

Mind the Gap: Exploring the Sought-After Intelligences of Marketing Graduates

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Abstract

In higher education settings, teaching usually encourages the interactions of different intelligences in two ways: within the student and across students. This misses the market actor contribution (industry) that have awareness of current demands of intelligences to interact with students. Be that as it may, an overall gap exists between the skills expressed by employers in South Africa and the expression of interest of employers for any form of graduate intelligence. The purpose of the study is to draw from Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence (MI) Theory (Gardner, 1993) to understand the relationship between the acquisition of traditional skills and professional attributes, including how this can facilitate the inception of an intelligence-set framework relevant for Marketing graduates. An inductive approach was followed. Data were collected from two leading online recruitment sites that advertise marketing jobs across South Africa. Job announcements were analysed by applying qualitative content analysis, using NVivo. The themes identified are intellectual intelligence, emotional intelligence, social intelligence and communication intelligence. Listening, interpersonal and communication skills have the highest influence on the employability of marketing graduates. For the best result for employers, it is recommended that recruitment of marketing graduates makes clearer specifications between traditional skills and intelligences that they require. Furthermore, the skill and intelligences gaps identified in this study may help business schools to revise and improve the curriculum of specialised marketing programs to be aligned with the needs of the marketing industry.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Human beings have at least eight 'intelligences' that influence how we receive and assimilate information, according to Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence (MI) Theory (Gardner, 1993). Therefore, each person has a unique intelligence profile made up of various intelligence skills. According to this theory, it is more useful to describe a person's cognitive capacity in terms of a number of separate but related cognitive abilities than it is to do so in terms of a single "general" intelligence coming from the idea of a profile of intelligences. Each individual's intelligence profile consists of a combination of relative strengths and weaknesses among the different intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and existential (Gardner, 2000). Each individual's mix of intelligences is unique, with some dominating, but which can vary over time (Barrington, 2004).

Acknowledging the range of intelligences is important, given the diversity of university students, making an MI approach an inclusive approach (Barrington, 2004). Of note, is the pressing need to profile the vital intelligences for success within the field of Marketing, since the marketing profession is the only known organised discipline where practise is underpinned by creating value through advancing and rationalising the insatiable 'needs and wants of consumers' (Kotler et al. 2015). Notably, empirical evidence suggests that marketing graduates demonstrate unbalanced profiles (Pool and Qualter, 2012), with evident variation among their intelligences; whereas they might be very strong on one or two intelligences while relatively weak in others (Kidwell, Hardesty, Murtha and Sheng, 2011). Be that as it may, intelligences are not isolated elements as they can interact with one another to yield a variety of outcomes. As such, Marketing students are in a better position to follow a clear path to success by developing a pluralistic set of intelligences. For example, a successful marketer in the music industry might combine musical, spatial, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences; a marketing student working in advertising might use logical-mathematical, linguistic, interpersonal, and some existential intelligences (Kidwell, Hardesty, Murtha and Sheng, 2011). For educators, the challenge with marketing students is deciding whether to accentuate the students' strengths through advanced opportunities to develop their skills or bolster their weak areas through remediation to develop a more balanced profile.

Recent contextual changes in educational and working environments have created a paradoxical gap where it is seen that the number of marketing students has grown and simultaneously, diminishing opportunities for developing multiple intelligences and where the market is also attempting to make sense of this changing arena. The rapid adoption of digitalisation for example has had both positive and negative effects on university students' multiple intelligences (Serpes, 2019). Digitalisation has for

example expanded access to vast amounts of information through online platforms where students can engage in online discussions, access educational resources, and participate in virtual learning environments. However, the overreliance on digital communication and shorter attention spans associated with digital platforms may also pose challenges to critical thinking skills (Serpes, 2019). At the same time, digital tools and platforms provide opportunities for students to engage in problem-solving activities, data analysis, and simulations. Simultaneously, excessive dependence on automated processes may undermine the development of mental and problem-solving skills and hinder the heuristics that act as substitutes for decision-making.

What is most evident with digitalisation is how it has transformed interpersonal interactions and the sense of belonging to organisations. Critically, it has also created a two-sided effect where employees recruited directly from university are more familiar with digital technologies but less familiar with the intelligences necessary to navigate team working, corridor politics or socialisation processes commonly present in organisations (Malone, Laubacher and Dellarocas, 2010). It's important to recognize that the effects of digitalisation on multiple intelligences can vary based on how technology is utilised, the balance between digital and offline experiences, and the individual's engagement with various activities. Striking a balance between digital and non-digital experiences can help foster the development of multiple intelligences in university students.

