UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
Department of Marketing, Logistics and Operations Management, College of Business
MKTG 6030 - 002: DOCTORAL SEMINAR IN MARKETING STRATEGY
Spring 2018 (January 14-May10, 2019)
Room BLB 281, Thursdays 6:30pm-9:20pm
Dr. Charles Blankson
COB BLB, Room 365A
Tel: (940) 565-3136, Email: Charles.Blankson@unt.edu
Office Hours: By appointment – but for reasons explained below, students will typically meet outside class with the Professor once every two weeks.


These books will not be directly discussed in class. However, pertinent Chapters from Hooley et al. (2018) and Dall’Olmo Riley, Singh, and Blankson (2016) (Eds) will be discussed in class and handouts will be made available to students. Given that we all should be on the same page regarding general strategic issues, concepts, principles and nomenclature, these books are recommended (optional) for marketing students.

“The beginning of knowledge is the discovery of something that we do not understand.” – Frank Herbert

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically….intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education” – Martin Luther King Jr.

SEMINAR INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Ph.D. seminar in marketing strategy is to help doctoral students understand the role of marketing within the organization, its marketing and/or business strategy, and its success or failure. The seminar will expose students to the main issues in marketing strategy and marketing strategy research. The seminar is designed to help doctoral students critically evaluate both fundamental (i.e., seminal) ideas and more recent developments on the subject matter.
SEMINAR OVERVIEW AND PEDAGOGY

MKTG 6030 is designed to present current and historical insights into several (i.e., selected) streams of marketing research that each relate to various broad aspects of marketing strategy. Moreover, like all Ph.D. seminars, this provides the types of insights, knowledge sets and skills that will enable students to grow into their presumed roles as successful marketing scholars.

The seminar will feature a strong emphasis on discussion and critical deliberation of assigned reading materials in class. Students’ preparation for each class should entail close reading and serious thought about the various topics and readings assigned for each week’s discussion. All students should have read each of the assigned materials prior to each seminar session. Moreover, all students should have thought about what they have read. So, be prepared to discuss each article in-depth and to present ideas about gaps in the literature, contributions to the marketing literature, limitations of the article(s) discussed, and extensions of each paper – future research directions. Extensions can include straight-forward/line extensions and replications or more innovative linkages with other papers or literatures. Professor Christine Moorman of Fuqua School of Business cautions students against three tendencies.

1. Please be very careful about overly negative approach to dealing with other scholars’ research/studies. It is worthwhile to try to understand what the research is trying to accomplish and whether it is interesting and important as opposed to “tearing it apart;” whether it is perfect in every regard. No research is perfect; nobody is perfect.

2. Do not adhere only to extending others’ points made in class and not initiating your own ideas/perspectives. While the former is a safe strategy, it is not particularly interesting in the end. At times, you should take risk(s) – go ahead and put your ideas out there.

3. Make sure you read and think. Reading is the easy part – it takes time, but it is not very hard. Thinking is the critical part of the quest you are on – doctoral education. Think hard about the validity of the ideas and results in the paper as well, as how you could improve the paper. Finally, think about what a paper might mean for your current research and/or dissertation topic.

The three tendencies are culled from Christine Moorman’s (2013) seminar in marketing strategy.

In the midst of in-class discussions, collegial disagreement amongst students or amongst students and the presiding Professor are welcomed and encouraged. Because many of the topics discussed in this course are subjective in nature, group consensus regarding these topics is neither expected nor desired.

What does strategy mean?

The word strategy originated from the Greek word meaning “strategos” – “art of the general.” That many of the early teachings on strategy were couched in military contexts should not surprise us. From von Clausewitz to Sun-Tzu to General Paton, military leaders have espoused differing perspectives of strategy. For example, WW II Andre Beufre described strategy simply “as a method of thought.” The best accepted English definition is “the art of generalship”. It is therefore not surprising that the term is used to describe decisions that companies make when
they are engaged in competition in open market environments.

