

# Promoting Problem-Based Learning in Retailing and Services Marketing Course Curricula With Reality Television

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This research provides business educators who teach retailing and services courses with an innovative way to encourage students to engage in problem-based learning solving by incorporating reality television into their curricula. The authors explore the reality television genre from several theoretical perspectives to lend support to the conclusion that reality programs easily captivate their audiences by stimulating self-involvement. The authors present an assignment based on B. S. Bloom's (1956) revised taxonomy that educators can employ when incorporating reality programming into their courses. They then provide data to demonstrate direct and indirect measures of learning outcomes associated with reality programming in business curricula.

**Keywords:** creative problem solving, problem-based learning, reality television, retail curriculum, services marketing curriculum

Problem-based learning (PBL) is an instructional and curricular approach that “empowers learning to conduct research, integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem” (Savery, 2006, p. 12). The importance of solving real-life problems in business curricula is evident, as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB, 2014) recognizes reflective thinking skills as a vital outcome of undergraduate business education.

Unfortunately, PBL is often lacking from business education because the university practice of focusing on content within narrow discipline boundaries actually hampers students from fully understanding how to solve the complexities inherent in real life scenarios (Page & Mukherjee, 2007), especially those that arise in service settings that are designed to serve customers (Spohrer & Maglio, 2008).

That is, disciplinary boundaries, which are a sacrosanct construct of academic convenience, have resulted in students understanding the functions of business more so than

the practice of managing (Stinson & Milter, 1996). Yet, managing is not about mastering a collection of discrete disciplines, but rather, management requires leadership and integrating skills so that managers may solve complex problems by weaving together different kinds of knowledge (Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002).

Given the importance of PBL skills for business students, one may speculate about the best means for incorporating it into curricula. A challenge confronting educators is that millennial learning preferences are different from past generation preferences (Silverstone, 2007). Nearly all college courses require a text, which most instructors expect students to read as part of their comprehension of course content. However, research reveals that few students read assigned textbooks, purchase required textbooks, or complete reading assignments (Juban & Lopez, 2013; Vafeas, 2013). Regardless of how many books are assigned, “some students will spend more time watching reality television than reading” (Dreyer, 2011, p. 409).

Although this remark may seem flippant, reality television programming has become a significant and successful genre among U.S. adolescents (Patino, Kaltcheva, & Smith, 2012) and global audiences (Beck, Hellmueller, &

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Aeschbacher, 2012). Reality programs are unscripted, voyeuristic, and employ real people, rather than professional actors, who are embedded in a specific locale, such as on an island, in a home, or a hair salon (Patino et al., 2012).

As Hall (2009) stated, “audiences define reality shows in terms of a focus on real people playing themselves” (p. 516); thus, a certain amount of authenticity inherent in reality programming exists. Despite the so-called realness of the reality television genre, taken at face value, reality television seems to provide little in the way of learning. Lurking beneath the surface of reality programs, however, are audiences who constantly reflect on the authenticity of the programs and express criticism and concerns (Beck et al., 2012), while engaging in critical thinking to learn real-world lessons about economics (Mixon, 2001), strategy (Strauss, 2011), and client management (Bach, 2008).

Although reality-based television remains part of American culture, pedagogical examples that promote PBL among business undergraduate students are missing in business education. Furthermore, although business educators have employed engaging exercises that use reality-based programming to teach real-world lessons, especially in capstone courses, considerably less is known about learning outcomes associated with reality programming in business curricula. The purpose of this study is to address these voids in business education.

The article proceeds as follows: first, we discuss the popularity of the reality television genre. Second, we discuss how instructors can integrate reality television into their curricula by employing a PBL assignment. Third, we present humanistic data regarding students’ views toward reality programming. Fourth, we show the extent to which PBL takes place when discussion board and short paper assignments are based on reality programming. We conclude with a discussion of why business educators should blend reality television into their curricula.

### Questioning Retailing and Services Marketing Pedagogy

Similar to Heames and Service (2003), we espouse that dichotomies exist between the way things are in retail and service management education and the way most people think they should be. That is, although retailing textbook authors and educators discuss topics such as merchandise buying, visual merchandising, location analysis, and pricing, students are learning the functions of retailing as opposed to how to assume real-life responsibilities, which they will confront a daily basis as managers.