Another more recent event (the Covid pandemic) distorted multiple intelligences surrounding provision in education and development in organisational settings where there is a greater need for multiple intelligences but a lack of forum to develop them (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020). During the Covid pandemic, there was an acceleration in education and work settings to digitally facilitated hybrid formats of working. This shift has presented challenges for marketing students entering the job market where remote work can limit networking opportunities and mentoring relationships that are crucial for onboarding processes and career development (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020). Furthermore, the uncertainty caused by the pandemic has led to companies becoming cautious about making long-term commitments. Uncertainty has made it difficult for marketing students to secure job offers promptly when the job offerings are quite diffuse. Importantly the need for multiple intelligences and skills of new graduates is increasingly in demand but under strain at the same time due to the distances created by new working models that are rapidly decreasing the need for continuous interaction.

1.2. Problem Statement

There is a discrepancy between the capabilities listed by South African marketing employers, cited as the expression of interest on job postings for marketing positions. An unintended impact of this disjuncture is one of obfuscating the mandatory professional intelligences that business is looking for. This poses a dilemma since, in the 21st century, success, impact and professional thriving will not be

possible with just knowledge, skills and grades (Baporikar and Sony, 2020). Additionally, sustained success necessitates the review of cogent techniques to investigate the acquisition of professional traits, of which this can be accomplished by navigating non-linear methodologies such as the theory of multiple intelligences (MI). It should be noted that previous research has explored the application of the theory of multiple intelligences (MI) in various disciplines including career counselling (Shearer and Luzzo, 2009), demartoglyphics (Abhimanyu, Bottiger and Singh, 2016), health sciences (Lane, 2010) and law education (Jones, 2017), among others.

To date, no known study has reviewed the potential embedding of the MI theory within the field of Marketing and/or related sub-disciplines. In this study, the researchers explore and question what is known concerning the gap between industry demands and the attribution of these multiple intelligences among marketing graduates. This is considered both fundamental and pressing, since the role of marketing in any industry setting is at the forefront of rationalising the “needs and wants of customers”, albeit for profit or not. Therefore, there is a need to better understand the relationship between traditional skills and professional traits as well as how these might help students develop the appropriate intelligence-set. This information is vital as it provides marketing organisations with direction towards developing a balanced scorecard for translating their professional requirements. Hence, through a critical analysis of selected job postings focusing on marketing jobs in South Africa, *the purpose of this study is to explore the void between traditional skills, professional traits and sought-after intelligences of Marketing graduates in South Africa.*

The key research question posited in this research is: What are the traditional skills and professional traits that employers seek from Marketing graduates in South Africa and to which specific professional intelligences can these be attributed? Thus, as an anticipated theoretic contribution, the researchers seek to provide initial discussions into the development of an intelligence-set framework that can be used to provide vocational identity to Marketing graduates in South Africa and beyond. Therefore, this study agenda is supported by the following research propositions:

Proposition one: The nuance of intelligence (g) in real-world Marketing practice is non-unitary nor is it based on one common fundamental function (i.e., intellectual quotient), only.

Proposition two: Success in Marketing practice requires a fair balance of traditional skills, attributes and professional intelligences.

Proposition three: The theory of MI underpins the exploration of baseline data for possible development of a framework of professional intelligences relevant to Marketing graduates in South Africa.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on marketing skills and multiple intelligences. Section 3 describes the research method, after which the researchers present the empirical findings and the conceptual analysis. Section 4 concludes by summarising the implications of this research, the limitations of the study and directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Skills required for graduate employment

Employability skills required of university graduates can vary depending on the specific industry, job role, and employer's preferences (Abbasi, Ali and Bibi, 2018). Employability skills are defined as attributes, competencies and technical skills used to make practical decisions in the workplace (Gibbs, 2000; Abbasi, Ali and Bibi, 2018). Osmani, Weerakkody, Hindi, Al-Esmail, Eldabi, Kapoor and Irani (2015) identified communication, teamwork, problem-solving, information technology, creativity, interpersonal, leadership, self-management, adaptability and critical thinking as the most used skills and attributes that are used by employees. Based on Osmani et al.'s (2015) study core employability skills can be elucidated in the following categories:

Communication skills constitute all types of written, verbal and technical communication (Abbasi, Ali and Bibi, 2018). Communication helps employees to work effectively with others (Osmani et al., 2015) and is one of the most important skills to achieve higher profitability (Ramadi, Ramadi and Nasr, 2016) for that reason, it is the most frequently used skill to investigate employability (Osmani et al., 2015). Already in 2002, Bennett found that communication is the top skill requirement for management jobs (Bennett, 2002). Closely aligned to this skill is Interpersonal skills, which is the ability of a person to practice interpersonal skills to construct relationships and communicate with others (Lievens and Sackett, 2012). Upon entering into work life, interpersonal skills help them to adjust to a support job role (Saeed, 2015). This skill has been labelled as one of the highly desired skills to assess the employability of marketing-focused business graduates (Dacko, 2006).

