

# USING A CUSTOMER VALUE-ADD (CVA) APPROACH TO DRIVE IMPACTFUL MARKETING PRACTICES IN A PART-TIME MBA PROGRAM

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## ABSTRACT

*Due to increasing competitive pressures and limited budgets, marketing programs in higher education need to be laser focused, addressing critical value-add requirements of targeted markets. A Customer Value-Add (CVA) survey methodology was utilized to understand what constitutes “value-add” for prospective, current, and alumni student customers of a large, part-time Northeast PA MBA program. Survey respondents were asked to provide an importance weighting for each MBA value-add attribute, rate the MBA program on each of the CVA attributes, and then provide a relative rating (on each of the attributes) of the MBA program with respect to its competitors. Results from 350 survey respondents suggest that part-time MBA programs should be practical and relevant, flexible, credible and trusted, provide affordable quality, and provide personal attention. Relatively little importance was placed on value attributes emphasizing being connected, focusing on ethics, or globalization. Absolute and relative (to competitor) ratings of the focus MBA program on all value-add elements were discussed and rationalized, while implications for MBA marketing and operational actions were considered. CVA methodological concerns and suggestions for future research were also posited.*

## INTRODUCTION

Increasing competitive pressures and limited advertising budgets have driven the need for university advertising campaigns to be laser-focused, addressing critical value-add requirements of targeted markets. So too must the structural and operational characteristics of a university program, as well as its products or services, hit the mark as good as, or better than, the competitor. This study was initiated because of ongoing discussions about what graduate students really value in a part-time MBA program. A Customer Value-Add (CVA) survey methodology was utilized to understand what constitutes “value-add” for prospective, current, and alumni student customers of a large, part-time Northeast PA MBA program. Survey respondents were asked to provide an importance weighting for various value-add attributes, to rate the MBA program on each of the CVA attributes, and then to provide a relative rating (on each of the attributes) of the MBA program with respect to its competitors. Understanding which CVA elements are important to students, and which ones the MBA program excels in, especially relative to its competitors, is important for maintaining market share, selectively driving the right program improvements, and growing the MBA business.

Survey results from 350 participants suggest that part-time MBA programs should be practical and relevant, flexible, credible and trusted, provide affordable quality, and provide personal attention. Relatively little importance was placed on value attributes emphasizing being connected, focusing on ethics, or globalization. Absolute and relative (to competitor) ratings of the MBA program, on all value-add elements, yielded some expected findings, while at the same time, offered some surprising results. Not all of the CVA attributes being touted by university administrators were rated as important by the student-customer base...and the MBA program, in focus for this study, didn't always fare well when evaluated against important attribute criteria or when compared to key competitors on those attribute criteria.

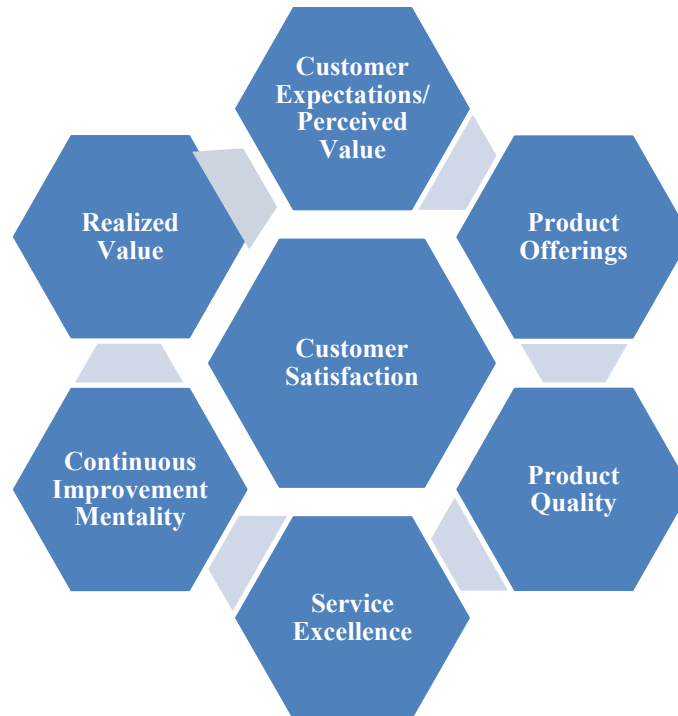
Practical implications for both the development and refinement of the MBA program's marketing collateral, as well as key logistics and operational elements of the program itself, were considered. CVA methodological issues and concerns, as well as suggestions for future research, were posited by the authors.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Customer Satisfaction