Within retail settings, managers, and trainees, are usually responsible for daily sales; customer service; asset protection; employee hiring, training, and termination; merchandising based on standardized design directives; implementation of corporate pricing directives; unloading and stocking of inventory; and maintenance. Thus, students

pursuing managerial careers in service-based industries need to understand practical workplace realities, such as how to manage employees, implement service recovery, and limit service failures. Indeed, retail practitioners emphasize the need to hire employees who possess the skills to creatively identify, formulate, and solve real-life problems, while merchandising skills have a much lower priority (Finch, Nadeau, & O’Reilly, 2013).

### Challenges to Students’ Learning Capacities

Although practitioners want to hire new employees with the ability to solve real-world problems, a pertinent question to address is the best method for heeding their request. As discussed, research shows that many college students shy away from reading assigned textbooks. Rather, many students expect professors to verbally review important material in class, typically in the form of PowerPoint (Burke, James, & Ahmadi, 2009) and to direct them to important parts of assigned readings (Clump, Bauer, & Bradley, 2004). Thus, educators who opt to assign students with PBL readings, or to fill a handful of slides with PBL bullet points, will most likely fail in their endeavors to teach their students how to analyze and to solve problems.

Many textbook authors address the apparent real-world gap by providing students with case studies. However, undergraduate business students, who often lack work experience beyond that of frontline employees, have difficulty engaging in problem-based learning from passively reading textbook cases (Strauss, 2011). Furthermore, with many cases assigned as group projects, not all students share equally in the learning experience. That is, educational researchers (McCorkle et al., 1999) conclude that the majority of students report unequal participation among students engaged in group projects.

Other business educators, especially those teaching strategic management capstone courses, often attempt to address the lack of real-world in their content by employing simulation games. Interestingly, an in-depth review of the impact of these games on learning outcomes remains inconclusive. On one hand, students reported enjoying participating in in-class simulations, and the autonomy of making decisions. On the other hand, educational researchers conclude that there have not been enough high-quality studies on the topic of learning via simulation games to conclude whether student players learn by participating in simulations or experiential exercises (Gosen & Washbush, 2004).

### PBL Learning Application Via Reality Programming

Silverstone (2007) advocates that business educators should shift from an emphasis on textbooks as the preferred source of disseminating knowledge to the use of technology—most notably, reality television—as a key tool for students to acquire real-world business information. Although this

idea may sound anathema to academia, other researchers (Mixon, 2001; Strauss, 2011) argue that reality-based business television encourages students to think beyond the surface entertainment and to consider the underlying business issues these programs uncover.

### Reality Television in the United States

Reality-based television programming refers to “programs that film real people as they live out events” (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stit, 2003, p. 304). Thus, reality programs differ from other programs that claim to present reality—news, talk and interview shows, and documentaries—in that they tend to portray regular people, rather than professional actors and actresses, acting within their natural environments in a nonscripted and apparently unrehearsed manner for the audience’s entertainment. Although viewers admit to being aware that reality-based shows are only moderately realistic, the genre’s popularity does not seem to be declining (Tran & Strutton, 2014). Two key theories explain the popularity of reality television.

## THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

### Backstage Thinking

Rose and Wood (2005) concluded that reality television’s attractiveness originates from viewers’ tendency to engage in backstage thinking as they view these shows. Reality television viewers often engage in active problem-based thinking by speculating about why the cast members acted or spoke as they did, what they would do in the cast member’s place, what the producers were up to, and what actually happened or might have been. Thus, by extension, watching reality business programming might induce students to engage in backstage thinking about why problems occur and how they are best solved.

### Belligerent Broadcasting

Higgins, Montgomery, Smith, and Tolson (2012) coined the term *belligerent broadcasting* to denote a broadcast style that underlies popular trouble-shooting business television programming. They defined belligerent broadcasting as a style that offers spectacular expressions of anger, impatience, or intimidation from an on-screen persona who is usually an expert in a certain business field. Although reality program figures are typified by tough talking and excessive swearing, the authors contend that viewers are enamored by their ability to confront harsh business realities and to provide business owners and employees with honest, negative feedback. Higgins et al. suggested that belligerent broadcasting is part of the contemporary social milieu, a concept they define as a “celebration of a manner

of speaking that cuts through evasion and obfuscation, in the name of immediacy, authenticity, truth, and understanding” (p. 516). In other words, reality business programming viewers appreciate these shows because they are succinctly and brutally honest about the harsh realities that businesses often encounter.