Adaptability is an important skill as graduates need to be flexible and responsive to new situations, demands and conditions to ensure survival (Abbasi, Ali and Bibi, 2018). Employers consider adaptability as an important skill for new graduates (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin and Zehner, 2013) and to work effectively within groups (Abbasi, Ali and Bibi, 2018). Adaptability skills are closely aligned with good problem-solving skills, problem-solving requires a constellation of skills e.g., attitudes and mental approaches that, once developed, transform the way people look at the world around them (Wismath, Orr and MacKay, 2015). It has been recognised that problem-solving skill is a critical factor for the employability and performance of new graduates across disciplines (Finch et al., 2013). Dacko (2006) reports that a gap exists in the problem-solving skills of marketing graduates. Analytical skills have also been recognised as one of the most desirable skills for graduates in general business (Al-Mutairi, Naser and Saeid, 2014) and specifically in marketing graduates (Dacko, 2006). This also is

aligned with business schools' focus on the development of critical thinking methods in graduates (Amen, 2014). Critical thinking skills are about growing and maturing in thinking (Abbasi, Ali and Bibi, 2018) with transformational potential for the interpretation of information (Amen, 2014). Critical thinking has been recognised as one of the most desired employability skills in business and marketing graduates (Finch et al., 2013). Finally, Yang, Cheung, and Fang (2015) found that due to the need for more effective presentation of work increasing importance is being given to IT skills such as word processing, searching, gathering, and sharing information. Information and communication skills have been recognised as essential qualities for the employment of graduates (Conrad and Newberry, 2012).

Drawing from the review of the various skills identified from the literature, it can be noted that many universities and business schools have traditionally emphasised the development of a specific type of analytical thought process in their undergraduate marketing courses. This has mostly concentrated on the principles, theories, processes and methods involved in performing the marketing function. This has served to position various disciplines and fields as a theoretical corpus (Jones, 2017). For example, in this pedagogy, the Marketing discipline is positioned as a social science field with an inherent logic of its own. While this singular approach is useful as a first step in obtaining the credentials required to enter the workforce, the pedagogy falls short because it does not suggest a vocational goal. Instead, an optimal balance between social science theory and the practice of marketing appears to be a crucial necessity for the marketing practitioner to thrive. This is because the marketing function and responsibilities frequently interact with varied customers, which puts the problem-solving approach used in education front and centre (Dacko, 2006). Before they can apply it, the students must independently gather and analyse the data (Jones, 2017). As a result, the learning is authentic because it is based on the needs, interests and aptitudes of the students (Abhimanyu et al. 2016). Thus, as this latter approach becomes more serious for successful adaptation in the workplace, a plurality of intelligences rises to the fore.

2.2 Multiple intelligences (MI) as a complement to graduate skills

The theory of multiple intelligences (MIT), proposed by Howard Gardner (1993) suggests that individuals possess different types of intelligence that go beyond the traditional view of intelligence as a single, general ability. These different intelligences include verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligence (Gardner, 1993). While the theory was initially developed in the context of education, it can also have relevance in the fields of business and specifically marketing. Gardner's MIT (2011) proposes that there are different types of intelligences that individuals can possess, beyond the traditional notion of intelligence. While Gardner originally identified seven intelligences, he later expanded the list to include an eighth. These intelligences are: 1) linguistic intelligence relating to language and verbal skills; 2) logical-Mathematical intelligence which involves logical thinking,

problem-solving, and mathematical skills; 3) spatial intelligence which relates to visual and spatial perception, spatial intelligence gives a keen sense of aesthetics, design, and an ability to visualize how planes and formats will look in different arrangements (Gardner, 2011); 4) Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence involves physical coordination, dexterity, and a connection between mind and body (Gardner, 2011) graduates evidencing this intelligence may have a keen sense of touch and movement, enabling them to interact in a skilled and intuitive manner; 5) Musical intelligence which involves sensitivity to rhythm, melody, and sound and can offer creative ways to incorporate musical elements into work design; 6) Interpersonal intelligence requires understanding and interacting effectively with others (Gardner, 2011). Graduates with interpersonal intelligence may enjoy sharing their knowledge, collaborating with fellow employees, or teaching and mentoring others in certain techniques. Graduates may also be more comfortable engaging in group projects and should want to participate in social arenas inside organisations; 7) Intrapersonal Intelligence relates to self-awareness, introspection, and understanding one's own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses (Gardner, 2011). Graduates with intrapersonal intelligence are highly prized as they may also reflect on their experiences, experiment with different methods in their new workplace, and adapt their practices based on personal insights. 8) Naturalistic intelligence focuses on a graduate's connection to nature and the environment. Graduates with this intelligence have a deep appreciation for the natural world, understand ecological relationships, and observe patterns in the environment, making them more comfortable practising sustainable methods in their new workplace.

