

Application of the Kolb Experimental Learning Method to Marketing Management Material for Generation Z Students in the Economics Education Study Program, Al-Washliyah Muslim Nusantara University

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Aug, 2025

Revised Aug, 2025

Accepted Aug, 2025

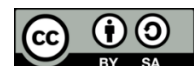
Keywords:

Kolb's Experiential Learning
Marketing Management
Generation Z

ABSTRACT

Learning for Generation Z (Gen-Z) students in college today will not be optimal if it is only in mastering theory, but also in developing practical skills that are applicable, where Generation Z students who are thick with their characteristics of mastering IT will certainly only be enthusiastic in learning that involves IT and Social Media. Today's Gen-Z students are those who when they graduate will face social life and work that are certainly more challenging, so students need to be equipped with various IT skills that can support their lives and careers after graduating from college. One solution to the problem in developing practical skills for Gen-Z students in the context of the Marketing Management course, Gen-Z students are required to understand not only theoretical marketing concepts, but also be able to apply marketing concepts using various IT platforms and social media to be applied in designing, preparing and marketing various products and displaying them in real activities. One solution to the problem of developing skills is exploring students' experiences in applying Kolb's experimental learning method to marketing material in the Marketing Management course. This method consists of four stages of the learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This study used a qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of reflective interviews with 2A semester students of the Economics Education Study Program at Al-Washliyah Muslim Nusantara University. The results of the study showed that students experienced an active, contextual, and meaningful learning process. They marketed products such as fruit salad, balado spring rolls, donuts, spring rolls, and firecracker meatballs using direct marketing strategies and social media. Students identified challenges such as time constraints, market competition, and product technical constraints, but they overcame these through teamwork, time management, and quality improvement. This experience fostered self-confidence, creativity, and an interest in entrepreneurship. Students stated that this learning experience was more effective and beneficial than conventional theoretical learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid developments require higher education to not only provide theoretical knowledge but also equip students with practical skills relevant to the real world. One of the current challenges is how to bridge the gap between the theory taught in lectures and the practical work required. Particularly in marketing, conceptual understanding must be accompanied by hands-on experience in designing and implementing real-world marketing strategies.

The experiential learning method developed by David A. Kolb offers a learning approach based on real-world experiences. This method consists of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In the context of Marketing Management learning, this method is highly relevant to students so they not only understand the theory but also are able to put the concepts into practice.

In this modern era, higher education institutions are expected to equip their students not only with theoretical knowledge but also with practical skills relevant to the real world. One challenge that needs to be addressed is how to bridge the gap between the theory learned in the classroom and the actual skills needed in the workplace. In marketing, it is crucial that an understanding of a concept is combined with hands-on experience in designing and implementing marketing strategies.

Kolb's work on experiential learning offers an approach more relevant to real-life experiences. Learning, according to Kolb, consists of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This method should be applied in teaching Marketing Management

so that students not only learn concepts but also have the opportunity to practice them.

Kolb's proposed method was implemented through a marketing project conducted by second-semester students of the Economics Education Study Program at Al-Washliyah Muslim Nusantara University. Grouped into project teams, students were given the task of determining the objectives of the product they wanted to market, developing a marketing strategy, selecting advertising media, facing various forms of alternative problem-solving strategies for obstacles encountered during the campaign, and ending with a reflection exercise based on their experiences. This project had a primary goal along with other objectives that included enhancing student creativity and collaboration that simulated entrepreneurial skills for them, who were mostly Generation Z.

The project demonstrated that students marketed food products such as fruit salad, donuts, spring rolls, balado spring rolls, and firecracker meatballs. They employed various strategies, from in-person promotions to social media platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok. Students expressed that the project provided valuable experience, boosted their confidence, and encouraged them to pursue entrepreneurship.

However, students still face challenges such as time management, logistical challenges, and intense market competition. Despite this, they overcome these challenges by dividing tasks and organizing schedules while maintaining motivation. Student reflections indicate that learning through experimental methods is more meaningful than simply wasting time in class.

Problem Formulation

Based on this background, the problem formulation in this research is:

1. How is Kolb's experimental learning method applied in marketing projects in the Marketing Management course?
2. What marketing strategies did the students use in this project?
3. What are the challenges students face while carrying out marketing projects?
4. How did students experience reflecting on learning through this project?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. Analyzing the application of Kolb's experimental learning method in the Marketing Management course.
2. Describe the marketing strategies used by students in marketing projects.
3. Identifying the challenges faced by students in the product marketing process.
4. To find out students' reflections on project-based learning experiences.