One of the most widely read business primers is *Bing Fa* or *Art of War*. Chinese military strategist Sun-Tzu admonished, “Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.” The lack of accord between the *tactical* and the *strategic* is a compelling issue that may be frequently addressed throughout the semester. Publius Virigilius Maro Vergil questioned: “Who asks whether the enemy was defeated by strategy or valor?” So is strategy truly a “means to political end,” as Prussian General von Moltke [the Elder] suggested? The adaptation of military strategy to business introduces a different set of challenges. *Is the marketplace the same as a battlefield?*

About three decades ago, the noted management professor George Steiner authored a seminal text that addressed the conceptualization of organizational strategy.³ Although he does not define strategy *per se*, he does reinforce the lack of a reconcilable definition of strategy. Mintzberg introduced the “four Ps” of strategy: plan, pattern, position and perspective. This typology has been widely adapted to several disciplines across the social sciences. Tom Peters has cited this book as one of the most important books written in the last quarter-century. Today, a prevailing definition of strategy is found in Michael Porter’s (1996) *Harvard Business Review* article, “What is Strategy?”

[Strategy] “means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value.”

“What’s the use of running if you are not on the right road?”

– German proverb

James Thurber once counseled, “It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers.” Thurber’s advice functions as an appropriate introduction to any doctoral seminar.

Successful completion of this doctoral seminar – like most others – will not provide you with an accumulation of answers. Instead, it will introduce you to many questions.

The doctoral seminar is designed to motivate critical thinking. Each student will be required to engage in critical thinking. Beyond question however, the majority of our thinking is impacted by distortions or partialities that persist - and likely have persisted for a long time - within our living or working environments.

**LEARNING GOAL**

The overarching goal of this seminar is to deliver a platform that will permit doctoral students to identify and to discuss seminal questions that underlie knowledge development in marketing strategy.

³Steiner, George (1979), *Strategic Planning*, Boston, MA: Free Press.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students must acquire the skills in appreciating the thinking engaged in and methodologies employed by marketing researchers engaged in the development or execution of marketing strategies.

Students should have an in-depth, multidimensional understanding of the role that various critical strategic marketing issues play in the development and execution of marketing theory or practice.

Research Ideas

The intention of this seminar is that you leave this course with several ideas that may form the foundation of your own research. As Professor Moorman notes, you should read as if on a scouting expedition. Pay attention to what you find interesting in case you find something is missing or inaccurate. Note/jot down alternative explanations for what the research suggests is happening. Question the researcher’s point of view and try to establish what the underlying assumptions are in the research and question them.

Use these activities for your own research idea assignments. To that end, you are required to write 3-4 page note (double-spaced) focusing on one research idea (i.e., overarching idea) that emanates from the entire week’s readings.

As well, each student is requested to present their ideas (via power-point slides) to the class from week 2 through 14. You will be informed accordingly. The purpose of these assignments as noted by Professors George S. Day and Christophe Van den Bulte of Wharton Business School is to encourage you to think generatively while reading. The two-page write-ups will be due at the end of each class.

“Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem solving abilities and a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism and sociocentrism.”

Research Paper

Each student will be expected to develop a research paper on a marketing-strategy or logistics-strategy related topic. If you decide to work on a paper that is more modeling in nature (e.g., logistics students), you should present the model and solve it. On the other hand, if you decide to work on a paper that is more behavioral, you could do one of two things.

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1http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/
First, you could write an integrative conceptual paper that offers a new framework for marketing strategy. This paper would be in the tradition of conceptual papers published in journals like *Journal of Marketing* (see e.g., Rindfleisch and Heide 1997), *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* (see e.g., Cleeren, Dekimpe and van Heerde 2017) and *AMS Review* (see e.g., Prabhu, Tracey and Hassan 2017).

Second, your paper could offer predictions (i.e., propositions) and geared toward the design of a marketing strategy study. This could involve an experiment, quasi-experiment, a survey, a content analysis, a meta-analysis (see Grewal, Puccinelli and Monroe 2018), a field study, or an empirical analysis of secondary brand and/or firm data.

In rare cases, a student who is already well ahead in working on a research project in any area of marketing or logistics that is geared for an “A” journal can be allowed to pursue/carry-on with that agenda. In other words, a study may not necessarily be within the domain of marketing strategy or logistics strategy but with the agreement from the instructor, the study may be targeted at any of the top marketing journals – *JM, JMR, JCR, MKSC, JAMS, JOM, POMS* etc.

The purpose in writing this paper is to target an “A” journal publication in the first instance. You will be guided by myself and where need-be, by other faculty colleagues here at UNT and other schools. A list of “A” marketing/logistics journals will be discussed during the first and second weeks of the semester. Thereafter, you should follow the targeted journal’s specific submission guidelines in preparing the said paper.

The paper will be submitted/due during the last seminar session on May 9, 2019. As well, you will be expected to make a 15-20 minute presentation (followed by Q&A) of your manuscript – bound for a named journal. Please develop the paper with a designated journal target in mind. I will provide on-going guidance on this.

