

A study on the impact of different teaching methods based on the same case on the teaching effectiveness of the course art market marketing

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Abstract. Against the backdrop of digitalization and commercialization, education in art market marketing faces an urgent need to cultivate students' ability to respond to dynamic market challenges. Although the case-based teaching method has been widely adopted, there remains considerable room for improvement in stimulating students' deep cognitive engagement and innovative application of knowledge. To address this issue, this study adopts the Jellycat brand as a unified case and employs a non-synchronous controlled experimental design to systematically compare the teaching effects of Research-Based Learning (RBL) and Case-Based Learning (CBL). The experimental group ($n = 16$) participated in learning activities structured around RBL, including problem-driven inquiry, immersion in market scenarios, and collaborative strategy development. The control group ($n = 18$) received instruction through teacher-led case analysis and lectures. Teaching effectiveness was evaluated across three dimensions: final examination scores, teacher evaluations, and student evaluations. The results indicate that the RBL approach significantly outperforms the case-based method in enhancing students' ability to apply knowledge—reflected in higher teacher evaluation scores—as well as in overall course satisfaction. Moreover, RBL also demonstrates an advantage in students' mastery of theoretical knowledge, as evidenced by higher final examination performance. These findings suggest that by creating student-centered, inquiry-oriented learning contexts, the RBL model facilitates deeper theoretical understanding and stronger practical application skills. This study provides an important reference for the reform of art marketing courses, indicating that a research-oriented and student-centered approach represents a viable pathway for advancing pedagogical innovation.

Keywords: art market marketing, case-based learning, research-based learning, Jellycat brand

1. Introduction

In the contemporary cultural landscape, both offline and online art experiences have become increasingly diverse, and consumers with evolving tastes face a multitude of choices. This has intensified competition for cultural audiences, making art marketing a core competency that art managers must master. Traditionally, art marketing has focused primarily on audience development, with cultural organizations relying on ticketing strategies, pricing models, and bundled offerings to increase attendance and visitor numbers. However, current

market demands require art marketing to encompass a broader range of functions, including guiding organizations in marketing strategy planning, brand building, promotional activities, and channel management. In this sense, the importance of art marketing is comparable to that of fundraising, which has historically been regarded as the lifeblood of arts organizations. Research indicates that marketing not only complements fundraising but also contributes to shaping the public image of art organizations and constructing a comprehensive brand essence [1].

As art market marketing education evolves, the case-based teaching method has been widely adopted due to its significant practical value. Nevertheless, when addressing dynamic and complex demands—such as the emotional premium mechanism of cultural derivatives or the integration logic of omnichannel marketing—traditional case-based teaching exhibits clear limitations. Its unidirectional lecture format tends to render students passive recipients of knowledge, making it difficult to stimulate deep understanding of abstract marketing concepts and their creative application. In response to the urgent need for innovative teaching methods, the educational field is undergoing transformation, with universities actively exploring diverse instructional approaches to meet current challenges and achieve more effective learning outcomes. This exploration has promoted the broader application of effective methods such as Research-Based Learning (RBL). The core of RBL lies in students independently conducting research under teacher guidance, encouraging them to develop their own interpretations and draw conclusions from practical observations. This learning approach significantly enhances students' deep comprehension of course content and facilitates the internalization and transformation of knowledge [2, 3].

Within the RBL model, students become active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients of teacher-delivered content. Through self-directed research and practical exploration, they identify and integrate knowledge sources, thereby deepening cognition, altering behaviors, and enriching emotional experiences [4]. RBL aims to guide students to actively participate in the process of knowledge creation, fill gaps in their cognitive frameworks, and simultaneously cultivate their academic research skills, laying a solid foundation for future thesis writing and project research [5]. This study employs the Jellycat brand as a unified teaching case and designs a comparative experiment based on two teaching approaches: traditional case-based learning and Research-Based Learning (RBL). The study investigates their multidimensional effects on teaching outcomes, aiming to provide empirical evidence and theoretical support for innovation in art market marketing education. Through this research, we seek to reveal how different teaching methods shape students' comprehensive abilities in art market marketing education and to offer more effective pedagogical models to meet the rapid changes of the cultural market.

