric for comparability.

versity B, the institution with significantly higher reported Classroom AI Preparation (Table 5), also had the lowest rate of student-reported Role Conflict or Ambiguity (6.4% of its students), compared with 8.7% and 9.5% at Universities A and C respectively, though cell sizes here are too small to test this formally.

A supplementary descriptive survey of marketing faculty ($N = 24$, Marketing Educator Faculty) provides additional context consistent with the student findings. Forty-three percent of faculty respondents described their AI use as primarily surface-level or exploratory, and many cited limited institutional guidance on how to integrate AI into their courses. Faculty comments varied widely, with some describing AI policy in the classroom as "the wild west," reflecting the kind of inconsistent expectations that Role Theory would predict generate Role Ambiguity downstream for students. Thirty-six percent of faculty respondents cited limited leadership support as a barrier to more systematic AI integration.

Considering industry, faculty, and student data, these three independent, descriptive sources are consistent with the idea that differing Role Clarity is a plausible contributing factor to the patterns observed in H1 and H2, though this study's design does not permit a direct causal test of that relationship. The full set of 59 coded responses, drawn from 57 unique students (a small number of whom contributed more than one relevant response across the four open-ended items) and organized by survey item and by whether they reflect Clarity or Conflict/Ambiguity, is reported verbatim in Appendix F. Our coding was intentionally conservative, offered here in full for transparency.

Practical Recommendations for Educators: The INSPIRE Model and Application

Integrating artificial intelligence into marketing education requires educators to move beyond isolated experimentation and adopt frameworks that support pedagogical innovation and ethical responsibility. Its connection to AI lies not in the technology itself, but in how AI use may challenge existing frames of reference.

Grounded in Role Theory (Anglin et al., 2022; Biddle, 1986), the INSPIRE Model treats AI integration as a problem of cross-context expectation clarity rather than of technology adoption. Within that lens, INSPIRE operationalizes three established pedagogical mechanisms in service of Role Clarity: curriculum agility (Wymbs, 2011) for adapting course design to a fast-moving tool, constructive alignment (Zahay et al., 2022) for tying activities and assessments to explicit learning outcomes, and experiential learning (A. Kolb & Kolb, 2005) for building competence through applied AI tasks. We propose INSPIRE as a practical guide for educators seeking to promote student efficacy, career readiness, and responsible AI use, with its stages aimed at making AI-use expectations visible and consistent across courses. The Model includes seven interrelated stages. The model is theoretically grounded and evidence informed. Where appropriate, each stage is linked to empirical patterns observed in the present study, while other stages are grounded primarily in established pedagogical theory and offered as directions for future classroom testing, introduced as each stage is discussed below and summarized together in Appendix D.

Integrate. Incorporate AI tools within existing course structures to support learning outcomes and reinforce core marketing concepts. Grounded in constructive alignment (Zahay et al., 2022), integration should ensure that AI activities, objectives, and assessments are mutually reinforcing. Embedding AI across multiple courses, rather than limiting it to a single elective, demonstrates its relevance to marketing practice and workplace readiness. Clearly stating whether AI use is permitted, required, or prohibited for each outcome makes expectations explicit and reduces Role Ambiguity (Biddle, 1986; Zahay et al., 2022). Student-perceived Classroom AI Preparation varied significantly across institutions (Dunn's adj p less than .001), with University B reporting notably stronger preparation than both University A and University C, consistent with constructive alignment's premise that integrated, curriculum-wide AI exposure may shape student experience more than isolated course-level exposure.

Navigate. Guide students in exploring AI tools while critically evaluating their capabilities, limitations, and ethical implications. Instructors should help students compare institutional, course, and workplace norms for AI use, then codify agreed boundaries for tasks, clarifying expectations and reducing strain from conflicting roles (Biddle, 1986; Kumar et al., 2024). This stage addresses a gap suggested by the MMA dataset: industry leaders apply AI to specific tasks such as promotional content creation and competitive intelligence generation. Left undiscussed, this kind of task-specific gap is exactly what Role Theory predicts will generate Role Ambiguity (Biddle, 1986), pointing to a need for instructional approaches that make professional AI use visible and navigable. Open-ended student responses echo this risk directly: one participant described AI as a tool that "underachieving students use it as a crutch," while another called relying on it "a lazy short cut to doing the work myself" (see Appendix E for additional examples).