Universities have tended to cultivate almost exclusively the linguistic and logical–mathematical symbolisation and have done so through repetitive learning (Gardner, 1991). As a result, many graduates fail to discover their strong intelligences and ones which require improvement (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Gardner (2011), along with businesses looking to recruit graduates, has suggested that universities can be improved by encouraging teachers to consider the different preferences and intellectual strengths of graduates and teach them in ways consistent with them.

Beyond the plausibility of MI, the framework has attracted the enthusiasm and interest of a growing number of university educators around the world (Burnard and White, 2008). At the same time, MI is something that is lacking in graduates and it can also be questioned if employers are aware of which intelligences are most desirable. Nonetheless the importance of MI lies in the recognition and understanding of their complementarities to graduates diverse talents, personalised learning, individual growth, equal valuation, and the promotion of collaboration.

3. Research Methodology

An inductive approach to the rich data available in the South African labour market for marketing professionals facilitated the collection of rich data on the nuances of how organisations are crafting and specifying (but equally importantly not) the calls for skills they require of entry-level marketing professionals. Job descriptions were selected via theoretical sampling, prioritising their suitability for illuminating and extending relationships among constructs (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Mindful that the research setting impacts upon the theoretical explanations that will emerge from that context (Reuber and Fischer, 2022), the next section outlines the setting for this research.

3.1 The empirical context

The observation sites for this study comprised two of the top online job boards in South Africa that advertised 145 marketing positions within four weeks, between 15 May 2023 and 15 June 2023. This decision is consistent with earlier research that has examined market needs labour pools in the marketing profession. Top jobs included branding specialists, digital account managers, communication managers, key accounts executives, product and sales consultants among others. The advertised jobs cut across different sectors, including health care, financial services, fast moving consumer goods and consulting firms and this enabled the researchers to study similarities and differences in the call for marketing and generalist skills and see if there is a pivot in these recruitment calls for more specific intelligences in a market where there are such complexities. South Africa was selected as the geographic location for the exploratory study because it is an emerging economy with rising unemployment rates. The top job locations in the online job boards included Johannesburg, Cape Town, Nelspruit, Limpopo and Durban. According to Statista (2023) portal for market research, unemployment among university graduates (2.7%) and other tertiary cohorts (7.5%) in South Africa is inexorably high. Furthermore, South Africa is a highly fragmented market with a distinct political and historical setting, offering a lucrative opportunity for academic research.

3.2 Data collection

Three key sampling criteria were applied. First, focus was on the job advertisements relating to marketing jobs, which are normally targeted by marketing graduates (Bennett, 2002; Di Gregoria et al., 2019). Secondly, the postings comprised jobs from a diverse set of sectors, which provides an attractive base for multi-skilled marketing applicants. Thirdly, the research explicitly targeted job advertisements that specified traditional marketing skills and more intelligences-orientated skills.

3.3 Scraping of online job advertisements

This study considered marketing job announcements, alone. With the aim of carrying out a study that could add value to researchers and industries across South Africa, only those job announcements in

English were considered as that enables data collection on a larger, scale without demographic and regional constraints. Marketing entry-level jobs and marketing skills were used as keywords when searching the job databases. Job announcements that contained words including “marketing” and “marketing graduates” and their synonyms were used.

Job announcements published between 15 May and 15 June 2023 were collected to analyse their contents. A total of 145 job announcements published in this period were collected. While the validity of secondary sources, such as job announcement databases, can be discussed, these sources are internationally recognised as credible. Moreover, the sources were primarily used to provide information on what different firms are looking for in marketing recruits – for example, descriptive data on the job requirements for different industries and the different skills called for still provides robust data that is possible to analyse. The changing nature of these calls and the increase (or not) of calls for “softer” skills in multiple intelligences. Scraping is a technique that is used for automated data collection of online data ranging from media from news outlets, social media, app reviews, websites, etc. (Marres and Weltevrede 2013). To understand the patterns within the scraped data, an exploratory data analysis procedure was adopted, which involved examining the scraped data from a nonparametric visual lens (Behrens, 1997; Tidhar and Eisenhardt, 2020).

3.4 Exploring and analysing the scraped data

Exploratory data analysis (Behrens, 1997) involves examining data from non-parametric (often visual) lenses. The goal is a preliminary understanding of patterns within data, the job announcements were analysed by applying qualitative content analysis (Webber, 1990), which helped us understand the content and code them accordingly. NVivo software were utilised to pursue content analysis which entailed finding themes or patterns in the scraped data which is a robust research tool used to systematically analyse and interpret the qualitative characteristics of textual, visual, or audio data. It involves examining the content of communication artefacts, such as texts, images, videos, or audio recordings, to extract meaningful information and identify patterns or themes.