This discussion lends support to the conclusion that reality business programs may stimulate problem-based thinking among services and retailing management students. Thus, a question worth exploring is how business educators can insert reality business programming into their course content so that students emulate the decision-making behaviors that often help real-life struggling retailing establishments succeed.

### Reality Television in Business Courses

We buttress Mixon’s (2001) perspective of reality television by proposing that reality business programming can benefit business students by helping them learn how to solve problems by engaging in PBL exercises associated with these programs. All the reality programs illustrated in Table 1 are based on focal characters solving problems in service establishments.

The following section presents an assignment that educators can employ to encourage students to engage in PBL, which simultaneously meets the AACSB’s directives.

### Reality Television Assignment for PBL Learning

A key characteristic of PBL is to apply knowledge and skills that develop a viable solution to a defined problem or

TABLE 1  
Reality Television Guide for Retailing or Services Marketing Courses

Reality program	Program’s general concept
<i>Bakery Boss</i>	Buddy Valastro seeks out struggling family bakeries
<i>Bar Rescue</i>	Jon Taffer assumes managerial responsibilities at struggling bars.
<i>Caught Red Handed</i>	Follows undercover store detectives in retail stores.
<i>Hotel Hell</i>	Gordon Ramsay consults with struggling hotels.
<i>Hotel Impossible</i>	Anthony Melchiorri consults with struggling hotel properties.
<i>Kitchen Nightmares</i>	Gordon Ramsay consults with struggling restaurants.
<i>Restaurant Impossible</i>	Robert Irvine turns around faltering restaurants in two days with only \$10,000.
<i>Restaurant Stakeout</i>	Willie Degel works with restaurant owners on employee issues.
<i>Tabatha Takes Over</i>	Tabatha Coffey assumes managerial responsibilities at small businesses.
<i>Undercover Boss</i>	A firm’s chief executive goes undercover on the firm’s front line.

problems (Savery, 2006). To meet this requirement, one the authors developed the following reality television assignment that promotes PBL learning. The assignment incorporates Bloom's (1956) theory of critical thinking and six successive stages of learning (Nentl & Zietlow, 2008), which was updated in the 1990s (Forehand, 2005) to yield Bloom's revised taxonomy. We now discuss each of the assignment's questions in detail.

*Remembering the problem.* In this learning stage, students show knowledge by remembering or retrieving previously learned material. Thus, in the assignment, students are asked to list at least 10 problems that are causing service failures at Company X. Instructors fill in Company X with an actual firm highlighted in a reality program.

*Understanding the problem.* Students are asked to demonstrate their ability to grasp conceptual meaning by explaining what is happening. In the assignment, the instructor asks students to explain their previous answer by classifying each of the problems listed into the service mix—namely, to recognize problems as related to issues with people, processes, or physical environmental stimuli. This question permits students to differentiate problems by categorizing them into customer service components, which are typically under managerial control.

*Applying theory to practice.* Students are encouraged to apply knowledge from a retailing or services marketing theory, framework, or classroom discussion to explain why several of the problems are occurring in the episode. For example, students may be asked to use examples from the Servicescape Framework or the gaps model to explain why many customers are avoiding the bar. This question encourages students to integrate theory and practice, which is also a key characteristic of PBL (Savery, 2006).

*Analyzing why problems are occurring.* This stage of learning requires students to break down a complex problem into different parts and to determine the relationships between those parts. Thus, the corresponding question on the assignment asks students to examine each of the 10 problems they listed and to analyze in-depth why the problem is occurring. This step is critical to PBL because it encourages students to begin thinking of solutions to pre-existing problems.

*Evaluating viable solutions.* At this higher level of learning, students are asked to combine parts to form a new whole—namely, to recommend a viable solution to a problem. By doing so, students are engaging in the essence of PBL. Thus, the next question asks students to develop management strategies for solving each of the problems listed in the first question.