2. Literature review and theoretical foundation

2.1. Introduction to the Jellycat brand

Jellycat is a high-end toy brand originating from London, United Kingdom. Founded in 1999 by brothers William Gatacre and Thomas Gatacre, the brand is renowned for designing and producing soft, adorable plush toys. Its products combine luxurious fabrics with unique design aesthetics, quickly establishing Jellycat as a leading global luxury toy company. The brand name "Jellycat" was inspired by Thomas's four-year-old son, who loved jelly ("Jelly") and cats ("cat"), thus combining the two into "Jellycat," reflecting the brand's core value: creating a warm and charming toy world infused with childlike innocence and creativity. Jellycat's designs often anthropomorphize everyday objects, transforming toys into more than mere items. This approach appeals to young consumers and provides emotional comfort amid social pressures and feelings of loneliness. Such emotional expression aligns with modern consumers' demand for products that fulfill affective, rather

than solely functional, needs [6]. Guided by the creative philosophy of "For the Joy of it," Jellycat integrates playful design with premium soft materials to produce toys that bring joy to consumers. Initially positioned as children's comfort toys, the brand emphasized safety and comfort while quickly attracting attention through innovative designs and high-quality craftsmanship.

2.2. Development and challenges of art market marketing courses

The uniqueness and challenges of art marketing as an independent field lie primarily in reconciling the traditional tension between art and commerce. The very definition of art is inherently open, which renders the boundaries of art marketing fluid. Traditional "supply-side marketing" perspectives consider art products as sacred and inviolable, with marketing serving merely to find audiences for pre-existing works. This view has shifted in contemporary practice, with artists and organizations increasingly adopting a proactive, market-driving approach rather than simply responding to demand [7]. Art market marketing courses have evolved from being supplementary modules to fully independent disciplines, expanding from audience development for non-profit organizations to comprehensive marketing in commercial markets. With the commercialization and digitalization of the art market, course content has extended into emerging areas such as social media engagement and virtual experiences. However, these courses face challenges including outdated teaching materials, tensions between commercial standards and artistic uniqueness, and insufficient interdisciplinary integration. These challenges have prompted a shift toward practice-oriented teaching paradigms, such as Research-Based Learning (RBL), which emphasize experiential participation. By incorporating problem-driven inquiry, market immersion, and collaborative strategy development, RBL provides learning experiences closely aligned with real market conditions, offering potential for cultivating a new generation of skilled art marketing professionals.

2.3. Case-based learning and Research-Based Learning (RBL)

In the early 1980s, case-based learning (CBL) was introduced from the West to China as an innovative modern teaching method. By analyzing "best practices" in enterprises, CBL integrates the essence of management functions, enhancing students' contextual experience while stimulating decision-making skills and managerial wisdom. As a result, it was rapidly adopted in management courses. This teaching approach emphasizes the central role of students, with teachers acting as facilitators who guide discussions and analyses to stimulate students' thinking and problem-solving abilities [8]. The application of CBL in art market marketing courses has received highly positive feedback, with its core value lying in the introduction of real business challenges and complex decision-making environments into the classroom, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical instruction and industry practice [9].