Scaffold. Design AI-based assignments that progress from foundational exposure to advanced application, enabling students to develop both conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. This approach aligns with Wymbs's (2011) call for modular, adaptive curriculum design in which learning evolves with technological change. Sequenced activities help students translate theory into applied skill, strengthen self-efficacy through incremental mastery, and sustain curricular relevance. Program-level coordination can include a shared AI statement and staged permissions for use, ensuring consistent expectations across courses while minimizing Role Conflict and preserving curricular agility (Anglin et al., 2022; Wymbs, 2011). This stage is informed by the significant between-institution variation in AI Efficacy ($H(2) = 6.46$, $p = .040$), where University C outperformed University A (adj $p = .036$), consistent with curriculum agility's premise that how AI exposure is sequenced shapes students' confidence in using it as a learning tool.

Practice. Engage students in applying AI tools to authentic marketing tasks such as content creation, campaign analysis, and data visualization. Experiential projects bridge theory and practice, reflecting marketing educa-

tion's long-standing emphasis on applied learning (Gremmer et al., 2000; D. Kolb, 1984). Using AI to solve realistic problems builds procedural competence and self-efficacy by aligning coursework with professional expectations. Requiring AI-use disclosure, prompt logs, and side-by-side originals clarifies performance criteria and accountability, reducing perceived risk and reinforcing efficacy development (Kumar et al., 2024). Consistent with experiential learning theory (D. Kolb, 1984), authentic practice, rather than passive exposure, likely builds the applied confidence students need to meet the task-specific AI demands documented in the MMA dataset

Interpret. Provide structured opportunities for students to examine the ethical, social, and managerial implications of AI in marketing. Guided discussions and case analyses help students see AI not only as a functional tool but as a force shaping decision-making, trust, and equity. Dialogues on bias, transparency, and accountability promote responsible engagement, while comparing classroom and professional policies helps students reconcile role expectations amid technological disruption (Biddle, 1986; Pettiette, 2018). This stage responds to the documented divergence between professional AI norms in the MMA dataset and the inconsistent academic policies students reported across institutions, which RQ1 identifies as a plausible contributor to cross-context tension and reduced AI efficacy.

Reflect. Embed reflection throughout AI-related coursework to help students connect new experiences with prior knowledge and developing professional identities. Structured activities, such as journals, peer dialogue, and guided debriefing, enable learners to examine assumptions and track changes in confidence and understanding. Amigo and Lloyd (2021) describe experiential learning environments as inherently liminal, unstable in-between spaces for students, faculty, and workplace supervisors alike; AI intensifies this liminality by adding a layer of normative uncertainty, as students are unsure whether their role as a learner permits, requires, or prohibits AI use, and that uncertainty varies course by course. Structured reflection helps students articulate and work through these competing expectations, supporting the kind of role making that transforms unresolved conflict into adaptive professional identity development (Harnisch, 2012; Turner, 1962). Prompts should invite students to identify unclear or conflicting expectations, describe how they resolved tensions, and articulate how their role identity as learners and future marketers evolved (Anglin et al., 2022). This stage is grounded in the range of orientations toward AI visible across students' open-ended responses, from openly skeptical ("AI makes me uncomfortable in general"; "How scary AI is to think about") to confident and ownership-oriented ("the confidence of filtering the important information in a professional way that I wanted to share"), a spread consistent with the role-making process that structured reflection is designed to support (Harnisch, 2012; see Appendix E). Because this study relies on a single post-task survey rather than a pre/post design, these responses are best read as illustrating the range of student orientations present at one

The INSPIRE Model Cycle

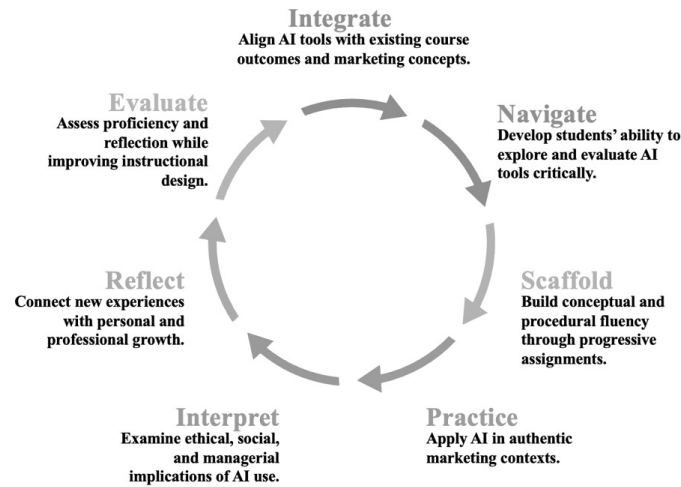


Figure 1. The INSPIRE Model for AI Integration in Marketing Education.

point in time, not as evidence of change within individual students over the course of the study.