Benefits of Research

Theoretical Benefits:

This research is expected to contribute to the development of experiential learning theory, particularly in the context of economic and entrepreneurship education.

Practical Benefits:

1. For lecturer, as a source for evaluation and further development of project-based teaching methods to make them more effective.
2. For students, as a means of reflection and fostering entrepreneurial spirit and marketing skills.
3. For educational institutions, as an innovative teaching design model that can be used in various practical courses.

Research Authenticity

This research is novel because it focuses on the application of Kolb's method in the context of Marketing Management learning involving Generation Z students as the main subjects. Furthermore, this study combines students' reflective approach with an analysis of their marketing strategies, making it unique compared to similar studies that focus solely on quantitative results.

2. METHODS

This descriptive qualitative research using a case study approach aims to describe the application of the Kolb learning method in the Marketing Management course. This research was conducted on second-semester students of class 2A of the Economics Education Study Program at Al-Washliyah Muslim Nusantara University in the even semester of 2024/2025. The research focused on how students directly experienced the learning process by conducting several marketing projects, reflected on these experiences, and analyzed how effective these experiences were for understanding marketing concepts and developing entrepreneurial skills.

The subjects in this study were all 10 students in Class 2A. Subjects were selected using total sampling because all students in the class had actively participated in the project-based learning. The study was conducted at Al-Washliyah Muslim Nusantara University and at several locations where they market their products, both online through social media and in person in their neighborhoods.

The research design refers to Kolb's experimental learning model, which consists of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The research procedure was carried out in stages. First, in the planning stage, the researcher designed a learning project that allowed students to directly practice product marketing strategies. Students were asked to form groups, select products to be marketed, and develop a marketing plan.

Second, during the implementation phase, students carried out real-world marketing activities for two weeks. They implemented various promotional strategies, from direct sales to utilizing social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok. Researchers monitored this process through class discussions, weekly reports, and visual documentation collected by the students.

Third, during the observation stage, researchers recorded the dynamics that occurred during the marketing process. Observations were conducted through direct interaction, group discussions, and verbal reflections provided by students during learning sessions. Researchers also observed how students overcame obstacles, assigned roles within groups, and evaluated their sales results.

Fourth, in the evaluation-reflection stage, students were asked to prepare individual reflective reports detailing their experiences during the marketing project, the strategies used, the challenges faced, and the lessons learned. Researchers analyzed these reflective reports as primary data to determine the extent to which experiential learning impacted students' understanding and motivation.

The data sources for this study were primary data obtained from in-depth interviews and written student reflections. Interviews were conducted in person and unstructured to allow students the freedom to express their experiences and feelings. Additionally, data were obtained from documentation of student activities during the project, such as photos, videos, sales notes, and recordings of promotional conversations.

The data collection techniques used were participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during the learning process and project implementation. Interviews were conducted after the project was completed to explore students' impressions, understanding, and reflections. Documentation was used to support the findings and provide authentic evidence of learning activities.

The collected data was analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis techniques. Researchers grouped the data based on emerging themes, such as marketing strategies, challenges, collaboration, learning reflection, and attitude change. Each theme was analyzed in depth to examine the relationship between the learning process and student outcomes. The analysis results were then compiled into a narrative that describes the entire process of applying Kolb's experimental learning method in the context of Marketing Management learning

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine how the application of Kolb's experimental learning method can improve students' understanding and skills in Marketing Management. The results were obtained from student reflections on a live marketing project, then analyzed based on the four stages of Kolb's learning model: concrete experience, observational reflection, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

3.1 Concrete Experience: Learning from Real Activities

All students reported experiencing firsthand the product marketing process, from product selection and strategy development to consumer sales. The products marketed were quite diverse, including fruit salad, spring rolls, donuts, balado spring rolls, and firecracker meatballs. Product selection was based on market interest, ease of production, and appeal to campus consumers.

This hands-on experience provides learning beyond theory alone. Students report gaining a better understanding of their target market, pricing strategies, and appropriate promotional strategies. They also learn to navigate real-world challenges such as limited study time, pricing errors, and intense competition.