The idea of achieving customer satisfaction via the development or refinement of a company's product or service attributes to align with the needs, wants, and requirements of its targeted customers is a basic fundamental tenant of marketing (Kotler, 2012). Measurements of the resultant levels of customer satisfaction are also quite basic and have been developed and refined over the years (i.e. Churchill and Suprenant, 1982; Fornell et al., 1996; Szymanski and Henard, 2001; Raithel et al., 2012). Figure 1 depicts a composite Customer Satisfaction model showing key/typical drivers of satisfaction with product and/or service offerings.

**Figure 1**  
**Key Drivers of Customer Satisfaction**



### **Customer Value-Add**

Gale and Wood (1994), in their seminal work on managing customer value, introduced the concept of Customer Value-Add (CVA) to further advance an important notion about customer satisfaction. Their fundamental idea was that businesses add value, as perceived by their customers (or not), in the production and delivery of their goods or services. They also contended that certain CVA “attributes” (i.e. technology, quality, responsiveness, delivery) are important, and if companies are to be successful, they must figure out what those CVA attributes are, and which ones are more important than others to their target customers. Furthermore, they suggest that companies should reach out and survey past, current, and potential customers (even customers who do business with competitors if possible), and ask beyond the “Which CVA attributes are important?” question. Companies should also ask how they are *performing* against each of the importance-weighted CVA attributes, and most critically, ask how they are performing *relative to their key competitors* in each of those attribute areas. Other researchers have further expounded on the CVA concept and/or have reviewed how impactful the CVA methodology has been in a variety of business settings (Laitamaki and Kordupleski, 1997; Higgins, 1998; Kordupleski, 2003; Lindgreen and Wyndstra, 2005; Olaru et al., 2008). No research appears to have been done applying the CVA methodology to understanding the drivers of business education or MBA program quality.

## Business Education Program Quality

A somewhat limited body of work has been done on the drivers or determinants of business education program quality using other methodological approaches (LeBlanc and Nguyen, 1997; Argenti, 2000; Richards-Wilson, 2002; DeShields et al., 2005; Gibson, 2010). LeBlanc and Nguyen (1997) were one of the first to systematically investigate the concept of service quality in undergraduate business education with data collected from 388 students. Adapting a measure of service quality (SERVQUAL) from the pioneering work of Parasuraman et al (1991), LeBlanc and Nguyen identified seven factors which influenced student evaluations of service quality. In descending order of importance these factors were: *reputation, administrative personnel, faculty, curriculum, responsiveness, physical evidence, and access to facilities*. LeBlanc and Nguyen (1997) describe the implications for managing business education program quality and for achieving business education excellence. The authors cited the need for additional research, but suggest that research efforts should be institution-specific and that results should be used to help drive behavioral changes that will improve each business program's quality as perceived by its student "customers". DeShields et al. (2005), in a similar study of business undergraduates, used a satisfaction model and a comprehensive set of independent variables (and self-reported experiential assessments) to understand drivers of student satisfaction. Results of their study indicated that three factor categories - *faculty* (understanding, accessible, professional, helpful, provide feedback), *advising staff* (accessible, reliable, helpful, responsive, understanding) and *classes* (real-world experience, course scheduling, project/case skills) - ultimately lead to higher student satisfaction and retention. The authors suggest that the changing nature of the higher education marketplace should encourage college administrators to apply and frequently validate customer-oriented principles that are used in the corporate sector. Gibson (2010) reviewed the major attributes that influence business students' satisfaction across a broad spectrum of studies – including the above mentioned works of LeBlanc and Nguyen (1997) and DeShields et al (2005). Gibson's analysis concluded that academic factors such as the *quality of teaching, skills and knowledge acquired*, as well as the *curriculum itself*, are the most significant determinants of overall satisfaction. A number of other non-academic factors - such as the student's *feeling of 'belonging'* and perceptions of the institution's *responsiveness and concern* - also contributed significantly to overall satisfaction.