Evaluate. Conclude each instructional cycle by assessing both students' technical proficiency and their reflective growth with AI tools. Evaluation should move beyond grading to include formative feedback loops that inform students, faculty, and institutional stakeholders about learning outcomes and curriculum relevance. Incorporating multiple perspectives (student self-assessment, peer review, and practitioner input) supports evidence-based curriculum refinement and ensures AI integration remains adaptive, ethical, and industry-aligned. Findings should inform revisions to shared policies, rubrics, and exemplars, enhancing transparency and reducing ambiguity across courses (Kumar et al., 2024; Zahay et al., 2022). This stage draws on the institutional differences noted above, suggesting that ongoing evaluation and feedback practices, not only the AI tools themselves, may help explain differing student outcomes across institutional contexts. See [Figure 1](#).

The INSPIRE stages aim to clarify expectations and reduce ambiguity across courses; whether this supports higher AI efficacy and skills transfer remains a question for empirical follow-up (Anglin et al., 2022; Biddle, 1986; Kumar et al., 2024).

Discussion and Future Research

Based on the data collected in this inquiry, including a coded thematic analysis finding that a larger share of students described Role Conflict or Role Ambiguity than described clarity (RQ1; see Results and Appendix F), the authors conclude that Role Conflict is possibly present among students and faculty alike. Related patterns appear in the

MMA industry results. Reducing Role Conflict is a valuable organizational goal. The INSPIRE Model supports this objective within classroom settings, though broader application to adult-learning environments warrants further study. Although the present study draws on Role Theory rather than the Knowledge–Motivation–Organization (KMO) framework (Clark & Estes, 2008), the KMO framework offers a useful scaffold for organizing future work on AI integration as a performance problem. Read against KMO, the present study contributes primarily to the Knowledge dimension by surfacing uneven role-expectations knowledge across institutions. Future research could extend into the Motivation and Organization dimensions, including work on AI use in professional marketing contexts. As Pavone (2025) notes, progress depends on “clearly defining what constitutes legitimate AI-assisted work” (p. 18).

Future research should further specify Role Expectations Knowledge as a key predictor of AI efficacy. Recent work examining student readiness for AI-driven marketing practices finds similarly uneven confidence and awareness across institutional contexts, reinforcing the view that Role Clarity around AI use remains an unresolved curricular challenge for marketing education (Pettiette et al., 2026b). Integrating the Clark and Estes (2008) KMO framework offers a validated foundation for this exploration. The recent paper from Pavone (2025) looks at students' motivations related to integrating GenAI into the learning process, but more work needs to be done in this area to understand Motivational factors more fully. Pavone concurs and proposes some motivational areas worthy of inquiry:

We examined two specific individual characteristics—self-esteem and academic anxiety. However, other traits may also play a significant role in shaping students' motivation and satisfaction with AI tools. Future studies should ex-

plore additional psychological constructs to provide a more complete understanding (2025, p. 18)

The KMO framework (Clark & Estes, 2008) provides a robust, validated foundation for future approaches to this research. Organizational factors also merit attention, such as whether universities provide adequate tools (e.g., Chat-GPT licenses) and leadership support. Consistent with the descriptive faculty data referenced earlier, 36% of marketing faculty respondents cited “limited support for change by leaders” as a barrier to AI integration. Reducing Role Conflict is therefore both a pedagogical and organizational performance goal. The broader integration of GenAI into higher education introduces institutional challenges for which established frameworks connecting knowledge, motivation, and organizational capacity may offer a useful starting point for further inquiry.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, student anxiety may have influenced responses, potentially impacting the accuracy and reliability of the findings. Additionally, the 2024–2025 sample is limited in both timing and size, which could affect the generalizability of the results. A further limitation is the cross-sectional design: data were collected through a single post-task survey, with no pre-task baseline. As a result, this study can characterize differences in AI efficacy and AI-related perceptions across students and institutions, but cannot directly evidence change in efficacy or perspective attributable to the AI assignments themselves. Future iterations of this work should incorporate matched pre/post measurement to test the developmental claims implicit in models like INSPIRE.

Another limitation relates to the differences in discussion around AI across universities. This disparity may have influenced the findings, particularly regarding which institutions appear more prepared to integrate AI into the

workforce. While we were able to gather a few responses from faculty, a more robust analysis of how faculty across the field of marketing are embracing AI would be valuable. Given the exploratory nature of this research, findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than confirmatory, serving as a foundation for future hypothesis testing.

Conclusion

This study opens with industry data showing that AI use in the workplace is still taking shape rather than fully settled. Against that backdrop, both hypotheses were supported: AI Efficacy and Classroom AI Preparation each differed significantly across university locations, meaning students at some institutions perceive stronger classroom preparation for an AI-driven marketing future than students at others. These institutional differences are meaningful when interpreted against the industry benchmark data, which suggest that professional AI expectations are still emerging but increasingly task-specific. A supplementary faculty survey corroborates this pattern descriptively; among spontaneous open-ended responses relevant to AI-use expectations, students more often described ambiguity or inconsistent expectations than clear, unambiguous policy understanding. Together, these findings are consistent with the possibility that Role Conflict may emerge when campus expectations lag or diverge from workplace norms. We synthesize these insights into the INSPIRE Model, an educator-ready framework for bridging classroom preparation with workplace expectations.