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The UNT COB complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Reasonable accommodations are made for qualified students with disability. If you have an established disability as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act and would like to request accommodation, please see me as soon as possible.

*The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SETE to be an important part of your participation in this class.*

Acceptable Student Behavior

The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [www.unt.edu/csrr](http://www.unt.edu/csrr)
Academic Integrity:

Each student should be fully aware of the policies and guidelines for academic honesty in the University of North Texas Student Guidebook and on UNT’s web page (www.unt.edu). The Student Code of Conduct and an abbreviated list of other rules, regulations and policies are available from the Dean of Students. Plagiarism is a serious compromise of academic integrity. Please be certain to cite any reference. Materials copied verbatim must be in quotation marks with a correct citation documented within the text. This applies to any and all materials taken from Internet sites.

Timeliness Policy: Class sessions will begin precisely at 6:30 p.m. on each scheduled Thursday. That means students are required to be seated and ready to begin work before 6:30 p.m. If you are not present and ready to start by 6:30 p.m., you are late.

In-Class Communication Comportment: Every student is expected to contribute substantial value to each session’s discussion. Yet no student is expected, nor is any student permitted, to dominate seminar discussions. In fact, no one will be permitted to dominate in-class communications - not even the Professor. This seminar is structured to facilitate a shared and collaborative learning experience. Should your questions, responses or observational commentary be anything other than crisp (succinct), clear and hopefully compelling, the Professor will advise you – in the moment – to do better.

SEMINAR PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Performance assessment in this seminar will be based on the following:

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<tr>
<th>Quality of articles reviewed and critiqued in class</th>
<th>Quality of your seminar paper for journal</th>
<th>Quality of your weekly four-page idea quests</th>
<th>Total Possible Points</th>
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<td>33%</td>
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Participation:

Every student should be well-prepared for each seminar. You should read each assigned reading. However, you should go beyond a cursory reading of assigned materials. Before each seminar session, you are expected to critically evaluate the “body of knowledge” clustered together for each seminar session.

Articles review and critique:

The sessions will involve a discussion of the readings assigned for the day. A student will be designated to be the discussant for the week. He/she will be assigned a specific article among the list of the week’s articles to critically review and present to the class. Occasionally, I will offer “background readings” on key areas involving a topic treated or method to help the appreciation of the subject matter. As well, I will have three or more concepts and/or theory points that I will
make at some point during the semester – either at the beginning, during, and getting to the end of the semester. I reserve the right to change topics and readings at will during the semester. This may never occur but I would like to have the option if I find a better paper in course of the semester.

ASSIGNED READINGS

Week 1: Introduction and overview (January 17, 2019):

Students should download and then read materials before class and arrive ready to discuss them during the class session.


Further Reading


Week 2: Marketing Planning and Market Domain (January 24, 2018)


Further Reading


**Week 3**: The Role of Marketing within the Organization, Market Orientation, and Marketing Practices (January 31, 2019)


Further Reading


Week 4: Market Definition, Segmentation, Positioning and Product Differentiation (February 7, 2019)


Further Reading


Week 5: Competition (February 14, 2019)


Further Reading


Week 6: Making Decisions (February 21, 2019)


Further Reading


Week 7: Product/Service and Industry Life Cycle Dynamics (February 28, 2019)


Further Reading


Week 8: Marketing Mix and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (March 7, 2019)


Sankar Sen and C. B. Bhattacharya (2001), “Does doing good always lead to doing better?


Further Reading


**Week 9: Channel Design, Coordination and Transaction Cost Theory (March 21, 2019)**


Further Reading


**Week 10: Alliances and Acquisitions (March 28, 2019)**


Further Reading


**Week 11: Market Entry and Evolution, Institutionalization and Network Effects (April 4, 2019)**


Further Reading


**Week 12:** New Product Development and Innovation (April 11, 2019)


Further Reading


Week 13: Strategic Transformations, SD Logic and Resource-based View of the Firm (April 18, 2019)


Further Reading


**Week 14: Branding and Relationship Marketing (April 25, 2019)**


Further Reading


Papadopoulos, Nicolas, Leila Hamzaoui-Essoussi, and Jose I. Rojas-Mendez (2016), “From
country to neighborhood: Branding and marketing places,” In Dall’Olmo Riley, Singh, and
Blankson (2016), The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Brand Management,

Week 15: Come to class prepared to present your paper in power-point slides. 15-20 minutes are
allocated for each student (May 2, 2019). **May 9, 2019. Final written paper due.**

Responding to editors and reviewers in a diligent and humble fashion. We will discuss these issues on an
ongoing basis.