## MBA Program Quality

Several researchers have recently assessed the determinants of MBA program quality (Rapert et al., 2004; Shrestha, 2013; Icli and Anil, 2014; Osman and Ashraf, 2014; Sebastianelli et al., 2015). Rapert et al. (2004), for example, combined both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in evaluating how students select and evaluate an MBA program. Results indicate that students use a holistic approach to assess program quality, including factors inside of the classroom (i.e. more *specialized academic concentrations*) and outside of the classroom (i.e. *integration with the business community*). More recently, Shrestha (2013) surveyed 220 MBA students in Nepal and found that perceived quality is determined by a *credible and trustworthy reputation* which is influenced by graduate employability, practical curriculum and competent faculty. Similarly, Icli and Anil (2014) developed and validated HEDQUAL, a new measurement scale of service quality specifically designed for MBA programs in higher education. Using a 36 item survey, the authors engaged 317 MBA students and identified five factors as key dimensions

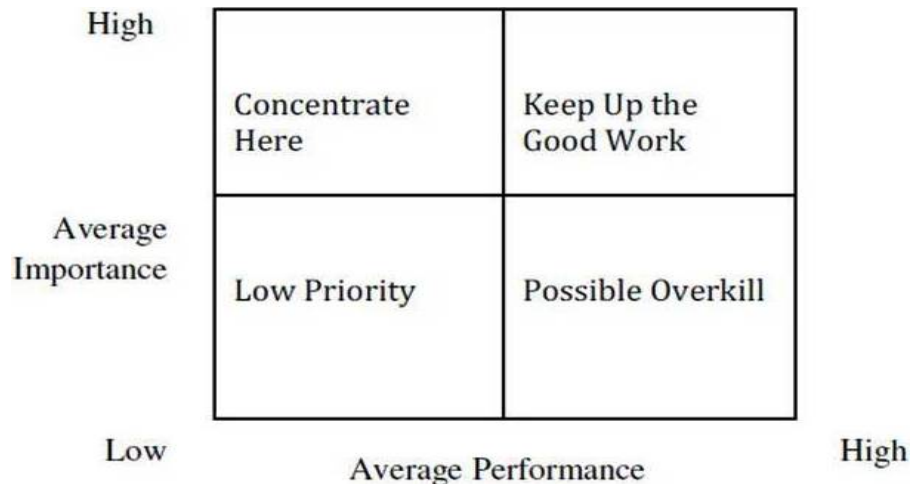
of service quality in a Turkish MBA program: *academic quality, administrative service quality, library services quality, quality of providing career opportunities, and support services quality*. Osman and Ashraf (2014) conducted a survey study of 344 Bangladesh MBA students and found that both aesthetic (*student quality, Ph.D. faculty, difficulty of admission*) and performance (*sufficient and effective knowledge, reputation on the job, effective communication and leadership*) factors were important determinants of student perceptions of overall program quality. Finally, Sebastianelli et al. (2015), using survey data from MBA students at a private university, employed structural equation models to explore these relationships empirically. The findings suggest that *course content* is the strongest predictor of all three outcomes (perceived learning, satisfaction, and quality); it is the only significant factor affecting perceived learning. They also found that *professor–student interaction* had a significant positive impact on satisfaction but not on perceptions of quality. Perceptions of quality were influenced significantly by *student–student interaction* and *mentoring support*.

While research on business education and MBA program quality suggest a variety of (mostly) survey mechanisms for understanding the relative determinants of student satisfaction or drivers of program quality, two things stand out from the literature review. First, the drivers of MBA program quality appear to be all over the map and, as LeBlanc and Nguyen (1997) and DeShields et al. (2005) articulated, appear to be program specific. Secondly, it is important to note that none of the methodologies attempt to measure student perceptions of business or MBA program performance relative to competitors. This methodological shortcoming can be addressed by the application of a CVA-related methodology in the present study.