Submitted: September 03, 2025 CDT. Accepted: August 11, 2026 CDT. Published: August 25, 2026 CDT.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CCBY-4.0). View this license's legal deed at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0> and legal code at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode> for more information.

References

- Amigo, M. F., & Lloyd, J. (2021). Changing roles and environments in experiential learning. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 11(2), 420–434. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-11-2019-0159>
- Anglin, A. H., Kincaid, P. A., Short, J. C., & Allen, D. G. (2022). Role theory perspectives: Past, present, and future applications of role theories in management research. *Journal of Management*, 48(6), 1469–1502. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063221081442>
- Athaluri, S. A., Manthana, S. V., Kesapragada, V. K. M., Yarlagaadda, V., Dave, T., & Duddumpudi, R. T. S. (2023). Exploring the boundaries of reality: Investigating the phenomenon of artificial intelligence hallucination in scientific writing through ChatGPT references. *Cureus*, 15(4), Article e37432. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.37432>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>
- Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent developments in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12(1), 67–92. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.12.080186.000435>
- Biddle, B. J. (2013). *Role theory: Expectations, identities, and behaviors*. Academic press.
- Clark, R. E., & Estes, F. (2008). *Turning research into results: A guide to selecting the right performance solutions*. Information Age Publishing.
- Crittenden, W. F., Biel, I. K., & Lovely, W. A., III. (2019). Embracing digitalization: Student learning and new technology. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 41(1), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475318820895>
- Donnelly, J. H., Jr., & Ivancevich, J. M. (1975). Role clarity and the salesman: An empirical study reveals that perceived role clarity may be an important factor in maximizing a salesman's job performance. *Journal of Marketing*, 39(1), 71–74.
- Ewing, D. R., & Ewing, R. L. (2017). Leveraging experiential learning to encourage role transition from “student” to “professional”: Insights from identity theory. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 39(3), 132–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475317724844>
- Fischbach, S. (2018). Ethical efficacy as a measure of training effectiveness: An application of the graphic novel case method versus traditional written case study. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 128(3), 603–615. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2119-2>
- Fischbach, S., & Guerrero, V. (2018). Mobile business retailing: Driving experiential learning on campus. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 40(1), 56–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475317733509>
- Floyd, S. W., & Lane, P. J. (2000). Strategizing throughout the organization: Managing Role Conflict in strategic renewal. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 154–177. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259268>
- Graham, M. (2024). Taco Bell and KFC's Owner Says AI-Driven Marketing Is Boosting Purchases. *Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/taco-bell-and-kfcs-owner-says-ai-driven-marketing-is-boosting-purchases-ab3a5f36?mod=Searchresults&pos=1&page=1>
- Gremier, D., Hoffman, D., Keaveney, S., & Wright, L. (2000). Experiential learning exercises in service marketing courses. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 22, 35–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475300221005>
- Grewal, D., Guha, A., Satornino, B., & Becker, M. (2025). The Future Marketing and Marketing Education. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 47(1), 61–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02734753241269838>
- Guha, A., Grewal, D., & Atlas, S. (2024). Generative AI and marketing education: What the future holds. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 46(1), 6–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02734753231215436>
- Harnisch, S. (2012). Conceptualizing in the minefield: Role theory and foreign policy learning. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 8(1), 47–69. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2011.00155.x>
- Horst, S. O., & Moisander, J. (2015). Paradoxes of strategic renewal in traditional print-oriented media firms. *International Journal on Media Management*, 17(3), 157–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14241277.2015.1084306>
- Ivanova, I. (2025). Duolingo CEO walks back AI-first comments: “I do not see AI as replacing what our employees do.” *Fortune*. <https://fortune.com/2025/05/24/duolingo-ai-first-employees-ceo-luis-von-ahn/>
- Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. (2005). Learning styles and learning spaces: Enhancing experiential learning in higher education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4(2), 193–212. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2005.17268566>
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning*. Prentice Hall.
- Lyons, T. F. (1971). Role Clarity, need for clarity, satisfaction, tension, and withdrawal. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 6(1), 99–110. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073\(71\)90007-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(71)90007-9)
- McMahon, L. (2025). H&M to use digital clones of models in ads and social media. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3vvg73xndeo>
- Mucharraz y Cano, Y., Venuti, F., & Herrera Martinez, R. (2023). *ChatGPT and AI Text Generators: Should Academia Adapt or Resist?* Harvard Business Publishing. <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/inspiring-minds/chatgpt-and-ai-text-generators-should-academia-adapt-or-resist>
- Pavone, G. (2025). Generative AI in the Learning Process: Threat or Tool? Understanding the Role of Self-Esteem and Academic Anxiety in Shaping Student Motivations. *Journal of Marketing Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02734753251346857>