*Creating personal transformations.* At the highest level of learning, students are asked to construct or to create something new, essentially to combine parts to form a new whole. In the assignment, a student is asked to do the following:

Imagine that you are a manager of a service-oriented firm, such as a retail, hospitality, transportation, financial, insurance, or food/beverage organization. Develop a set of procedures that you design and will adhere to, which will help prevent you from encountering problems and issues that you just witnessed in this episode.

Students are encouraged to keep a journal during the semester to record their answers to this question so that they can evaluate how they are developing as future managers.

## Research Questions

This discussion suggests that reality business programming should be integral to retailing and services curricula because it encourages students to engage in PBL and to understand the complexities involved in managing retail organizations. However, we lack an empirical understanding as to whether students prefer learning essential service and retailing concepts from the realistic issues present in many reality programs. In the next section, we investigate the extent to which undergraduate business students self-report their interest and personal development from watching reality programming. More specifically, we answer the following research questions:

*Research Question 1 (RQ1):* Do undergraduate business students enrolled in retailing and/or services courses perceive assigned reality business programming as interesting?

*RQ2:* Do undergraduate business students enrolled in retailing and/or services courses perceive the usefulness of reality business programming in helping them understand business concepts?

*RQ3:* Do undergraduate business students enrolled in retailing and/or services courses perceive the appropriateness of learning about business concepts through reality business programming?

## STUDY 1

### Sample

The data came from online, self-administered questionnaires given to students enrolled in a retailing course in the United States and two services marketing courses in both the United States and Romania. The retailing course consisted of 31 undergraduate students (19 women, 12 men);

of these, 68% were marketing and business administration majors, 26% were textiles and apparel merchandise majors, and the rest were liberal arts majors.

The services marketing course in the United States consisted of 32 undergraduate students (19 women, 13 men); of these, 50% were hospitality majors, 44% were marketing and business administration majors, and the remaining were liberal arts majors. The services course in Romania consisted of 29 undergraduate students (19 women, 10 men), all of whom were hospitality majors. Although the students regularly observed reality television clips during class lectures, student response data came from eight reality programming assignments (i.e., three in the retailing course, four in the U.S. services marketing course, and one in the Romania services marketing course).

### Methodology and Instrument

Students were instructed to complete an online survey instrument after they watched and completed a reality television assignment. In line with the work of Burr and King (2010), who probed student experiences in watching reality television, the students rated their responses to three 5-point Likert-scale questions, on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). The questions and response rates are illustrated in Table 2. The first question probed students' interests in a reality program. The second question probed the perceived usefulness of the program in understanding business concepts. The third question probed students' view of

the appropriateness of the reality television program in business classes.

### Results

**Research Question 1.** The data reveal that the overwhelming majority of students, in many instances more than 90%, reported being extremely or very much interested in each of the reality television shows (see Table 2). When students are more interested in course material, they attend class more often, and also perform better on examinations, than students who are less interested (Romer, 1993).

**Research Question 2.** An analysis of the findings, shown in Table 2, regarding the perceived usefulness of a reality program in helping the students understand service-related issues, reveals that the majority (89–100%), and in two cases 100%, of the respondents reported the usefulness as extremely or very much. Students viewed reality programming learning activities as meaningful and worthwhile; learning occurred because they found reality content useful and the assignment activity enjoyable and relevant (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

**Research Question 3.** The results (see Table 2) reveal that the overwhelming majority of students (83–91%) perceive reality television programming as extremely appropriate or very much so for learning about business concepts. This finding indicates that students regard reality