In narrowing the examination, a search was made for key a priori themes within the data to organize core and recurrent expressions such as “qualification” related to cognitive capability and “excellent time management” to emotional competence (as seen in the coding structure in Table 1). Raw data were grouped that contained key expressions into categories within the themes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) and labelled them representative illustrations (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). In this process, raw data and its categories were inspected in view of identifying established concepts. To specify, generic skills were consulted for coding theme 1, marketing skills were consulted for coding theme 2, and multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993; Gardner, 2000) were consulted for coding theme 3. Using this literature as a reference point, an iteration was made between the raw data and the critical skills in each theme to collapse the representative narratives (critical themes) into second-order categories that were named

categories of generic skills, marketing-specific skills and intelligences. In the second stage, the grouping of the coded data of the generic skills, marketing skills and intelligences were grouped into corresponding categories of skills. Lastly, the grouping of the coded data of the capacities that were present in the recruitment adverts was grouped into corresponding categories of skills demanded and beneficial intelligences.

Table 1: Coding structure

First order codes	Second order codes	
Degree/diploma Advantageous certifications Basic marketing-related knowledge	Qualifications	Intellectual Intelligence
Ability to carry out specific activities Time-specific	Experience	
Strategic thinking Critical thinking	Cognition	
Goal setting Project management skills Budgeting responsibility People management	Management skills	
Word, PowerPoint Other marketing software e.g., CRM software, creative tools Internet skills e.g., social media	Information technology (IT)	
Self-motivated Ability to motivate others	Motivation	
Positive Resilient	Adversity	
Reliable Honest Creative	Personality aspects	
The ability to work independently Organised	Responsible	
Punctual Meet deadlines	Time management	
Partnerships – external including clients (new and existing) Building and maintaining	Relationships	Social Intelligence
Cross-functional collaboration within the organisation Teamwork	Networks	
Written skills Verbal skills	Communication skills	Communication Intelligence
Presentation skills Reporting skills	Presentation skills	

4. Results and Findings

All the job postings required the candidate to carry out marketing-specific tasks such as branding, CRM, PR and a range of other marketing communication activities as part of the job responsibilities. A selection of examples, illustrated by the job post number is provided in the findings.

4.1 The structure of the job postings

The traditional layout of job postings is the way the posts are arranged. Posts generally start with a description of the organisation's recruiting, a description of the position offered (including the duties and responsibilities) and the necessary skills. Many described themselves in traditional terms (e.g., "XXX is a leading organisation working in YYY) while some described themselves in innovative and creative terms. For example, a company recruiting for a brand manager described themselves as "a dynamic team of rebels and explorers", another stating "Growth & Marketing Maestro Wanted!". One job posting states that the applicant must "love the brand" (#87). Thereafter, there is a description of the position and the associated responsibilities after which the candidate profile is stated, which is reflected in the analysis.

Most required only the submission of a CV, but one post required the submission of the candidate's writing skills for consideration for the position. The post provided the following task: "Please draft three (3) proposed Facebook posts (text only) on the topic of Unicorns – one serious, one tongue-in-cheek and one 'salesy'. (Minimum 10 words, maximum 100 words per post)" (#76).

4.2 SECI intelligences applicable for cultivating marketing graduates

From the identified job posts, the following overarching intelligences were identified for possible propagation among Marketing graduates, termed SECI intelligences.

4.2.1 Social intelligence

Posts highlight the ability to positively contribute to assist in building well-functioning teams. This includes being a team player (#6; #20; #21; #26; #46), being collaborative (#3; #13; #62; #69) including being responsible for building the team (#25;). Relationships and relationship-building capabilities, within the organisation and between functional areas (#11; #13; #14; #27; #65) as well as the building of external networks are mentioned. This includes relationships with partners, suppliers and stakeholders (#14; #18; #23). Customer networks, including a customer orientation (or a customer service approach), are highlighted (#5; #7; #9; #11; #17; #22), which is unsurprising as these are marketing positions, which are inherently customer focused.

4.2.2 Emotional intelligence

This refers to the applicant, also described as attributes (#2; #72; #113), with some posts specifically identifying the need for a “good EQ” (#18; #32; #76). Other posts focused on specific traits such as motivation, the ability to work under pressure and detail with stress.

Several terms were used to describe the candidates’ *motivation* including being described as a “self-starter” (#18; #40; #72), “driven” (#11) or as self-motivated (#2; #8; #21; #31; #68; #1074, which includes the ability to motivate others in the team (#15; #28; #66). The ability to work independently (#14; #17; #42; #89) despite being part of the broader team was noted. Dealing with adversity, including the importance of a positive attitude and the ability to deal with pressure (stress) or work under pressure (#2; #11; #31; #61; #93; #100) or being resilient (#18; #91; #144) appeared in many posts. Personality aspects described included being curious (#103; #116), and creative (#2; #4; #10; #11; #46) and being outgoing (#2; #75; 107).