- Pettiette, M. (2018). *Advertising Sales Performance at a Traditional Media Company Operating in the Digital Age* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Southern California.
- Pettiette, M., Conde, R., & Fischbach, S. (2026a). From SEO to GEO: The pedagogical imperative for integrating generative engine optimization into marketing education. *Marketing Education Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2026.2688958>
- Pettiette, M., Conde, R., & Fischbach, S. (2026b). Innovations for AI-driven marketing pedagogy across generations: Hybrid approaches for SEO and GEO instruction. *Marketing Education Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2026.2659871>
- Pettiette, M., & Whitler, K. A. (2026). Can Customers Find Your Brand? Marketing Strategies for AI-Driven Search. *MIT Sloan Management Review (Online)*, 1–8.
- Powell, E. (2025). WPP asks AI to get creative and dream up era-defining new slogans. *The Times*. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/cc18b682-56af-4239-81cb-f0e0e338124b>
- Reavey, B., Zahay, D., & Rosenbloom, A. (2021). Updating the Marketing Research Course to Prepare the Marketing Generalist. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 43(3), 333–353. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02734753211043925>
- Rodríguez-Vilá, O., & Bharadwaj, S. (2024). MMA Global's MOST Marketing Organization Structure Think Tank in partnership with MarCaps Consulting. <https://www.mmaglobal.com/think-tanks/mostt>
- Rodríguez-Vilá, O., Bharadwaj, S., Foster, A., & Pettiette, M. (2025). *Navigating the GenAI landscape: A practical roadmap for marketing organizations* [White paper]. MMA Global. https://mmaglobal.com/files/documents/mma_whitepaper_-_navigating_the_genai_landscape.pdf
- Rodríguez-Vilá, O., Bharadwaj, S., Morgan, N., & Mitra, S. (2020). *Is your Marketing Organization Ready for What's Next? A framework for aligning growth strategies and capabilities*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2020/11/is-your-marketing-organization-ready-for-whats-next>
- Shalley, C. E., & Gilson, L. L. (2004). What leaders need to know: A review of social and contextual factors that can foster or hinder creativity. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(1), 33–53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.12.004>
- Sloane, G. (2024). Coca-Cola's AI lead on the polarizing response to its holiday ads. *AdAge*. <https://adage.com/article/digital-marketing-ad-tech-news/coca-colas-pratik-thakar-response-its-ai-holiday-ads/2593616>
- Springer, J. (2023). *Coca-Cola Embraces ChatGPT and other AI Tools in Deal with Consultancy Bain*. Advertising Age. <https://adage.com/article/marketing-news-strategy/coca-cola-embraces-chatgpt-ai-tools-deal-bain/2475366>
- Tang, T. L. P., & Chang, C. L. (2010). Impact of role ambiguity and role conflict on employee creativity. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4(6), 869.

Appendices

Appendix A: Qualtrics Survey Instrument Ethical Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 1977; Fischbach, 2018) Includes 15 statements on a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly disagree → Strongly agree, including self-efficacy, involvement and principle-based ethics (PBE) questions

- Making AI decisions in an organization is well within the scope of my abilities. (Self Efficacy)
- I feel confident that my ability to make AI decisions equals or exceeds those of my peers.
- AI is of no concern to me. (Self-Efficacy)
- AI is irrelevant. (Self-Efficacy)
- AI means a lot to me. (Self-Efficacy)
- AI is useless. (Involvement)
- AI is valuable. (Involvement)
- AI is beneficial. (Involvement)
- I do not anticipate any problems making the correct AI decision when working as a student. (Involvement)
- My educational experience and accomplishments increase my confidence that I will be able to make the correct AI decisions at my university. (Involvement)
- AI is important. (Involvement)
- AI is not needed. (Involvement)
- Participating in principle-based AI education could heighten my awareness of integrity issues and the complexity in reaching the correct decision. (PBE)
- I am motivated to learn more about principle-based AI in the university. (PBE)
- I believe it would be valuable for my university to address principle-based AI education. (PBE)

Open-ended response questions

What did you like most about the AI Classroom Assignment? (i.e., use of the AI tool or output of the AI tool)

What did you dislike most about the AI Classroom Assignment? (i.e., use of the AI tool or output of the AI tool)

What is your perception of the use of AI tools in the university classroom?

What was your overall motivation for using AI in classroom?