TABLE 2  
Students' Perceptions of Reality Television Assignments

	How interesting did you find this program?					How useful did you find the program in helping you understand?					How appropriate do you believe it is for students to learn about business concepts through reality television programs?				
	Ex-tremely %	Very much %	Some what %	Little %	Not at all %	Ex-tremely %	Very much %	Some what %	Little %	Not at all %	Ex-tremely %	Very much %	Some what %	Little %	Not at all %
<i>Bar Rescue – Tiki</i>	60	36	4	0	0	52 <sup>a</sup>	44	4	0	0	48	40	12	0	0
<i>Bar Rescue – Piratz Tavern</i>	50	41	9	0	0	47 <sup>b</sup>	50	3	0	0	59	34	6	0	0
<i>Tabatha Takes Over</i>	28	50	22	0	0	22 <sup>c</sup>	67	11	0	0	33	50	11	6	0
<i>Caught in the Act</i>	44	44	9	3	0	35 <sup>d</sup>	56	9	0	0	35 <sup>e</sup>	56	9	0	0
<i>Kitchen Nightmares</i>	33	64	3	0	0	37 <sup>f</sup>	63	0	0	0	47	37	17	0	0
<i>Hotel Hell</i>	58	31	11	0	0	43 <sup>g</sup>	57	0	0	0 <sup>g</sup>	46	43	11	0	0
<i>Tabatha Salon Orbit</i>	41	40	16	3	0	53 <sup>h</sup>	41	6	0	0	53	38	6	0	3
<i>Tabatha Salon Brownes &amp; Co.</i>	48	36	16	0	0	52 <sup>i</sup>	39	3	7	0	55	32	13	0	0

<sup>a</sup>How service failures are related to a firm's people (employees, owners, managers), process (operations, training), and the physical environment?

<sup>b</sup>How service failures are related to a firm's service mix (people, process, physical)?

<sup>c</sup>Service issues that may occur in a service setting, such as a bed and breakfast?

<sup>d</sup>Customer issues that may occur in a service setting, such as a department store?

<sup>e</sup>Question was: "How appropriate do you believe it is for students to learn about loss prevention through reality television shows?"

<sup>f</sup>Service issues that may occur in a retail setting, such as a restaurant?

<sup>g</sup>Service issues that may occur in a service setting, such as a hotel?

<sup>h</sup>Service failures that may occur in a service setting, such as a hair salon?

<sup>i</sup>Human resource issues that may occur in a service setting, such as a hair salon?

television viewing as an appropriate instructional approach and a method that can enhance their personal development. This contention was supported by anecdotal evidence derived from Facebook comments the author (M.S.R.) received from the students. For example, one student noted how reality programming provided him with a visual aid to the course:

I find it quite helpful to have a visual perception of the concept we are studying. There were some situations when I couldn't understand only from what I read; videos filled the gap in my understanding. [This] way of teaching is easy to comprehend and explanatory enough to enable us to solve some of the real-life situations regarding service marketing.

Another student noted how reality programming provided insights into real-life situations:

Having something real, almost tangible to interact with adds value to the class, and sometimes it is self-explanatory. Having examples that can show real-life (or directed) situations from real hotels does provide sufficient information for students in order to understand the exact points [they will confront in the future].

Another student emphasized the enjoyment of video learning over reading, while noting with indifference toward staging:

I truly believe it [reality business programming] represents an amazing way for us to learn and discover more. Forty minutes of watching an entertaining video is definitely more fun and interesting than reading 40 pages from a book. Personally, I enjoyed each and every video, and I realized that it doesn't matter whether it's staged or not, since they are exposing serious hospitality problems.

Finally, a student pointed out the problem with imaginary learning:

My opinion is that [what] you actually see in practice [rather than] what you learn theoretically is better than just imagining because as we all know, we can be wrong. Also, the videos provide concrete examples, not only general speaking. It is useful to be put face-to-face with problems within a hotel and then to evaluate if our recovery strategies are similar with the ones chosen by professional people.

Although indirect measures of student learning are insightful, in the next section, we investigate direct measures of student learning measures by analyzing discussion board postings and short paper assignments among students who have watched reality business programs. The primary research question that we want to explore follows. Do students, whom are exposed to reality programming, in conjunction with a lecture and assigned textbook readings, demonstrate PBL by integrating theory and practice?

## STUDY 2: APPLY THEORY TO PRACTICE

The data for this study came from 30 undergraduate students who were enrolled in a services marketing course, which was held at a large university in the Midwestern United States.

### Discussion Board Assignments

One of this study's authors (M.S.R.) assigned his services marketing students two discussion board assignments that were based on the *Bar Rescue* "Piratz Tavern" episode (SpikeTV, 2014). The goal of the reality assignments was to teach the theory-to-practice aspect of PBL (Savery, 2006) by having students apply theoretical components of the Servicescape Framework (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2013) to understand the complexities of the problems put forth in the *Bar Rescue* episode.