Applicants are also described as responsible and accountable (#32; #42; #46;), reflected in the attention to detail and accurate work (#81). Posts have numerous mentions of time management, specifically the ability to meet (strict) deadlines (#17; #71; #77; #143), time management skills (#96; #122), managing time effectively (#34; #122) or being “excellent at time management” (#74). The ability to multi-task (#42; #72; #93; #96) or “loves juggling more than 5 things at a time” (#93) to deliver on time is also mentioned as part of this ability.

4.2.3 Communication intelligence

Communication intelligence was implied in a majority of the posts, with the importance of “excellent communication skills” (#1; #7; #94) specifically stated. Some referred to both written and verbal skills while others also mentioned the need for “excellent presentation skills” (#22; #71; #74; #137). Communication skills necessary are described as “exceptional written, oral, interpersonal and presentation skills” (#1; #70; #86; #90), including being fluent in English (#1; #4; #7; #16; #19; #31; #60; #90). One form of communication is the ability to negotiate with others and persuade or influence others to undertake a course of action (#70; #75; #94) and “sell your ideas” (#90; #92; #93). In summary, the posts ask for “a confident communicator” (#78). In addition, cultural awareness is mentioned by #95 while another requires a “cultural understanding of South Africa (#84) and another expresses the need to communicate within a multicultural environment (#17).

4.2.4 Intellectual intelligence

All posts included a minimum academic *qualification* (e.g., degree/diploma) required (a “must” - #40; #50; #83; #118) as well as several additional advantageous qualifications such as beauty training or Customer Relationship Management (CRM) certificates. Specific *cognition* aspects were also mentioned including strategic abilities, critical thinking (#18; #76) (abstract reasoning) or an

“entrepreneurial mindset” (#26) or “entrepreneurial spirit” (#11; #12; #40). These are regarded as necessary to execute the task required by the organisation, and the tasks listed are related to marketing students such as conducting research and developing marketing strategies.

Management skills, including project management skills, are extensively described. This includes the complete managerial process, starting with the setting of objectives, the development of plans and the implementation thereof. Associated with this is the ability to search out marketing opportunities (#9; #11) and the ability to “manage a budget” (#4; #14; #34; #49; #51; #62), control expenditure and meet financial and performance targets (#28; #121). A range of management skills are required, including people management skills (#98), described as an “ability to manage others” - #14 or “solid people management skills” - #63 as an example of leadership skills. Project skills are also mentioned in the posts with the ability to conceptualise, develop and deliver the plan mentioned (“awesome project management skills” - #40; “excellent project management skills” – #21; #36; #96), working on “multiple projects” (#49; 72; #75).

Posts expressed the need for experience, including social media (SM) experience or other work-related experience. Some included previous work experience, but this varied depending on the nature of the position. Some stated a specific number of years marketing (#9) or selling experience required (#17), while others were less specific on the actual experience required (e.g., “relevant work experience” - #25; #26).

IT capabilities, specifically the ability to use the Microsoft suite (e.g., Word, PowerPoint), the ability to use other marketing software (e.g., CRM software; Adobe Photoshop), business software (eg., SAP) and Internet skills (e.g., social media) are described as important for the successful candidate. Examples of additional tools include Adobe or other video-creation software that is used in being a content creator for posting on SM (e.g., Canva).

4.3 Theoretical discussion

A recent Wall Street Journal article, “New Grads Have No Idea How to Behave in the Office. Help Is on the Way,” is a pertinent call that illuminates the ongoing discussion in the industry on the challenges faced by new graduates entering the workforce, namely there is a growing gap in both skills and intelligences the graduates need to navigate the working environment (WSJ.com). Managers recognize listening, interpersonal and communication as highly desired skills for marketing graduates to work in multiple industries. In marketing, job design is based on coordinated work to have a tight control on customer interaction both private and public actors. Additionally, interaction with colleagues and corporate executives necessitates interpersonal, listening and communication skills for effective performance in new, complex and often stressful organisational environments. The findings of this study are consistent with earlier studies, for example, this study found that listening, interpersonal and

communication skills have the highest influence on the employability of graduates (Conrad and Newberry, 2012). In line with (Bennett, 2002; Saeed, 2015; McMurray et al., 2016), this study found that communication and interpersonal skills are reported in the job advertisements as the topmost requirements for fresh marketing graduates in South Africa.