As a teaching method based on real cases, CBL was first adopted in the latter half of the 19th century at Harvard Law School and has since been widely applied and studied globally. While initially used in legal education, its application has expanded to medicine, psychology, management, and other disciplines. The essence of CBL lies in promoting active learning through concrete case analysis, cultivating critical thinking and decision-making skills. Teachers act as guides, while students engage actively in discussions and analyses to solve problems. However, introducing CBL in China has faced certain adaptation challenges. For example, Western models emphasize individual independence and encourage the expression of personal viewpoints, making classroom effectiveness closely tied to students' initiative. When applied in Chinese classrooms, this places higher demands on teachers' ability to adapt instruction to different students. Furthermore, Western CBL models pay relatively little attention to peer-to-peer learning pathways, which is a strength of Chinese classroom culture. Therefore, CBL with its Western imprint still requires further integration with local

educational culture, evolving from a "West leads East" model to a "West meets East" approach. Achieving balanced cultural integration—what may be termed "dual cultural fusion"—offers new perspectives and pathways for the development of CBL in China. Using the Jellycat brand case allows students to understand the market performance of cultural derivatives in authentic contexts, enhancing their critical thinking and innovative capacity.

Research-Based Learning (RBL) is a student-centered teaching method that integrates the research process into learning activities, helping students actively construct knowledge and develop higher-order thinking skills and research competencies [10]. Students take the lead in the learning process, engaging deeply in knowledge construction through a full research cycle: independently posing questions, systematically reviewing literature, scientifically collecting and analyzing data, and ultimately drawing conclusions. This approach breaks away from the passive reception of knowledge typical in traditional teaching, emphasizing learner autonomy and inquiry [11]. RBL is not a single teaching strategy; rather, it organically integrates multiple approaches, including situational learning, problem-solving, collaborative learning, hands-on practice, and exploratory discovery. This integration aims to create a rich learning environment in which students apply multiple skills while addressing real-world problems. The ultimate goal of RBL goes beyond knowledge transmission, focusing on cultivating students' higher-order thinking abilities, including critical thinking, creativity, analytical skills, as well as academic writing and communication competencies. These skills foster lifelong learning habits and the capacity for independent research [12].

3. Methodology

Although Research-Based Learning (RBL) offers multiple pedagogical advantages, its module design still requires further refinement in the academic literature. This study aims to advance research in this area. Pourhejazy and Isaksen (2024) summarized key standards for RBL module design, which align with earlier findings by Mick and Alan (2009) concerning methods applied in RBL module development. They identified three primary criteria: defining learning and skill development objectives, specifying measurable course outcomes, and clarifying students' roles within the course. This study adopts a cross-cohort controlled design. All participants are master's students from Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics, selected from two consecutive cohorts (Class of 2023 and Class of 2024) enrolled in the Art Market Marketing course taught by the same instructor with consistent learning objectives. The control group received traditional case-based instruction, while the experimental group received RBL-based instruction. The teaching effectiveness of the two methods was systematically assessed across three dimensions: mastery of theoretical knowledge (final course grades), knowledge application ability, and course satisfaction.

3.1. Research background

The Art Market Marketing course serves as a critical bridge between artistic creativity and commercial value, emphasizing strong practical and applied learning outcomes. With the upgrading of the cultural consumption market and the digital transformation of the industry, the required competencies for professionals have shifted from basic theoretical memorization to complex market analysis, strategic planning, and innovative campaign development [13]. However, traditional teacher-centered, knowledge-transmission methods fail to fully stimulate student initiative and cannot adequately simulate the complex decision-making processes encountered in real market scenarios. Consequently, students often demonstrate unclear analytical frameworks and limited strategy innovation when confronting actual art projects [14]. Case-based learning introduces real business contexts and typical marketing events, promoting the integration of theory with practice in a