### **Importance-Performance Analysis**

Importance – performance analysis has been addressed in the literature by a number of studies (Wong et al., 2009; Slack, 1994; Ennew et al., 1993). Martilla and James (1977) created a mapping model to identify key attributes based upon importance and performance (see Figure 2). Some modifications have been made to the model since its development (Anderson and Mital, 2000; Matzler and Sauerwein, 2002), however, the basic premise of the model has remained: it is a tool to identify key performance drivers and provide recommendations for strategic direction. The two dimensional IPA model in Figure 2 is divided into four quadrants with performance on the x-axis and importance on the y-axis. As a result, four quadrants - Concentrate Here, Keep up the Good Work, Low Priority, and Possible Overkill - are created.

**Figure 2**  
**Importance-performance Analysis (IPA) Grid (from Martilla and James, 1977)**



The quadrants can be used to generate strategic marketing direction for an organization. Quadrant I (High Importance/Low Performance) is labeled “Concentrate Here”. Attributes that fall into this quadrant represent key areas that need to be improved with top priority. Quadrant II (High Importance/High Performance) is labeled “Keep Up the Good Work”. All attributes that fall into this quadrant are the core key drivers upon which the organization performs very well. Quadrant III (Low Importance/Low Performance) is labeled “Low Priority” because any of the attributes that fall into this quadrant are of least importance to customers and not organizational strengths. Quadrant IV (Low Importance/High Performance) is labeled as “Possible Overkill”. It denotes attributes that may be overemphasized by the organization. As customers do not find these attributes to be of particular importance, organizations should audit these features and consider reallocating resources to more effectively manage attributes that reside in Quadrant I. Note that the “cross-hair” intersection in the IPA grid is identified using the *mean* level of importance and the *mean* level of performance from a list of product/service attributes.

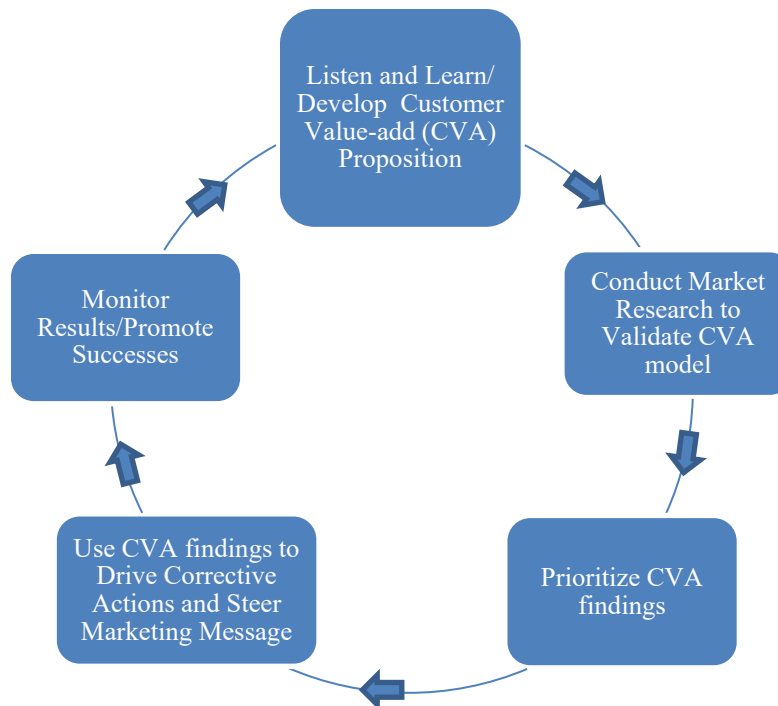
In sum, the IPA evaluation tool provides a means to evaluate product or service benefits and provide guidance to formulate a strategy to allocate resources accurately in order to maximize return on investment (ROI). The IPA model is used to evaluate the level of importance that customers attribute to each of the benefits and also to examine how customers perceive organizational performance in the delivery of those product/service benefits.