Numerical and critical thinking were less called for skills in entry-level marketing jobs in South Africa. While at the same time, this study found that creative skills were in high demand. This research posits this to be a consequence of marketing jobs requiring more innovativeness while also being jobs that compel employees to be more socially competent due to the customer-focused nature of the work. In line with Abbasi, Ali and Bibi (2018) this study suggests that the relative absence of critical thinking and analytical skills in the job advertisements for marketing graduates in South Africa suggests that they are less expected from fresh business graduates who to some degree will be expected to pick up these skills during the onboarding process when they are hired and latterly as they grow into their respective role. This study also provides evidence that an overall gap exists between the skills expressed by employers in South Africa and the expression of interest of employers for any form of graduate intelligence. This research finds that there is a persistent lack of distinction in the job advertisements that were analysed calling for multiple intelligences that are conceptualised by Gardner (1993). On the lack of calls for multiple intelligences in graduates of all disciplines, the findings of this research are consistent with previous studies (Dacko, 2006) and explicitly within the marketing industry where one would expect that there would be a greater need for multiple intelligences due to the creative and social nurture of external stakeholder engagement (Kidwell, Hardesty, Murtha and Sheng, 2011).

While Gardner's (2000) multiple intelligences proposes that intelligence is not a single, unitary trait, but rather a collection of independent abilities, this study focused on the following intelligences: Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Emotional Quotient (EQ), Social Quotient (SQ), Adversity Quotient (AQ) (Gardner, 1993) as they are most pertinent to marketing graduates due to the nature work in their industry. While the marketing industry has traditionally emphasised certain types of intelligence, such as analytical and verbal skills, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of multiple intelligences in recent years (Kidwell et al., 2011).

The perceived lack of calls for multiple intelligences of newly graduated or graduating marketing students in job advertisements in the South African marketing industry can be attributed to several factors. Education and training programs are one bottleneck where many marketing graduates are trained in programs that focus predominantly on traditional marketing skills, such as market research, data analysis, and communication strategies. These programmes may not provide comprehensive training in areas that relate to multiple intelligences (Serpes, 2019).

Secondly, the findings clearly show that there is a recruitment bias, organisations often prioritize hiring marketing candidates with specific skill sets and qualifications that align with their industry needs (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin and Zehner, 2013; Yang, Cheung and Fang, 2015), This can result in overlooking individuals with diverse intelligences who may bring unique perspectives and creative

approaches to marketing. It also creates the problem where intelligences are often hidden in the recruitment process meaning that universities are somewhat blind to the requirements of the industry (beyond engagement with corporate advisory boards) where the engagement and tailoring of education profiles is often out of sync with market requirements. This has the potential to create a dogleg in the development and training of graduate intelligences since the recruitment calls are still predominantly calling for traditional and specific industry needs, as identified in the empirical data used in this research.

The marketing industry has traditionally valued certain types of intelligence, such as logical and verbal reasoning, due to the emphasis on data analysis, strategy development, and communication. This can create environments that reinforce these intelligences and overlooks others. However, while it is evidenced that calls for skills mimic this tradition, the lack of calls for intelligences in job postings caused us to reflect on the marketing industry's awareness of what they need and want. Furthermore, a path dependence is proposed in graduate marketing students' training since there is an ongoing call for specific skills (void of any real call for intelligences) meaning that is a self-reinforcing cycle, where the industry is calling for skills and universities and graduates themselves are focusing on developing.

There is a lack of awareness and understanding among organisations recruiting marketing graduates where they are potentially unaware of the concept of multiple intelligences or its potential benefits in the industry (Dacko, 2006; Kidwell et al., 2011). Two gaps are suggested in present industry awareness. Firstly, the lack of understanding of the broader range of intelligences may mean that organisations are not actively seeking out graduates with diverse skill sets and this has significant implications for performance as these organisations may not recruit the right graduate and most certainly will commit significant resources to develop these skills and intelligences in these graduates after they are recruited.

Furthermore, the lack of specific intelligences that were called for in the recruitment advertisements focusing on *Intelligence, Emotional, Social and Adversity* led us to dive deeper into the data in respect to looking for where the narratives speaking to these intelligences overlapped with skills. There is a significant degree of ambiguity where these intelligences and skills are separately called for. The findings evidence that there is also a high degree of embeddedness of concepts i.e., that the narratives of the recruitment advertisements in South Africa call for specific skills that also are written in a manner that also captures elements of intelligences. Professionals in the marketing industries will know what is required of graduates to succeed but there very much appears that there is a mixing of skills and intelligences in the descriptions of job advertisements that makes it less clear what is asked for in a marketing graduate. More specifically the nestedness in the descriptions of required skills and intelligences also makes it highly likely that organisations are not recruiting exactly what they are looking for, leading to a potential penalty being paid by the recruiting organisation as they then must commit increased resources to develop the lacking skills and intelligences.