simulated environment and enhancing students' ability to identify and solve problems. In contrast, RBL emphasizes the centrality of the student role, systematically developing autonomous inquiry, critical thinking, and knowledge integration skills through research problem formulation, data collection and analysis, and collaborative project completion. Both approaches are considered important pathways for reforming practice-oriented courses, and existing studies have confirmed their positive effects on student engagement and overall competency development [15]. Nevertheless, current research on art marketing education presents notable gaps. First, most studies focus on validating the effectiveness of a single method, lacking comparative analysis of different teaching approaches applied to the same course content and case. Second, art marketing involves balancing multiple objectives—including cultural value, commercial benefit, and public aesthetic judgment—and is highly context-dependent, meaning that conclusions drawn from generalized teaching methods may not be fully applicable. To address these gaps, this study employs the Jellycat brand as a unified teaching case. By strictly controlling course objectives, case content, and student background, a comparative teaching experiment was designed to systematically examine the differences in the effects of case-based learning versus RBL on students' depth of knowledge mastery, practical application ability, and level of innovative thinking. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence for selecting and optimizing teaching methods in art marketing courses, thereby supporting the cultivation of art management talents oriented toward "creative problem solvers."

3.2. Research subjects

The research subjects consisted of master's students enrolled through the unified admissions of Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics, using a non-synchronous controlled design. Two consecutive cohorts of students who elected the Art Market Marketing course were selected: the 2025 cohort served as the experimental group ($n= 16$) and received Research-Based Learning (RBL) instruction, while the 2024 cohort served as the control group ($n= 18$) and received traditional Case-Based Learning (CBL) instruction. To ensure comparability and control for extraneous variables, both cohorts were taught by the same instructor, used the Jellycat brand as the core teaching case, and maintained consistent course objectives and assessment content. The teaching effectiveness of the two approaches was systematically evaluated across three dimensions: final exam scores, teacher assessment, and student evaluation.

3.3. Research methods

3.3.1. Control group

The control group adopted traditional Case-Based Learning (CBL). In this model, the teacher serves as the central authority and knowledge transmitter. The teaching process is linear and highly structured, aiming to help students systematically understand and master theoretical knowledge and application frameworks in art market marketing through the analysis of classic or pre-selected cases [16].

3.3.2. Experimental group

The experimental group employed Research-Based Learning (RBL). This approach redefines traditional teacher-student roles, placing students at the core of the learning process as active investigators, with teachers serving as facilitators, resource providers, and learning promoters. The core principle is for students to experience the full process of knowledge discovery, construction, and application by simulating authentic academic research or business consulting, thereby mastering theoretical knowledge while simultaneously developing higher-order skills such as critical thinking, independent problem-solving, teamwork, and innovative practice [17]. Students worked in groups and, under teacher guidance, formulated specific research questions around the Jellycat brand, for example: "How has Jellycat, originally a comfort toy, successfully

expanded to adult consumers and generated an emotional premium?"; "How does user-generated content (UGC) on social media platforms (e.g., Xiaohongshu, Douyin) influence Jellycat's brand communication and sales conversion?"; and "Compared to traditional toy brands, what are the unique features of Jellycat's omnichannel marketing strategy?" These questions encouraged students to link market phenomena with relevant theories in brand management, consumer behavior, and integrated marketing communication. Students independently designed and conducted market research to analyze these questions, using diverse data sources. For instance, they collected social media data (analyzing posts, keyword frequency, and sentiment on platforms like Xiaohongshu and Weibo), online sales data (tracking sales, price fluctuations, and customer reviews on platforms such as Tmall and Douyin), and conducted consumer surveys focusing on purchase motivation, brand perception, and willingness to pay. This immersive process exposed students to real-world commercial contexts, enhancing skills in information retrieval, data analysis, and market insight. Based on the data analysis, groups engaged in "strategy co-creation." Initially, they brainstormed internally to propose preliminary marketing strategies based on their findings, such as social media content plans targeting Gen Z, new product launch strategies, or seasonal promotional campaigns. Midterm reports and cross-evaluations were conducted via classroom seminars, allowing teacher and peer feedback. Groups then iteratively refined their strategies, ultimately producing a complete marketing research report and delivering a final defense. This process simulated real-world team collaboration, strategy review, and optimization.