### **Purpose of Present Study**

The purpose of the present study was to develop and launch a CVA survey tool to identify the key attributes of a part-time MBA program that students use to determine how much the program adds value to their current life situation. The study is designed specifically to answer the question, “What are the prioritized decision-making criteria used to select a part-time MBA program?” The authors would also like to know how the incumbent MBA program rates against this prioritized set of customer value-add attributes and how they are perceived, relative to the

competition, on each value parameter. Figure 3 depicts, from a practical perspective, how this data will be used to drive improvements in the subject MBA program.

**Figure 3**  
**Process Flow – Using CVA Attributes to Drive MBA Program Improvements**



## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

Participants in this study are current, former and prospective students in a quarterly private, part-time MBA program with eight campus locations. The institution is a private Catholic university approximately two hours west of New York City. The total number of students in the MBA program is approximately 850. The program can be completed in a traditional face-to-face format, online or in a hybrid format. The mean age of the MBA students is 37 with 45% male and 55% female gender distribution. Participation in this study was voluntary. Contact lists were generated from internal records and surveys were delivered via email. Students were invited to enter into a drawing for an iPad Mini as incentive.

### Research Objectives

The purpose of the current study was to explore the following research objectives:

1. Determine “customer value” drivers for the DeSales MBA (DSU MBA) program
2. Establish benchmarks on customer value
3. Identify likely marketing actions to capitalize on DSU MBA perceived Customer Value-Add.

4. Develop corrective programmatic actions to improve CVA going forward.

No specific hypotheses are suggested, as the research is essentially exploratory in nature and designed to provide direction for more descriptive research in the future. Survey research methodology is employed in this study, with frequencies to summarize data and nonparametric (chi-square statistic) tests to determine relationships between variables. The authors further explore relationships among variables with multiple regression analysis. SPSS was used for all statistical analysis.

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed after initial brainstorming with MBA program staff, informal discussion with faculty, anecdotal feedback from MBA alumni, as well as current literature review on customer value analysis and customer service surveys in business education. The resulting questionnaire was comprised of two sections. The first section contained a series of Likert scaled questions relevant to students' perceptions of MBA program characteristics. Specific dimensions include:

**Practical and relevant:** it is practitioner focused, applied, includes knowledgeable faculty and in-demand concentrations.

**Flexible:** tuition deferral, multiple program entry points, campuses, varied delivery formats, GMAT waiver option.

**Comprehensive:** number of courses, concentrations, degrees, certificates

**Affordable:** quality education, competitively priced.

**Unique:** for its focus on **ethics** in business, character and Christian humanism.

**Global:** variety of global course offerings, study tour opportunities.

**Credible and trusted:** ACBSP and MHSCE accredited, state and regional brand recognition, high student satisfaction.

**Personal:** attentive advisors, small class size, responsive.

**Connected:** quality network of corporate and educational partners.

**Digital:** state of the art classrooms, online programs, training available.

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with whether or not they perceived the program to fit the aforementioned characteristics. The dimensions are rated on a scale of 1-5, 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree." A mid-point on the scale (3) included "neither agree nor disagree."

The second section contained a series of similar questions focusing on students' perceptions of similar dimensions of MBA program value as they pertain to *competitors'* offerings. The survey also included a set of demographic questions largely aimed at location, age, and gender. All items in both sections were structured and closed-ended except for one open ended question in the second section that asked respondents to consider other factors that were important to them in an MBA program. An item analysis indicated scale reliability with an alpha coefficient of .82.

## Procedure

Surveys were distributed online to 528 current, prospective, and alumni students. Three hundred and fifty surveys were completed for a response rate of 66%. Of the 350 surveys returned, all were valid and included for analyses in this study.