Appendix B: AI Email A/B Testing Class Assignment

This assignment requires you to develop an email campaign using ChatGPT or another AI platform. The purpose of the assignment is for you to be able to examine how to combine this new technology with digital marketing and specifically email marketing in the scope of A/B Testing.

The assignment is designed to take a creative approach to working with AI tools. The primary outcome is for you to be able to answer the following questions when working with AI: What do the AI tools do to make your IMC campaigns more effective? How does using these tools help you use these tools in IMC? You can use examples from your

own personal experience or those you have read to explain your answers more thoroughly.

ChatGPT can be used for the following areas: 1. Subject Line, 2. Personalization, 3. Content Optimization, 4. Suggestion different email formats, 5. Generate different calls-to-action

Follow these steps to leverage ChatGPT for generating ideas for subject lines and content optimization: Provide Email Information: Furnish ChatGPT with details about your email, including its purpose, target audience, and main message. Subject Line Requests: Task ChatGPT with generating diverse subject line ideas based on the information you provided. Alternatively, share a few examples of past or potential subject lines for ChatGPT to build upon. Model-Generated Ideas: Utilize ChatGPT to generate additional ideas based on your input. For instance, you can ask the model to create unique subject lines for a specific email campaign, such as a promotional message targeting young professionals or suggestions for optimizing content in a newsletter for retirees. Evaluate Suggestions: Review the suggestions provided by ChatGPT, using them as a foundation for your creative process. Refine, combine, or adopt the ideas as needed.

Conduct A/B Testing: Implement the generated subject lines and content suggestions in your A/B testing. Analyze the results to identify the versions that outperform others, allowing you to refine your email marketing strategy effectively.

Step 1: Prompt: We need subject lines for an email marketing campaign based on “[insert event]” and this Target audience: [insert target audience]

Step 2: Use the following Prompt: “Generate a persuasive email body for[insert event].....event targeted towards [insert target audience].”

Example

Note. Students were randomly assigned to one of the two parallel tasks below (Email A/B Testing or LinkedIn A/B Testing, Appendix C). Assignment type was not a focal theoretical variable; the two activities were designed as parallel procedural variations providing comparable applied AI marketing practice. Responses were therefore pooled for the primary analyses, which focus on institutional differences.

Appendix C. LinkedIn Marketing A/B Testing Class Assignment

Your task in this assignment is to create a LinkedIn post outlining a campaign for the launch of Buhi Bag’s new dream line category, utilizing ChatGPT or another AI platform. The purpose of the assignment is for you to be able to examine how to combine this new technology with digital marketing and specifically LinkedIn marketing in the scope of A/B Testing. The assignment is designed to take a creative approach to working with AI tools. The primary out-

come is for you to be able to answer the following questions when working with AI: What do the AI tools do to make your IMC campaigns more effective? How does using these tools help you use these tools in IMC? You can use examples from your own personal experience or those you have read to explain your answers more thoroughly. ChatGPT can be used for the following areas: 1. Introduction, 2. Engagement questions/content, 3. Showcase achievements/unique selling propositions (USP), 4. Visual content, 5. Generate a call to action (CTA). Follow these steps to leverage ChatGPT for generating ideas for subject lines and content optimization:

Provide LinkedIn post Information: Furnish ChatGPT with details about Buhi content, including its purpose, target audience, and main message. **Model-Generated Ideas:** Utilize ChatGPT to generate additional ideas based on your input. For instance, you can ask the model to create unique subject lines for a specific LinkedIn campaign, such as a promotional message targeting young professionals or suggestions for optimizing content in a newsletter for retirees.

Evaluate Suggestions: Review the suggestions provided by ChatGPT, using them as a foundation for your creative process. Refine, combine, or adopt the ideas as needed. **Conduct A/B Testing:** Implement the generated subject lines and content suggestions in your A/B testing. Analyze the results to identify the versions that outperform others, allowing you to refine your email marketing strategy effectively.

Step 1: Prompt: We need subject lines for a LinkedIn marketing post based on “[insert Buhi brand]” and this Target audience: [insert target audience]

Step 2: Use the following Prompt: “Generate a persuasive content LinkedIn post for[insert Buhi brand].....event targeted towards [insert target audience].”

Appendix D. The INSPIRE Model for AI Integration in Marketing Education

Stage	Purpose	Pedagogical Focus and Theoretical Foundation
Integrate	Align AI tools with existing course outcomes and marketing concepts.	Based on <i>constructive alignment</i> (Zahay et al., 2022), AI activities should reinforce course objectives and assessments while demonstrating relevance to professional marketing practice.
Navigate	Develop students' ability to explore and evaluate AI tools critically.	Students build adaptable digital literacy through guided evaluation of capabilities, constraints, and ethical implications.
Scaffold	Build conceptual and procedural fluency through progressive assignments.	Draws on curriculum agility (Wymbs, 2011) by sequencing AI learning experiences from foundational exposure to complex applications, ensuring iterative skill development and curriculum relevance.