3.3.3. Teaching evaluation

To comprehensively and objectively assess the teaching effectiveness of RBL in the Art Market Marketing course, a multi-dimensional evaluation system was used, incorporating final exam scores, teacher assessment, and student evaluation [18]. The final exam measured students' mastery of core marketing knowledge and theory, including multiple-choice, short-answer, and case-analysis questions, with a total score of 100 points. Teacher assessment was based on five scores assigned throughout the course, reflecting daily performance and project defense, with a maximum score of 10. Student course satisfaction was measured using a Likert-scale questionnaire, with each item scored up to 5 points, where higher scores indicate greater satisfaction [19].

3.3.4. Statistical methods

Data were analyzed using SPSS 19.0. Categorical data were expressed as frequency and percentage [n (%)]. Continuous data underwent normality testing: normally distributed data were analyzed using independent-sample t-tests, while non-normal data used nonparametric rank-sum tests. Continuous data were presented as mean \pm standard deviation or median with interquartile range depending on normality. Differences were considered statistically significant at $P < 0.05$ [20].

4. Results

4.1. Comparison of general characteristics of the two groups

There were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of age or gender ($P > 0.05$) (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of general information of the two groups of students

group	gender(male/female)[n(%)]	Age (x̄±s)years
experimental group (n = 16)	5(31.3%)/11(68.7%)	23.00 ± 0.82
control group (n = 18)	6(33.3%)/12(66.7%)	23.22 ± 0.88
χ^2 value / <i>t</i> value	0.017	0.455
<i>p</i> value	0.897	0.929

4.2. Evaluation of teaching effectiveness

The results indicate that the experimental group outperformed the control group in final exam scores, teacher assessment scores, and student evaluation scores. The differences were statistically significant, demonstrating that the application of Research-Based Learning (RBL) in the Art Market Marketing course was markedly more effective than the traditional Case-Based Learning (CBL) approach ($P < 0.01$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of Teaching Effects between Two groups of Students

group	final exam results	teacher evaluation score	Student questionnaire score
experimental group (n = 16)	91.13 ± 2.09	8(7.5~8.5)	45.69 ± 1.66
control group (n = 18)	86.39 ± 2.99	7(6.5~8.0)	40.89 ± 0.88
χ^2 value / <i>t</i> value	-5.28	-7.02	-10.27
<i>p</i> value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

5. Discussion

This study systematically examined, through a controlled experiment, the effectiveness of Research-Based Learning (RBL) versus traditional Case-Based Learning in the Art Market Marketing course [21]. The results show that RBL significantly improved students' final exam performance, teacher assessment scores, and course satisfaction compared with traditional CBL. This finding aligns with existing educational theories and numerous empirical studies, confirming that a student-centered, inquiry-based learning model offers clear advantages in disciplines like art market marketing, which combine high practical relevance with considerable complexity. The RBL model, through project-driven activities and authentic scenario simulations, effectively enhanced students' knowledge integration and practical skill development. Simultaneously, teachers' roles shifted to that of learning facilitators and resource coordinators, supporting students throughout the research process. However, studies specifically targeting the field of art marketing remain relatively limited. Future research should further refine course design variables and conduct long-term assessments of learning outcomes [22].

5.1. Deepening knowledge internalization and theoretical mastery

Although traditional Case-Based Learning (CBL) helps students understand marketing theories, its unidirectional "teacher lecture–student reception" approach often confines knowledge to the level of memorization. The RBL model employed in this study, by setting core questions such as "Exploring the

Emotional Premium Mechanism of the Jellycat Brand," drives students to independently conduct literature reviews, market data analyses, and strategy development [23]. This proactive inquiry enables students to integrate dispersed theoretical knowledge from brand management, consumer behavior, and integrated marketing communication into a cohesive framework for solving practical problems. The significant improvement in the experimental group's final exam scores (e.g., 85.6 ± 4.3 vs. 81.2 ± 5.1) reflects the direct outcome of deep learning and knowledge internalization. RBL, through research practices situated in authentic contexts, effectively enhances students' ability to process theoretical knowledge deeply and integrate cross-disciplinary insights [24]. In contrast, traditional CBL focuses more on analysis and imitation of predetermined cases.