## Limitations

There are several limitations to be noted in this study. The first is the fact that the sample was largely limited to DSU MBA students and alumni, therefore results may not be generalizable to all MBA programs. As more institutions begin to experiment with CVA, there will be more opportunities to conduct studies with larger samples. Second, the alumni responding may provide ratings on program features and dimensions that have changed significantly since they had been enrolled. There were no study controls in place to measure such changing factors as MBA leadership, new course offerings, new program partnerships, partnership discount rates, and so on.

## RESULTS

The CVA survey distributed to respondents is included in the appendix. Respondents surveyed included current students as well as alumni and some prospective students. Consistent with program demographics, 49% of respondents fall in the 21-35 age group, while another 46% fall in to the 36-55 age group. Sixty-three percent of respondents are married and 29% are single. Forty-four percent of respondents have household income of \$100,000 or greater. Fifty-eight percent of respondents are female and 42% male. As this is a part-time MBA program, 95% of study participants are employed full-time. Finally, 72% of the respondents are current students, 22% are alumni, and 6% are prospective students.

Table 1 includes a listing of item means for each MBA program (CVA) attribute. Importance weights (as ranked by respondents), absolute ratings of DSU MBA performance, and relative ratings vs competitor MBA programs are depicted and prioritized by importance rankings.

CVA ATTRIBUTE	Importance Weight Mean (Rank)	DSU MBA Rating Mean (Rank)	DSU MBA vs Competitor Mean Customer Value Index* (Rank)
Practical and Relevant	<b>16.52 (1)</b>	<b>4.40 (3)</b>	+ .57 (6)
Flexible	<b>15.57 (2)</b>	<b>4.69 (1)</b>	<b>+1.17 (1)</b>
Credible and Trusted	<b>11.51 (3)</b>	<b>4.28 (4)</b>	+ .44 (8)
Affordable	<b>11.37 (4)</b>	4.04 (7)	<b>+ .65 (4)</b>
Personal	<b>9.99 (5)</b>	<b>4.49 (2)</b>	<b>+1.00 (2)</b>
Comprehensive	9.98 (6)	<b>4.28 (4)</b>	+ .51 (7)
Digital	7.87 (7)	4.24 (6)	+ .62 (5)
Connected	6.68 (8)	3.93 (9)	+ .29 (9)
Unique Focus on Ethics	6.02 (9)	3.94 (8)	<b>+ .78 (3)</b>
Global	4.49 (10)	3.82 (10)	+ .26 (10)

\* + score indicates that DSU MBA is more competitive relative to MBA competitor

As can be seen in Table 1, respondents rated the focus MBA program as quite *flexible*, *personal*, *practical/relevant*, *comprehensive*, as well as *credible/trusted* with mean rating scores of 4.69, 4.49, 4.40, 4.28 and 4.28 respectively. Of these five dimensions, respondents indicate that the dimensions of *practical/relevant* and *flexible* are most important to them in terms of what