The first discussion board question asked students to provide examples of how customers, including yourself, may be, or have been, affected cognitively (e.g., beliefs, categorization, symbolic meaning), emotionally (e.g., mood and attitude), and physiologically (e.g., comfort and pain) by elements of the bar's servicescape. The second question asked students to describe the physical environment of Piratz Tavern in terms of three categories of servicescape dimensions: ambient conditions; spatial layout and functionality; and signs, symbols, and artifacts. In order to receive full credit, students had to post an initial post to the discussion board and to respond to a minimum of two other postings. The discussion board rubrics are located in the Appendix.

**Findings.** Every student completed the assignment; therefore, each student analyzed the material on three separate occasions, for a total of six postings when completing both assignments. In terms of the first assignment, 80% of students provided complete answers by accurately providing examples of how stimuli present in the bar's environment would likely cause them, and other bar customers, cognitive, emotional, and physiological responses.

For examples, students gave real-life meaning to the concept of a cognitive response by often remarking that the physical stimuli, such as the bar décor and employee dress, classified the bar as being pirate themed. Further, students noted that the bar's poor display of food and beverages and filth encouraged them to categorize the bar as being inferior quality. Thus, students began to understand the importance of cleanliness in a customer's cognitive response.

In terms of analyzing environmental stimuli for an emotional response, students noted that the employees' uncaring demeanor negatively impacted their mood and attitudes. Therefore, students began to understand the role employees play in the customer's emotional well-being. In terms of physiological responses, students commonly noted

that the bar's dirty environment may actually cause customers to experience pain and discomfort (i.e., becoming ill). They also noted that the bar's long, narrow corridor could possibly result in customers feeling trapped. Resultantly, students began to understand the potential impact of service design aesthetics on a customer's physical comfort.

About 90% of the services marketing students successfully applied servicescape theory to real-world practice by identifying examples of ambient conditions, space/function elements, and signs, symbols, and artifacts that comprise the bar's servicescape. Thus, reality business programming emerges an opportune PBL approach that helps students integrate theory and practice in a manner that they perceive as being interesting, useful, and appropriate.

### Short Paper Assignment

The services instructor also helped his students engage in PBL by applying theoretical tenets regarding customers' expectations of service (Zeithaml et al., 2013) to real-world practicalities by assigning them to watch *Hotel Impossible*, Glacier Bear Lodge (Travel Channel, 2014). In this assignment, students were asked to discuss the following questions. First, how are the lodge's customers' expectations being influenced by word-of-mouth communication found on popular Internet sites, including Tripadvisor, Yelp, and Google reviews? Second, after visiting the lodge website (see [www.glacierbearlodge.com](http://www.glacierbearlodge.com)) describe explicit promises that the lodge is making to potential guests. Third, explain how photos on the lodge's website represent implicit service promises. Forth, use Google reviews to determine Glacier Bear Lodge's competition in Yakutat, Alaska. After doing so, explain how perceived service alternatives influence a potential guest's expectations of Glacier Bear Lodge. Fifth, given that the target customer at Glacier Bear Lodge are male avid fishing fans, what sort of personal needs will they have that are essential to their well-being? The assignment's rubrics are located in the Appendix.

**Findings.** Based upon the short paper rubrics, 80% of the students had grades falling within the 90–100% percentile, with the remaining 20% falling between the 80–89% percentile. Overall, students were successfully able to consider the various factors that influence desired and predicted service levels, such as competition, explicit/implicit service promises, word-of-mouth communications, and apply these to an actual hospitality setting. Further, it is worth noting that this short paper assignment enhances PBL because it purposefully requires students to formulate solutions by drawing upon a wide range of disciplines, subjects, and perspectives.

## DISCUSSION

Celsi and Wolfenbarger (2002) stated that “professors must embrace change and view it as a chance to augment, extend, and in some cases rejuvenate their teaching” (p. 71). This research heeds their call by providing a novel way for educators to rejuvenate their retailing and services courses by embedding PBL in realistic contexts portrayed on reality television programs. This research shows how and why students may learn problem-solving skills by merging popular culture with academia; that is, business-oriented reality programming induces students to actively disaggregate problems inherent in these shows and to develop viable solutions to those problems. By doing so, educators are engaging in the key aspect of PBL—offer viable solutions to real-world problems.