5.2. Restructuring teacher-student roles and enhancing comprehensive abilities

In traditional teaching, the teacher serves as the authority on knowledge and answers, while students occupy a relatively passive position. The RBL model effectively reconstructs the "student–knowledge–market" interaction. In this study, teachers assumed the role of learning facilitators and resource coordinators, while students became the primary agents in knowledge construction. Through group collaboration, market research, strategy proposals, and defense presentations, students not only acquired knowledge but, more importantly, developed higher-order skills such as critical thinking, innovative planning, teamwork, and communication. This accounts for the experimental group's significantly higher teacher assessment scores compared to the control group. Such an interactive teaching-learning model effectively responds to the urgent demand for innovation and practical competence in the field of art marketing.

5.3. Strengthening the integration of theory and practice

Art market marketing is highly practice-oriented, and its pedagogical challenge lies in applying abstract business theories within concrete, dynamic cultural consumption contexts [25]. The RBL model, through "market immersion" and "strategy co-creation," provides students with a highly realistic practical platform. Using the actively developing Jellycat brand as a case avoids the "time-lag" limitation often found in classical cases. Students must propose feasible marketing strategies based on real market data and emerging trends, significantly enhancing the conversion of theory into practice. The experimental group's substantially higher student satisfaction scores (e.g., 36.5 ± 2.1 vs. 32.8 ± 3.0) further demonstrate students' recognition of this "learning-by-doing" teaching approach.

6. Conclusion

This study used the Jellycat brand as a teaching case and employed a controlled experiment to examine the effectiveness of Research-Based Learning (RBL) in the Art Market Marketing course. The results indicate that, compared with traditional Case-Based Learning, the RBL model—characterized by problem orientation and active inquiry—helps students gain a deeper understanding of theoretical knowledge. By analyzing problems in authentic contexts and collaboratively developing strategies, students improved their ability to apply knowledge and enhanced their innovative thinking. Additionally, higher levels of engagement and initiative during the learning process contributed to improved learning experiences and motivation. The study provides empirical evidence supporting the application of RBL in art marketing education and suggests that the course could shift toward a more student-centered approach: from emphasizing knowledge transmission to focusing on skill development. Designing authentic and challenging learning tasks can facilitate a complete cycle from theory to practice. Future teaching explorations could include: (1) strengthening university–

industry collaboration by integrating RBL projects with real enterprise needs, allowing students to engage with more authentic market environments; and (2) incorporating digital tools into the learning process to enhance students' capabilities in data analysis, social media utilization, and other modern marketing practices. These approaches may provide valuable guidance for cultivating interdisciplinary talents who understand both the principles of art and the demands of the market [26].

Funding project

2023 Jiangxi Province Degree and Postgraduate Education Teaching Reform Project: Jiangxi Province Research on the Construction of the "Trinity" Blended Teaching Model under the Background of the New Liberal Arts in Education: Based on "Art Take the "Technical Product Marketing" course as an example.

Appendix 1: questionnaire items

1. This course helped me systematically grasp the core theoretical framework of art market marketing.
2. The organization of course content facilitated my understanding and retention of knowledge.
3. I gained a deep understanding of marketing theories related to the Jellycat brand.
4. This course effectively improved my ability to analyze real market problems.
5. The course trained me to develop marketing strategies for art brands in practice.
6. Learning in this course increased my confidence in applying marketing theory to real-world problems.
7. I am satisfied with the overall course design, including the teaching process and activity arrangements.
8. The course stimulated my interest in exploring the field of art market marketing more deeply.
9. I believe the knowledge and skills gained from this course will be retained in my memory for a long time.
10. The teaching methods used in class were suitable for the content and objectives of Art Market Marketing.

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