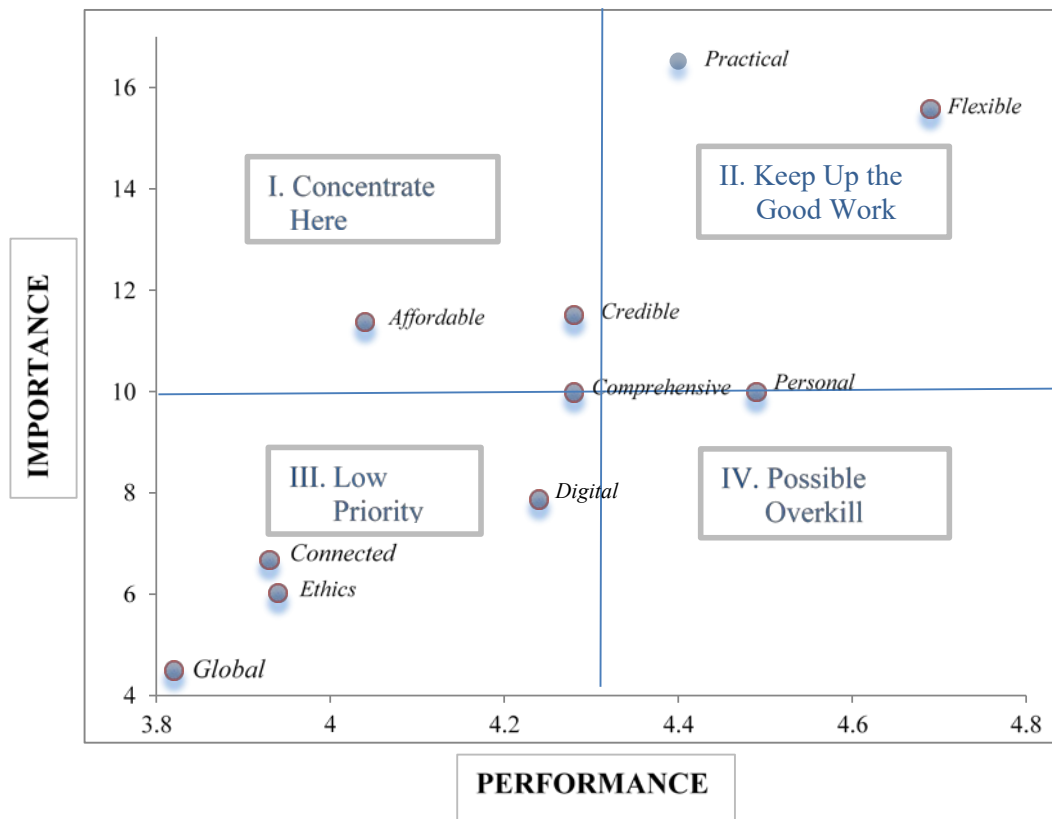
they value; with weighted importance mean scores of 16.52 and 15.57 respectively. *Credible/trusted*, *personal*, and *comprehensive* attributes are also valued as important, with weighted mean importance scores of 11.51, 9.99, and 9.98 respectively. It is interesting to note that the focus MBA program scored highest (in absolute ratings) on 5 of the top 6 most important program attributes.

The dimensions with the lowest performance scores include *affordable*, *ethics*, *connected*, and *global*. Ratings are 4.04, 3.94, 3.93 and 3.82 respectively. The MBA program is not particularly strong on any of these attributes as these scores indicate. Coincidentally, with the exception of the *affordable* attribute, respondents' mean importance scores indicate that these attributes are least important to them.

To correlate respondent ratings with overall customer value, we calculate a "customer value index" based upon attribute rankings as well as importance weights. The customer value index of each MBA vs competitor CVA attribute is included in the third column of Table 2. Looking at the *practical and relevant* attribute, for example, the DSU MBA program is perceived to be 57% more valuable than competitors' programs. Virtually all 10 of the CVA attributes were evaluated as better than the competitor offerings looking at the customer value ratios in Table 2.

Using an IPA matrix, the data was also mapped in order to identify areas of focus for MBA program administration.

**Figure 4**  
**MBA Importance - Performance Attribute (IPA) Matrix**



As the map indicates, students (customers) seem to value the *personal*, *flexible* and *practical* dimensions of the program. As these items fall in **Quadrant II**, it is important for the MBA program to continue to emphasize these program attributes to prospective students. It is these features that students seem to value more than any others, and students indicate that the program delivers on these attributes.

In **Quadrant I**, there are items that are extremely important to customers where performance ratings may be lower than desired. This is an area for critical focus. Program attributes *affordable*, *comprehensive*, and *credible* should be examined and explored for additional strategic marketing direction.

*Global*, *connected*, *ethics*, and *digital* fall in **Quadrant III**, which means the organization may be wasting valuable resources if the program is emphasizing or driving actions relating to these attributes. None of the ten CVA attributes fall in **Quadrant IV**, suggesting that the MBA program is not overemphasizing features that are of lesser importance to the customer, thereby conserving organizational resources.

Recall that the reliability analysis indicated that the items exhibited strong reliability ( $\alpha = .82$ ) suggesting that the survey is a reliable instrument. In order to investigate the data further, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted (using item means that were presented in Table 1) to determine what role certain items might play in understanding students' choice and commitment to an MBA program.