While many educators battle to keep students focused and engaged during lectures, as a communication genre, reality television programs naturally facilitates an interactive experience—essentially, a high level of connectedness between a viewer and a program's happenings—(Patino et al., 2012). However, as discussed, much of this interactive experience is missing from many of today's college classrooms as students continue to shun traditional pedagogy methods, including textbook reading and active engagement in classroom lectures. Further, whether or not students actually learn from participating in group work or simulation exercises remains questionable.

The net generation prefers realistic and relevant learning activities to instructor-centered activities, including the classroom lecture; reality business programming addresses this need. The findings in this research show that reality business programs have the potential to induce students think about how and why learned concepts are applicable to real-life scenarios. Most important, the study's findings regarding the extent to which students were successfully able to apply theoretical concepts to situations posted in reality programming, reflect the possibility that students can learn how to apply theory to practice—another key PBL outcome (Savery, 2006) through this communication genre.

Clearly, reality programming is not appropriate for every discussion in retailing and services marketing. However, we put forth that reality business programming is opportune for discussing topics such as physical evidence and the servicescape, service innovation and design, customer-defined service standards, expectations and perceptions of service delivery, employees' and customers' roles in service delivery, service failure and recovery, human resource issues in retailing, and asset protection.

Although this study focuses on services and retailing courses, the reality television assignments highlighted in this article can be applied to other business courses, including consumer behavior, customer relationship management, and marketing strategy. Any reality television show that focuses on understanding distressed businesses, consumer

crime (e.g., shoplifting), or specific industries (e.g., restaurants, pawn shops, used cars) can provide business students with a means to apply textbook concepts to real-life situations and to acquire experience by self-reflecting on how they would confront and solve dilemmas posed in reality programs.

We highly encourage business instructors who plan to employ reality business programming in their courses to review the reality shows that are highlighted in Table 1, especially in terms of the show's context and issues. As educators plan their lessons, they need to check for free programming capability that is typically offered by the show's network or on YouTube. We recommend that educators check the reality programming linkages a few days before a planned lecture as it is our experience that networks routinely remove programming links and that they often invoke viewing charges for older shows. This situation makes it nearly impossible for educators who want to use free reality business programming in their coursework to develop specific favorite episodes.

Educators may set the stage for PBL by introducing a business problem that is highlighted in a brief trailer from a reality business program. The trailers are conducive with PBL in that it introduces ill-structured problems (i.e., outcome is not clear) to students before the planned lecture and it stimulates the process, allowing for free inquiry during lecture (Savery, 2006). If the program's trailer is not available, then the educator may introduce the program and view specific aspects of the program that introduce ill-structured, real-world business problems to the class, and then begin the planned lecture. As the educator introduces a new business concept or theoretical framework, she or he must help students link the new knowledge to the posed in the reality program trailer. Students can then be assigned one of the three assignments put forth in this article that encourage students to engage in PBL by integrating theory and practice or by applying knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a real-world problem.

Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) noted that many large corporations have created their own corporate universities in an effort to bring management development closer to practice. They believed, similar to many others, that management education in many academic settings is failing to fully provide undergraduate and MBA students with skills to solve real-world problems. The traditional lecture format, assigned readings, PowerPoint slides, group case studies, and simulation games do not appear to be providing management students with sufficient wisdom that they require to develop viable solutions to problems that they often confront in their daily lives outside of academia. Perhaps, the blending of reality business programming is not a cure-all for the problems plaguing business education; however, we believe that it is a step in the right direction—that is, to provide business students with problem-based learning skills.

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APPENDIX

Discussion Rubric: Servicescape Assignment

Your active participation in the discussion forum is essential to your overall success on this assignment. Discussion questions are designed to help you make meaningful connections between the course content and the larger concepts and goals of the course.

Requirements for the Assignment:

Students are required to post one (1) initial post and to follow up with at least two (2) response posts for each discussion board assignment. Students may post additional response posts; however, if the basic requirements are not met, students earn a zero for the assignment.

For your initial post, you must complete the following tasks: 1) compose a post of one or two paragraphs; 2) complete the initial post by Thursday at 11:59 p.m. CST; 3) Take into consideration material such as course content, lecture, text, and, most importantly, the Servicescape Framework.

For your response posts, you must complete the following tasks: 1) reply to at least two different classmates outside of your own initial post; 2) complete the two response posts by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. CST; and 3) demonstrate more depth and thought than simply by stating “I agree” or “You are wrong.”