This lack of awareness out there in the marketing industry of the concept of intelligences and how it is separate but also complementary to traditional skills requires a shift in mindset and practices when crafting recruitment calls. If organisations are to promote diversity and inclusion by recognising the

value of different intelligences and actively seeking individuals with diverse skill sets during recruitment (Yang, Cheung, and Fang, 2015). An increased awareness of how skills and intelligences are separate concepts but highly complementary also can provide significant benefits for organisations where it will improve ongoing training and development opportunities to nurture and harness the full range of intelligences within their marketing teams that they are looking to recruit to and develop. Lastly, while there was no mention of the COVID-19 pandemic in the recruitment calls, it clearly disrupted the learning experience, hindering the development of essential soft skills. This could be one explanation of why the findings clearly show that there is a leaning towards traditional skills and that there is a nested nature of calling for these skills and intelligences. This could also be a consequence of coming out on the other side of the pandemic the marketing industry sees a drop in abilities to read social cues, navigate meetings, and establish connections in-person and the industry values traditional skills they know will be delivered in university and thus eschew intelligences for the time being.

5. Managerial and Practical Implications

As marketing managers form project teams, it is quite likely that they will select members with varying degrees of technical and interpersonal skills, capabilities and preferences. Individuals' skills, capabilities and preferences tend to correlate with the MI that tend to be their greatest areas of strength. This study presents social, emotional, communication, and intellectual (SECI) intelligences as a first step in creating a practicable framework based on the MI theory, to aid Marketing managers in increasing team productivity. Team leaders can use the SECI intelligence framework in conjunction with other skills-inventory assessments to evaluate the many talents, abilities, and diverse intelligence preferences of their team members. Facilitation and feedforward serve as the framework's foundations. Therefore, this comprehensive evaluation method can deliver the dominating skills-intelligence set that can be used as the foundation for boosting team productivity and accomplishing the goals of any marketing division.

Universities and business schools could benefit greatly from having a solid understanding of how a growth mindset and various intelligences interact (Morgan, 2021). For instance, by using a differentiated educational approach, teachers can provide students with access to tools, materials and software that convey content in a way that lets each student optimise their individual intelligences. In particular, applying the SECI approach to understanding intelligences can enable Marketing students to follow an optimal learning path based on various types of instructional and assessment methods, which include group projects, instructional software and individual and personalised time with educators. In this regard, business schools must embed necessary skills and intelligences in course curriculum and make it a part of assessments, but this should be in conjunction with deeper consultation with industry actors so there is less ambiguity over what is desired in Marketing graduates (Osmani et al., 2015).

6. Conclusions and future research

Businesses that prefer traditional skills over intelligences may face several implications in today's rapidly changing business landscape. By focusing on traditional skills over intelligences businesses run the risk of inefficient resource utilisation by possibly recruiting the wrong graduates. By communicating which skills and intelligences they are looking for they significantly improve the efficiency and productivity of marketing teams. As human resources focus on high-value activities like strategy development and creativity this is critically important. Businesses that prioritise traditional skills may underutilise available resources, leading to inefficient processes and missed opportunities for growth and innovation. Furthermore, businesses that prioritise traditional skills may struggle to adapt to changes yet by embracing intelligences, they can stay agile and responsive as they can quickly adjust to emerging trends in their industries.

The postings and/or advertising for marketing jobs in South Africa are regarded as a suitable technique for data collection for an initial study that prompts the potential revision of the MI theory. However, as the next phase of the study, the SECI intelligences framework will be tested using triangulation of data that will extend to Marketing managers, recruitment agencies, educators and university alumni who are now job seekers. This will assist to enhance the clinical validity of the proposed intelligences and further build on its relevance and applicability among key stakeholders.

As a recommendation, team leaders and hiring Managers in Marketing organisations can use the SECI intelligence framework in conjunction with other skills-inventory assessments as compulsory testing tools prior to recruiting Marketing graduates to join their marketing teams. While the SECI intelligence framework presents a practical approach to enhance the multiple intelligences for Marketing graduates, it is recommended for researchers to pilot test the suggested SECI intelligences presented in this paper on an expanded cohort of Marketing graduates, to evaluate its efficacy. Through this survey methodology approach, it is anticipated that this could be the starting point for a broader investigation into a cohort of additional intelligences that could bear relevance for Marketing graduates, including the more contemporary dimensions of inter-cultural intelligence, green and/or naturalistic intelligence, existential intelligence, body-kinesthetic intelligence and spatial intelligence.

It is important to note that traditional skills still hold value in marketing, such as communication, creativity and relationship-building. However, combining these skills with intelligences can provide a more comprehensive and effective approach to meet the demands of the modern marketing landscape. Importantly for marketing, relying solely on traditional skills may limit the depth of customer understanding and hinder the ability to create compelling marketing messages that resonate in today's turbulent marketplace.

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