Stage	Purpose	Pedagogical Focus and Theoretical Foundation
Practice	Apply AI in authentic marketing contexts.	Anchored in experiential learning theory (Gremier et al., 2000; D. Kolb, 1984). Students complete hands-on projects such as campaign analysis and data visualization, intended to support self-efficacy and workplace readiness.
Interpret	Examine ethical, social, and managerial implications of AI use.	Students engage in guided discussion and case analysis to evaluate issues of bias, transparency, and accountability in marketing practice.
Reflect	Connect new experiences with personal and professional growth.	Structured reflection through journals or debriefing sessions helps students evaluate their assumptions and learning processes.
Evaluate	Assess proficiency and reflection while improving instructional design.	Consistent with incorporating formative feedback, peer and practitioner input, and evidence-based iteration to maintain ethical and adaptive AI integration.

Appendix E. Illustrative Student Comments

The excerpts below are illustrative examples drawn from students' open-ended survey responses. They are not the product of a formal, independently coded thematic analysis and are not presented as an exhaustive or representative accounting of all responses; they are included to give readers a direct sense of the language students used on the topics discussed inferentially in the Method, Navigate, and Reflect sections above. For a complete, formally coded analysis of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity evidence, see Appendix F.

Concept	Where Discussed	Illustrative Student Comments
Over-Reliance	Navigate stage	“Good tool, but underachieving students use it as a crutch.” / “It felt like a lazy short cut to doing the work myself.” / “They can be a useful tool for brainstorming, but also dangerous when reliance on it becomes too strong and you begin to neglect thinking for yourself.”
Range of Orientations	Reflect stage	Skeptical end: “AI makes me uncomfortable in general.” / “How scary AI is to think about.” / “I have to trust that AI understood what I input to the engine.” Confident/ownership end: “the confidence of filtering the important information in a professional way that I wanted to share.” / “It can be a guide to your own ideas. It can also spark new ideas.”

Appendix F. Role Clarity Versus Role Conflict/Ambiguity: Full Coded Response Set

The table below reports the complete set of responses identified through the exploratory thematic analysis described in the Method and Results sections (RQ1). Responses are grouped into two categories rather than treated

as a single statistic. Clarity (10 of 572 students, 1.75%) includes Permissive responses, where a student described AI use as clearly sanctioned, and Restrictive responses, where a student described it as clearly prohibited; in both cases the student reported a single, unhedged understanding of the rule in their context. Conflict/Ambiguity (47 of 572 students, 8.22%) includes Inconsistent/Mixed responses, where a student described differing rules across professors, courses, or contexts (including language implying exceptions, such as “usually,” “most,” or “more and more”), and Ambiguous responses, where a student expressed direct personal uncertainty about the legitimacy of their own AI use. None of the four open-ended survey items asked about institutional policy directly. Quotes are reproduced verbatim, including original spelling and grammar. Readers should note that even the Clarity responses below are not beyond dispute on close reading; they are reported as the most defensible examples of unhedged clarity found in the data, not as an uncontested category. This is intentionally conservative.

Group / Pattern	Survey Item	Student Comment (Student ID)
Clarity: Permissive	Perception of AI	"In my experience, university classrooms do not prohibit use of AI tools." (Student 29)
Clarity: Permissive	Perception of AI	"Its okay as long as the professor allows it." (Student 151)
Clarity: Permissive	Perception of AI	"If you utilize it, you , you must site it like any other source." (Student 253)
Clarity: Permissive	Perception of AI	"good, its encouraged" (Student 538)
Clarity: Restrictive	Perception of AI	"Prohibited, Not accepted." (Student 90)
Clarity: Restrictive	Perception of AI	"Teachers use grammarly at most. Not much use in classroom." (Student 106)
Clarity: Restrictive	Perception of AI	"that it is not allowed" (Student 295)
Clarity: Restrictive	Perception of AI	"Not allowed" (Student 368)
Clarity: Permissive	Most Liked	"I like it because it shows the university is embracing the future itstead of being stuck in traditional ways" (Student 77)
Clarity: Permissive	Motivation	"The teacher made me." (Student 283)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"To me, it appears to be a useful tool but one that is often controversial and not allowed in the classroom." (Student 11)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"Very useful, but can be considered cheating at some point." (Student 95)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"I really don't know how AI will be used in university environment." (Student 204)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"It is not a good idea to use it on class, because some professors do not like it and it does not give you the answer that the professor wants." (Student 206)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"we have been told not to use AI in classrooms prior to this class" (Student 285)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"it should not be allowed" (Student 304)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"I use to consider it cheating, but now my professors have changed my perception to view it as an academic resource as they encourage the use of AI within the classroom" (Student 307)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"I think when and if AI is used correctly, it can be a great resource; however, because so many people abuse it, it is hard to tell if it will ever be used properly." (Student 343)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"Allowed in one class as long as I cite it." (Student 539)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Perception of AI	"not used effectively no usage allowed at all is not what the real world is like and not teaching us to use it well is harming future preofrmace" (Student 552)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"AI is not excepted in most of my classrooms." (Student 13)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"we are usally told when we are allowed to us AI and i find it really helpful, I don't think I could survive without Grammarly" (Student 35)