These results show that the concrete experience stage has succeeded in building deep emotional involvement and real practice, in line with [1] theory that direct

experience is the main foundation in the learning process.

3.2 Observational Reflection: Recognizing Challenges and Self-Awareness

After participating in the marketing activities, students reflected on their experiences. Many of them recognized the importance of teamwork, fair division of labor, and effective communication. Several students noted that the activities built their confidence and courage to speak directly with consumers.

Some of the challenges they encountered included limited time due to busy class schedules, fear of not selling, and a lack of promotional experience. However, this reflection also led to solutions they discovered on their own, such as scheduling, optimal use of social media, and improvising promotions.

This reflection demonstrates that the reflective observation phase went well. Students not only recognized their shortcomings but also evaluated and learned from their experiences. This aligns with Kolb and Kolb (2017), who stated that reflection is essential for connecting experiences to broader learning.

3.3 Abstract Conceptualization: Formation of New Understanding

Through the reflection process, students develop a new understanding of marketing concepts. They don't simply memorize marketing strategies, but truly understand them through personal experience. For example, they discuss the importance of determining target markets, adjusting prices to consumer purchasing power, utilizing digital media, and the importance of customer service.

Furthermore, some students are beginning to recognize their entrepreneurial potential. Some have expressed interest in starting their own businesses in the future, having experienced firsthand the challenges and excitement of trading.

This finding strengthens Kolb's (1984) position that through conceptualization,

students are able to build deeper theories and understanding based on the reflective experiences they have had.

3.4 Active Experimentation: Applying Knowledge to the Future

The final stage of Kolb's model, active experimentation, is evident in the students' follow-up actions after participating in this project. Several students have expressed a desire to pursue their own businesses, with some even having their own products before the project and taking them more seriously afterward.

Students also offered constructive suggestions for future projects, such as more thorough planning, product diversification into non-food products, and more effective use of social media. This demonstrates that they are not only learning from their experiences but are ready to apply them more broadly in the future.

Discussion: Interpretation of Research Results

The results of this study indicate that the application of Kolb's experimental learning method is able to provide meaningful learning experiences for Generation Z students. They learn in a way that suits the characteristics of their generation: active, collaborative, and digital-native [2].

Learning is no longer one-way, but rather an active process involving emotion, reflection, and real-world application. This aligns with research by [3] and [4], which emphasize the importance of experiential learning in higher education to enhance 21st-century skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

Furthermore, findings indicate that this method provides ample scope for developing an entrepreneurial spirit. Students not only learn marketing theory but also develop an interest and readiness to become entrepreneurs. This aligns with the views of [5] and [6], who emphasized the importance of integrating experiential learning in

entrepreneurship development in higher education.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research that has been conducted regarding the application of Kolb's experimental learning method in the Marketing Management course, the following conclusions were obtained:

Kolb's experimental learning method is effective in improving students' understanding and skills, particularly in applying marketing theory in real-world settings. Students can gain a deeper understanding of marketing concepts through Kolb's learning cycle: concrete experience, observational reflection, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Students experience meaningful and contextual learning. They gain hands-on experience in selling products, reflect on successes and failures, form new insights, and develop follow-up plans, which strengthens the active learning process in line with the digital-native and collaborative characteristics of Generation Z [3], [7].

The implementation of this model also encourages the emergence of an entrepreneurial spirit. Several students demonstrated interest and courage in developing independent businesses after participating in this project, indicating a positive contribution to strengthening soft skills and entrepreneurial readiness [8], [9].

Students become more reflective and independent in learning, and the ability to evaluate actions and make decisions based on experience. This aligns with [10] theory, which states that effective learning occurs through a cycle of experience-reflection-conceptualization-experimentation.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions above, the researcher provides several suggestions:

For Lecturers and Educational Institutions Lecturers are advised to continue developing experiential learning models like Kolb's to make learning more applicable and contextual. Educational institutions are also expected to support this by providing resources and time flexibility to ensure optimal project implementation.

For Students are expected to utilize this experience to develop their personal competencies and entrepreneurial spirit. It is also important to cultivate strong self-reflection to ensure learning becomes a continuous process.

For Further Researchers: It is recommended to examine the application of the Kolb model in other courses or in different institutional contexts, and to combine it with a quantitative approach to measure its influence on learning outcomes in a more measurable manner.

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