**Marketing Practices of Rural Micro and Small Businesses in Ghana and the Role of Public Policy**

*Journal of Macromarketing*

Manuscript ID JMK-16-0043 (revision)

Comments to the Associate Editor

Please do accept our sincere gratitude for the time spent in reviewing our paper and for the
directions and the suggestions provided. We have revised the article thoroughly in line with your
concerns and comments and have acted upon your concerns and the suggestions given.

Please find below our responses to the specific concerns raised. We deal with them point by
point.

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<tr>
<th>AE’s comments</th>
<th>Authors’ responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>The author has taken on an ambitious study of an important topic. Indeed, there is much to like in the manuscript, but in the current form it falls short of an acceptable standard for publication in JMK. Fortunately, three reviewers share detailed comments, which potentially could strengthen the paper. The author is encouraged to review them, carefully and to work through them to make substantial changes to content and structure.</td>
<td>We thank you for suggesting we clarify our writing/communication and highlight our contributions more upfront. You are right. We should have done far better job than we did. Indeed, we found out the communication could have been clearer. Thank you very much for pointing this out. As you will see in the revised paper, we have addressed this issue. Please see pages 2</td>
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Over-arching themes include:
1) a need for clearer development of ideas;
2) better organization of the text and sections,
3) better articulation of more explicit contributions to macromarketing and the sub-area of marketing and development,
4) much better integration into extant literature, including better positioning vis-à-vis macromarketing.

Good luck with this important stream of research.

Again, we should have done better than what we did in the first paper. We have combed through the abstract and the introduction and have cleaned the vagueness etc. out. Please see revised manuscript starting from the abstract.

We must thank you very, very much for your insight, constructive criticisms and all the suggestions and directions offered. The paper is now much stronger, thanks to your well thought-out input. We appreciate all your efforts in this regard.

**Journal of Macromarketing**

Manuscript ID JMK-16-0043 (revision)

Comments to reviewer 2

Please do accept our sincere gratitude for the time spent in reviewing our paper and for the directions and the suggestions provided. We have revised the article thoroughly in line with your concerns and comments and have acted upon your concerns and the suggestions given.

Please find below our responses to the specific concerns raised. We deal with them point by point.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Reviewer’s comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>At the outset, I would like to encourage you to rewrite the introduction, making the rationale for the novelty and importance of the intended contributions more explicit and organizing the writing much more tightly around the contributions.</td>
<td>We thank you for suggesting we clarify our writing/communication and highlight our contributions more upfront. You are right. We should have done far better job than we did. Indeed, we found out the communication could have been clearer. Thank you very much for pointing this out.</td>
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<td>As you will see in the revised paper, we have addressed this issue. Please see pages 2 through 7. Again, thank you very much for this suggestion.</td>
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<td>There is much research on public policy and marketing in emerging markets. For example, Viswanathan and his colleagues (e.g., 2009, 2012, JPPM) study rural and periurban subsistence marketplaces extensively and make recommendations for public policy. Ingenbleek (2014, this journal) makes similar recommendations. How do you intend to move us forward over and above prior research? Will you push the theoretical envelope?</td>
<td>Again, we should have done better than what we did in the first paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an empirical contribution intended? On what variables and relations will you focus and why is it important to study them in this context? What overarching theory underpins our current understanding? You need to make the intended contributions much more explicit in the introduction and focus the writing much more tightly around them.</td>
<td>Thank you for the remarks. We have duly addressed this concern which has to do with the lack of clarity in our writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In great qualitative research, participants reveal meaning to us in their own words. The writing strikes a balance between description, analysis, and interpretation—sharing rich insights not available through quantitative research and revealing compatibilities and conflicts with our understanding of variables and the overarching theories that explain their</td>
<td>Indeed, as you see in Table 1, following our extensive literature review, we came to the humble conclusion that in spite of the activities and interest surrounding retail banks’ efforts in attracting customers and banks’ marketing practices, scholars have overlooked the role of positioning strategies of banks and specifically in the Ghanaian environment.</td>
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<td>Thank you. We acknowledge that we could have done a better job. Please see the revised paper—introduction and research background. The latter, per your suggestion.</td>
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<td>relations. The paper does not yet rise to this standard.</td>
<td>Thank you for the comment. Your concerns are well justified. Please see the revised paper.</td>
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<td>Consider focusing the argumentation more tightly around the elements of Figure 1 and giving more prominence to the voices of the participants. A new construct seems to leap from every sentence and it is not always clear to me how these relate to the participant interviews or your model.</td>
<td>We thank the reviewer for his/her comments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The paragraph beginning at the bottom of page 5 illustrates my point. In comparison to what do smaller businesses perform worse? Notwithstanding the lack of formal training in marketing and management, there is a wealth of empirical research showing that small and micro businesses in subsistence marketplaces effectively respond to typical opportunities there with impressive creativity and entrepreneurship (e.g., Viswanathan and his associates).</td>
<td>Thank you. Please see our previous response.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Also, the performance effects of market orientation are well documented in emerging markets, despite the limitations you mention. Market orientation theory may not apply in the microbusinesses you study anyway. So, are you really playing to your strengths by focusing on market orientation (i.e., a generic strategic orientation) in a study on marketing practice (i.e., marketing strategy and implementation)? Can the voices of your study participants shed new light on how government policies affect their creativity and resilience in applying marketing instruments to overcome the challenges they face?</td>
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<td>The focus on religiosity-infused culture is potentially intriguing. Hierarchy and embeddedness are typical priorities in</td>
<td>Thank you. We have combed through the</td>
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subsistence cultures, arising in response to social and economic institutions and often promoting group affiliation and its public affirmation (Schwartz; Leung and Bond). Another difference in subsistence contexts is that social identity is more relational in subsistence contexts, with relational networks underpinned by kinship, tribe, ethnicity, religion, and other social identities (e.g., Brewer). Religiosity is a distinct concept from religious affiliation referring to the belief in a supernatural being(s) and the positive effects of religion in life. Public displays of religious beliefs may be prompted by individual religious beliefs, but also may be intended to express group affiliation and conformity to group expectations, even in the absence of religiosity. Can the voices of the participants to help us differentiate between the motives prompting their displays of religiosity?