Group / Pattern	Survey Item	Student Comment (Student ID)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"they are not often overly encouraged, but for tasks like this where it has to do with coming up with taglines or headings, it is seen as helpful" (Student 37)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"I think it is useful and very appropriate for some classes, but for others, I think it impacts our abilities to think for ourselves." (Student 46)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"I think University A is becoming more open to the use of AI in classrooms and is taking steps to make sure their students are prepared to use AI to their advantage as I believe the world is going to start using AI more." (Student 61)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"I believe it's very useful and should. be allowed to use especially since everyone uses it in the real world" (Student 85)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"As far as AI in classrooms, I have had a professor require the usage of it for HW and I actually have learned a lot from it. However, outside of that I think it is good for work." (Student 103)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"in some cases, AI is encouraged in a university classroom while in some other cases it is discouraged." (Student 168)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"I believe that if it's allowed then it's fine, but it should never be used in a foul manner" (Student 220)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"Depends on the class" (Student 228)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"I feel is definitely puts in disadvantage to people not using it, but at the same time like everything with technology, schools needs to find a way to adapt instead of fight it, and keep evolving." (Student 252)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"It is encouraged by some university staff and prohibited by others, however it is still used by the majority of students." (Student 265)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"I'm not sure since its fairly new and most teachers don't use them." (Student 301)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"It can be used as a tool according to my philosophy professor." (Student 305)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"Usually not allowed" (Student 324)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"i think it can be used to an extent, when it's needed to explain concepts that you are still not understanding from professors." (Student 329)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"Most classes do not allow the use" (Student 332)

Group / Pattern	Survey Item	Student Comment (Student ID)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"I feel as though using AI as a tool in certain classes is deemed acceptable. I would not recommend it be used in all classes, rather classes where AI can help cultivate ideas for a class. I find that when I use AI, I do not use it in classrooms, however on my own time at home. Using AI in Marketing class here at college is one of the best uses I have seen AI used for. AI does a great job with creating futuristic images and ideas." (Student 342)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"some professors encourage usage but others are completely against it" (Student 382)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"varies" (Student 385)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"professors don't approve it but all students use it" (Student 394)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"I don't really like them, it kind of scares me and I feel it sets some confusing precedents, but I respect its usefulness as a tool." (Student 411)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"it should be used while referring to professional applications, but otherwise should not be at all" (Student 412)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"it depends on the way you use it but for the most part it should be discouraged for younger generations while also teaching people how to use it without abusing it" (Student 424)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"Dependent on course; some can utilize it while others need to avoid it for the sake of academic integrity" (Student 446)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"it's useful but professors try to hard to include it when they don't understand it" (Student 474)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"In my experience, the usage of AI for the most part has been discouraged, until my marketing course." (Student 480)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Perception of AI	"There are both positive and negative aspects of using AI in the classroom, however, because it is relatively new and unmonitored, it is easily taken advantage of." (Student 543)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Most Liked	"i got to use chatgpt for a university related thing without having to worry about getting caught or cheating." (Student 526)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Most Liked	"I like that it simply asked me to use AI because I think a lot of professors make us fear AI instead of using it to our advantage." (Student 318)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Least Liked	"I am still iffy about the use of AI in the classroom" (Student 376)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Least Liked	"it feels like im cheating or doing the bare minimum" (Student 467)

Group / Pattern	Survey Item	Student Comment (Student ID)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Least Liked	"The expectations are a little confusing" (Student 79)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Motivation	"I would be somewhat motivated to use AI in the classroom if it is permitted." (Student 11)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Motivation	"Its something that more and more classes are starting to implement" (Student 192)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Ambiguous	Motivation	"I like it because I hope classroom can keep up with all updated technology and find ways to effectively use it to enhance study for students, rather than prohibit it." (Student 215)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Motivation	"I dont use AI in the classroom so I don't have a motivation unless a professor wanted me to use it." (Student 34)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Motivation	"I will use if its allowed" (Student 220)
Conflict/ Ambiguity: Inconsistent/ Mixed	Motivation	"If it were recommended for me to do so by a professor" (Student 553)