Critical elements	Distinguished	Proficient	Emerging	Not evident	Value %
Comprehension	Develops an initial post with an organized, clear point of view or idea using rich and significant detail from the text (18–20)	Develops an initial post with a point of view or idea using appropriate detail from the text (16–17)	Develops an initial post with a point of view or idea but with some gaps in organization and detail (14–15)	Does not develop an initial post with an organized point of view or idea (0–13)	20
Timeliness	Submits initial post on time by Thursday at 11:59 PM CST (10)	Submits initial post by Friday at 11:59 PM CST, one day late (7)	Submits initial post by Saturday at 11:59 PM CST, two days late (4)	Submits initial post by Sunday at 11:59 PM CST, three days late (0–3)	10
Engagement	Provides relevant and meaningful response posts with clarifying explanation and detail from Chapter XX (27–30)	Provides relevant response posts with some explanation and detail from Chapter XX (16–17)	Provides somewhat relevant response posts with some explanation and detail from the Chapter XX (14–15)	Provides response posts that are generic with little explanation or detail from Chapter XX (0–13)	20
Critical thinking	Draws insightful conclusions that are thoroughly defended with evidence and examples from the Chapter XX (27–30)	Draws informed conclusions that are justified with evidence from Chapter XX (24–26)	Draws logical conclusions with little or no text reference from Chapter XX (21–23)	Does not draw logical conclusions from any course material (0–20)	30
Writing (mechanics)	Initial post and responses are easily understood, clear, and concise using proper citation methods where applicable with no errors in citations (18–20)	Initial post and responses are easily understood using proper citation methods where applicable with few errors in citations (16–17)	Initial post and responses are understandable using proper citation methods where applicable with a number of errors in citations (14–15)	Initial post and responses are not understandable and do not use proper citation methods where applicable (0–13)	20
Comments: Use APA reference style for in-text and end-of-paper references					100%
Earned total					

## Short Paper Rubric

*Requirements of submission:* Short paper assignments must follow these formatting guidelines: double spacing, 12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, and disci-

pline-appropriate citations. Page length requirements: 2 pages undergraduate courses

*Instructor feedback:* Students can find their feedback in the grade book. Use APA format.

Critical elements	Distinguished	Proficient	Emerging	Not evident	Value (%)
Main elements	Includes all of the main elements and requirements of the assignment (23–25)	Includes most of the main elements and requirements of the assignment (20–22)	Includes some of the main elements and requirements of the assignment (18–19)	Does not include any of the main elements and requirements (0–17)	25
Inquiry and analysis	Provides in-depth analysis that demonstrates complete understanding of multiple concepts (18–20)	Provides in-depth analysis that demonstrates complete understanding of some concepts (16–17)	Provides in-depth analysis that demonstrates complete understanding of minimal concepts (14–15)	Does not provide in-depth analysis (0–13)	20
Integration and application	All of the course concepts from Chapter XX are correctly applied (9–10)	Most of the course concepts from Chapter XX are correctly applied (8)	Some of the course concepts from Chapter XX are correctly applied (7)	Does not correctly apply any of the course concepts from Chapter XX (0–6)	10
Critical thinking	Draws insightful conclusions that are thoroughly defended with evidence and examples from Chapter XX (18–20)	Draws informed conclusions that are justified with evidence from Chapter XX (16–17)	Draws logical conclusions, but does not defend with evidence from Chapter XX (14–15)	Does not draw logical conclusions from Chapter XX (0–13)	20
Research	Incorporates more than 6 scholarly resources effectively that reflect depth and breadth of research (14–15)	Incorporates 5 scholarly resources effectively that reflect depth and breadth of research (12–13)	Incorporates 4 scholarly resources that reflect depth and breadth of research (11)	Does not incorporate at least 4 scholarly resources that reflect depth and breadth of research (0–10)	15
Writing (mechanics/citations)	No errors related to organization, grammar and style, and citations (9–10)	Minor errors related to organization, grammar and style, and citations (8)	Some errors related to organization, grammar and style, and citations (7)	Major errors related to organization, grammar and style, and citations (0–6)	10
Earned total: Comments: Use APA reference style for in-text and end-of-paper references					100%

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