| Another intriguing finding is the link between religiosity and entrepreneurship. Religiosity is associated with low human and economic development, high priority on tradition and conformity in life, and low self-direction, risk-taking and openness to change (e.g., Leung, Bond and colleagues), which in turn have low correlations with innovation and entrepreneurship. Is Baaba 2 exhibiting religiosity or fate control in her belief in special powers to ascertain the well-being of customers and employees (p.12)? Is her desire to fix dresses for customers an expression of religiosity or good business practice in a highly connected society (p.19)? I am not saying that she is or isn’t, but drawing your attention to the fact that different interpretations arise from what you have written. | We appreciate your comments and your concerns are well taken. Please kindly see our previous response. |

Public policy issues are more explicit in the Thank you.
final stages of the paper but need to be emphasized more. That said, a concern does arise about your proposal that the government partner with the CCG. Social identification with a religious group can be a very powerful force for unifying individuals but dividing groups within a country. This is especially true in emerging markets, where the very nature of the social identity construct is different than in Western countries (e.g. Brewer). As one in three Ghanaians are Muslims and Muslim organizations are doing wonderful poverty alleviation work in Africa, why should government partner with CCG (or Protestants or Christians more generally)?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Could the delivery of services through religious organizations potentially promote religious conflict and threaten service delivery to the poor, as it has in other Western African countries? Do Western governments really partner with religious organizations to deliver services to the poor and, if so, do their policies provide relevant insights on effective policy in an African emerging market?</th>
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<td>Thank you very much. We apologize for the lack of clarity.</td>
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</table>

I should mention that I did not always see how the interviews or observations informed the arguments you present in favor of partnering with CCG. I’d like to encourage you to ground the analysis and interpretation firmly in the data. If this expands the paper too much, perhaps you could open up space by focusing more tightly in the writing. You could reduce the pilot study description to one or two sentences or omit it without detracting from the paper.

| Thank you very much. We apologize for the lack of clarity. |

In summary, I appreciated the opportunity to read your paper and commend you for choosing an important topic and context for
your research. I hope that you will make the intended contributions and their novelty and importance more explicit, focus the writing more tightly focused on the contributions, and rely more on the voices of the participants to bring a rich, new perspective to your arguments that will move us forward.

We must thank you very, very much for your insight, constructive criticisms and all the suggestions and directions offered. The paper is now much stronger, thanks to your well thought-out input. We appreciate all your efforts in this regard.

Manuscript ID JMK -16-0043 (revision)

Comments to reviewer 3

Please do accept our sincere gratitude for the time spent in reviewing our paper and for the directions and the suggestions provided. We have revised the article thoroughly in line with your concerns and comments and have acted upon your concerns and the suggestions given.

Please find below our responses to the specific concerns raised. We deal with them point by point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Thank you for conducting this research. The data you have generated is very interesting and the insights and conclusions you are able to make based on the data are insightful and hold a contribution to the debate. However, there remains work to be done to finalize the manuscript. Below I will list my suggestions for further improving the manuscript.</td>
<td>Again, we should have done better than what we did in the first paper. We have combed through the abstract and the introduction and have cleaned the vagueness etc. out. Please see revised manuscript starting from the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) My key concern with this paper is the lack of theoretical embeddedness. If you are able to address this properly, you will have a very good paper. a. You are now suggestion market orientation as your framework. Below some</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. You do not really use market orientation for the analysis of the data – might this indicate that it may not be a suitable framework to enhance the insights gained from your data?</td>
<td>Thank you for the remarks. We have duly addressed this concern which has to do with the lack of clarity in our writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You mention in the beginning that theories developed for affluent contexts are not suitable for rural settings. Then you nevertheless use such a frame, only to conclude again in the end of the paper that it is not suitable. iii. If you still decide to use market orientation – it should be properly introduced and used for the analysis, now there is only one paragraph on page 6 that provides more details on market orientation.</td>
<td>Indeed, as you will see in Table 1, following our extensive literature review, we came to the humble conclusion that in spite of the activities and interest surrounding retail banks’ efforts in attracting customers and banks’ marketing practices, scholars have overlooked the role of positioning strategies of banks and specifically in the Ghanaian environment. We believe positioning is pivotal to the success of banks in Ghana in the current competitive environment. We used Ghana, simply as a study context to represent sub-Saharan Africa and although we humbly imply the possibility of generalization to the region, we do not categorically assume that this exploratory study is generalizable across sub-Saharan Africa. Please see Table 1 and then pages 3-5 of the revised manuscript.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand your thinking with making a comparison to market orientation, and to contribute with additional dimensions to that notion, but I think it could be enough to make this point in the discussion section of the paper b. Have you considered embedding your work in the subsistence marketplaces</td>
<td>Thank you. We acknowledge that we could have done a better job. Please see the revised paper – introduction and research background. The latter, per your suggestion.</td>
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| **literature?**  
i. I think this could provide you with a suitable discussion to which you could rather easily position your contribution | Thank you for the comment. Your concerns are well justified. We have now clarified our writing and generally tightened our rationale and justification. We have done this throughout the paper. Please see the revised paper. |
| **c.** Particularly in the introduction, you refer to “cultures”. However, you do not provide any definition or theoretical basis. Incase culture is a key explanatory factor, consider finding a theoretical lens which will support you in making that contribution |   |
| **d.** You describe “small business marketing” in your theory section, but is that working as an explanatory concept? It now reads more as a descriptive concept. | We thank the reviewer for his/her comments. As you will see in the revised manuscript, we have literary re-written and expanded on this section – now under “The Ghanaian banking sector.” Please see pages 7-10 of the revised paper. |
| **2) The structure of the manuscript**  
a. Please review the different sections of the manuscript, I find that the manuscript as it is now would benefit from more clearly providing one type of information under dedicated titles (e.g. policy implication grouping all normative suggestions based on the study). Below are some pointers to such restructuring, note that this is not an exhaustive list.  
i. Page 2, first paragraph - implications, which typically are discussed in the end of the paper  
ii. Page 2, second and third paragraph – rather detailed case information, could be moved to the case description  
iii. Page 3 last paragraph – could be moved to discussion and conclusions  
iv. Page 3, midpage – “Governments should...” throughout the paper, there are several strong normative statements about what policy makers should do. I would suggest that these recommendations would be structured under one section. In addition, |   |
these normative recommendations should be based on the research findings, not on what appears as general opinions (e.g. on page 21) or on external evidence (page 30)

3) Research method
   a. It is enough to say that the study is qualitative, you don’t have to reiterate that it is “not quantitative”.
   b. Next to the data analysis section, it would be nice with an image showing your coding and analysis scheme. This could correlate with the table 1 that you included in the manuscript now, but bringing it to a more aggrevated level. (So the current table 1 could be an appendix.)

   Thank you. We have combed through the methodology section and have re-written the section to enhance clarity. We have provided justifications for our decisions about data collection and have given the genesis of our approaches. Please see the section under “Methodology” (i.e., pages 13-19) in the revised paper.

c. The last paragraph of the current manuscript explains that the enterprises interviewed are mainly service companies. This information is so essential, that I think it should be included in the section on research methods

4) Research findings
   a. The research findings should focus on presenting the findings, please move normative suggestions to a section dedicated to that.
   b. The quotes from the empirical data is now framed based on respondents first names, this needs to be reframed to e.g. entrepreneur 1, entrepreneur 2 etc.

   Thank you. This issue has now been revised and justification for choosing the sample now fixed. In the latter case, please see page 13 under “Sample background.”

c. In the current manuscript, it could be more clear if you are comparing rural and urban, or comparing rural with western “market orientation”, or not comparing but explaining rural realities.
   d. The study is framed around marketing, but the data also includes financing. Should the framing be broader – looking at how

   Thank you again. Basically, what we did was that, in order to decipher a specific positioning strategy undertaken by a given bank, we borrowed a priori an extant typology to juxtapose on the responses/comments from the managers. This approach is in line with Arnott (1992) and de
The manuscript now addresses several questions, which I summarize as 1) looking more specifically at how marketing is done locally and 2) how policy influences general business activities in rural areas. Please make it very clear which question you are addressing. If you address both, indicating this in structure of the analysis could help to clarify this.

Chernatony and Cottam (2009).

More specifically, in line with de Chernatony and Cottam (2009) and Brady and Cronin (2001), the managers’ responses were juxtaposed, inductively, with Blankson and Kalafatis’s (2004) typology of positioning strategies to determine the specific strategy employed by a firm. The typology was adapted for its popularity and replications in extant literature (see Diwan, 2016; Blankson and Strutton, 2011). Please see pages 17-18 of the revised paper.

It is important to reiterate that following Jarratt and Fayed (2001) and de Chernatony and Cottam (2009), we relied on inductive reasoning to decipher the positioning strategies used, guided by Blankson and Kalafatis’s (2004) typology of positioning strategies. More importantly, our approach has precedence as evidenced in Arnott’s (1992), Coffie’s (2014) and Coffie’s (2016) research into management’s employment of positioning strategies in the services industry. Please see pages 17-18.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>5) Adding a discussion section</th>
<th>6) Discussion and conclusion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I believe the paper would benefit from adding a discussion section</td>
<td>Thank you very much. We apologize for the lack of clarity. Following from our previous response, our interpretation of the managers’ discussion of their positioning activities were matched with the typology of positioning strategies adapted for this paper. This was applied to all six cases (pages 21-29).</td>
</tr>
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<td>b. Could discuss the relation to “relational empathy” identified in the subsistence marketplaces literature</td>
<td>Thank you for this concern. However, as</td>
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</table>
a. By analyzing how marketing is done locally, this could provide lessons for inclusive business initiatives championed by foreigners – this is an implication that you could highlight

Perry (1998) noted, in fact any number between four and ten cases is ideal for case study research. Please see page 13 under “Methodology.”

I hope these comments give some food for thought. Again, I believe you have an important contribution to make, and I wish you the best in finding the right theoretical lens and angle to bring you points forward.

Thank you. We have revised the discussion in line with your suggestions.

We must thank you very, very much for your insight, constructive criticisms and all the suggestions and directions offered. The paper is now much stronger, thanks to your well thought-out input. We appreciate all your efforts in this regard.

Manuscript ID JMK -16-0043 (revision)

Comments to reviewer 1 (primary reviewer and second reviewer)

We are very grateful and would like to thank you for the time spent in reviewing our paper and for the constructive criticisms, detailed directions, and specific suggestions requested. Following your comments, we have amended the paper paying attention to the directions/suggestions you put forward.

Please find below our responses to the specific concerns raised. We deal with them point by point.

<table>
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<th>Reviewer’s comments</th>
<th>Authors’ responses</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>From the primary reviewer:</strong> The strength of this paper is the fascinating and insightful description of some of the themes emanating from the data collection. I find the religiosity infused business practices, evidenced in the various social interactions, very interesting. I also think the stated goal of developing public policy recommendations adapted to established marketing tactics to be important. This goal is summed up nicely on page 29 (second</td>
<td>We thank you for suggesting we clarify our writing/communication and highlight our contributions more upfront. You are right. We should have done far better job than we did. Indeed, we found out the communication could have been clearer. Thank you very much for pointing this out.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>As you will see in the revised paper, we have</td>
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<tr>
<td>paragraph). addressed this issue. Please see pages 2 through 7. Again, thank you very much for this suggestion.</td>
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<td>However, the links the author(s) make between the discovered themes and prescribed policy are not well developed. For example, I do not see a clear link between the “relationships with customers” and the need for infrastructure improvements (pg. 20). Given establishing these connections is the focus of this paper, this is a significant shortcoming. The author(s) will have to make more data driven, idiosyncratic links between the findings of marketing practices and policy prescription.</td>
<td>Again, we should have done better than what we did in the first paper. We have combed through the abstract and the introduction and have cleaned the vagueness etc. out. Please see revised manuscript starting from the abstract.</td>
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<td>The core model (Figure 1) presents various relationships among the key themes. Again, there are directional relationships among the themes proposed, but it is not clear how the researchers fit this model together. Perhaps strengthening the relationships in this model is the first necessary step. This type of model would be a nice contribution to further our understanding of rural enterprise in this context. From here, perhaps one can develop more specific public policy recommendations.</td>
<td>Thank you for the remarks. We have duly addressed this concern, which has to do with the lack of clarity in our writing.</td>
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<td>Indeed, as you will see in Table 1, following our extensive literature review, we came to the humble conclusion that in spite of the activities and interest surrounding retail banks’ efforts in attracting customers and banks’ marketing practices, scholars have overlooked the role of positioning strategies of banks and specifically in the Ghanaian environment. We believe positioning is pivotal to the success of banks in Ghana in the current competitive environment. We used Ghana, simply as a study context to represent sub-Saharan Africa and although we humbly imply the possibility of generalization to the region, we do not categorically assume that this exploratory study is generalizable.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Page 4, line 25 - What percentage of Ghanaians live in rural areas?</td>
<td>Thank you for the comment. Your concerns are well justified. We have now clarified our writing and generally tightened our rationale and justification. We have done this throughout the paper. Please see the revised paper.</td>
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<td>Page 4, lines 36/37 – Authors should provide examples of the poverty reduction policies line 13 - They should provide examples of the key resources available to larger firms</td>
<td>Thank you. We acknowledge that we could have done a better job. Please see the revised paper – introduction and research background. The latter, per your suggestion.</td>
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<td>Page 8, line 46 – How many of the 28 owner-managers randomly approached participated in the study? This information is needed as more respondents were recruited via a snowballing method but only 29 owner-managers participated in the study.</td>
<td>We thank the reviewer for his/her comments. As you will see in the revised manuscript, we have literary re-written and expanded on this section – now under “The Ghanaian banking sector.” Please see pages 7-10 of the revised paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 9 – There are 17 different businesses. The authors should consider re-categorizing these business types into a smaller number of groups and cross tabulating with level of education, policy awareness, and marketing practices.</td>
<td>Thank you. Please see our previous response.</td>
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<td>The authors define small business on page 5 but failed to define “rural.” It is important for them to operationalize “rural” as some</td>
<td>Thank you. We have combed through the methodology section and have re-written the section to enhance clarity. We have provided</td>
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Finally, it is not clear that the findings apply only to rural businesses. Might these also apply to small businesses in larger markets? Again, it seems the authors are making assumptions, which need to be supported by stronger foundations.
of the locations (Akim-Oda and Konongo for example) are not rural. Most of the people in rural Ghana are farmers and are the focus of poverty reduction programs. The study is not focused on agriculture but one cannot discuss poverty reduction in rural Ghana without mentioning farming. On the other hand, a clear definition of what the authors mean by “rural” may make farming irrelevant to be mentioned.

| Page 12, line 13 – Wrong translation: “Nyame Nnae” means God is not asleep. |
| We appreciate your comments and your concerns are well taken. Please kindly see our previous response. |

| Page 12, line 51 – What Akos shared is irrelevant as parents are required to provide for their children. A more appropriate example would have been an owner-manager financing the education of a niece or a nephew. |
| Thank you. This issue has now been revised and justification for choosing the sample now fixed. In the latter case, please see page 13 under “Sample background.” |

| The discussions on Religiosity, Relationship with Staff, Relationship with Customers, Competitive Positioning, and Solicitation of Feedback are not peculiar to rural Ghana. They are typical small business practices in all places, including the capital city, Accra. The study could be enriched by including specific practices common among “rural” small businesses but uncommon among their "urban" counterparts. |
| We must thank you very, very much for your insight, constructive criticisms and all the suggestions and directions offered. The paper is now much stronger, thanks to your well thought-out input. We appreciate all your efforts in this regard. |