Principal axis factoring with varimax rotation was performed. Only one factor emerges with an eigen value greater than one. This factor accounts for 51.8% of variance and has been labeled MBAVAL. Factor loadings for MBAVAL are presented in Table 2. The factor items load moderately to strong (.622 to .746) on MBAVAL, indicating a unidimensional factor.

MBA PROGRAM ATTRIBUTES	FACTOR LOADINGS
Personal	.746
Practical	.740
Comprehensive	.735
Credible	.779
Digital	.698
Flexible	.633
Ethics	.619
Connected	.714
Global	.622

## **DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

One of the precepts of Gale's research was to identify issues critical to customers in terms of value delivery. Although there is some literature available on customer value in education, there do not yet seem to be any "benchmarks" for customer value ratios in the higher education industry, and as concluded from the literature review for this study, the research on CVA in

academia is sparse (Webb and Jagun, 1997; Brown and Mazzarol, 2009). Qualitative research conducted in this study identified dimensions that may be important to a graduate business (MBA) student population. These dimensions include: *practical, flexible, comprehensive, affordable, unique, global, credible, personal, connected and digital*. This is the first attempt to apply Gale's CVA modeling process to an MBA program. The dimensions were identified in qualitative non-probability research involving an expert sample. One item was included to represent each dimension to demonstrate student's perception of DSU MBA's performance on this dimension as well as competitors' performance. This instrument exhibited reliability with a strong Chronbach's alpha of .82. One of the first issues that should be addressed in future research is further exploration of application of CVA to higher education programs. Further investigation should include additional testing of the current program attributes and the possible development of other dimensions/attributes.

A second goal of this research was to explore how the MBA program performs relative to key competitors on the proposed attributes. In terms of customer value, it appears that DSU MBA outperforms its competitors on all factors, although performance on the personal and flexible dimensions is highest. While this is certainly respectable, there may be opportunities to grow the value gap between DSU MBA and competing programs. A more significant focus on communicating the dimensions most important to prospective students may yield a larger applicant pool and subsequently, alumni base. Research indicates that this alumni group may be one of the wealthiest at institutions of higher education. Research also indicates that the most influential variable on donation likelihood to the alumni educational institution is the overall value of the MBA (Bruce, 2007).

Another goal of this study was to identify items that are most critical to students (customers) in delivering value. Items were developed and evaluated for the MBA program resulting in a newly proposed model to understand student MBA program selection. We began with 10 items that our qualitative research indicated best represented features that were important to students in terms of graduate program selection. These items were further developed as the result of secondary and qualitative research. Further analysis of these items via univariate analyses and EFA revealed strong reliability and validity. The EFA revealed a one-factor solution, explaining 52% of the variance in the data. We have labeled this factor fittingly as "MBAVAL." The EFA in this study demonstrates that indeed several items are loading strongly on the new proposed factor MBAVAL. Although all items moderately to strongly load on the factor and several items play an important role in describing student choice, a few seem to provide more explanatory power in students' MBA program choice. Consistent with the CVA and IPA models, this analysis suggests exploring first the practical, comprehensive, credible and personal dimensions of the program. Future research should include additional testing of this model with a variety of graduate populations, and possibly additional multivariate analyses.

We also applied an IPA model to identify and highlight program features that are most important to students. In the IPA model, marketing efforts should be maintained and supported completely for attributes that rate highly on both importance and performance. This would include the practical, flexible and personal dimensions of the program. Conversely, if performance ratings on an attribute are low, but the attribute is important to customers, then organizational performance on that program attribute must be improved immediately if it is cost-effective. Our analysis reveals a need to address the *affordable, comprehensive and credible* dimensions of the program. While these items seem to be important to students, respondents indicated that the organization is not performing well on these dimensions. If an organization performs poorly on an attribute, but it is

of low importance to the customer, these features should be considered low. In this case study, this would include features falling into Quadrant III (Low Priority): the *connected, digital, ethics and global* dimensions of the program. Finally, if an attribute is of low importance but has very high performance, the organization may explore decreasing investment resources for that particular attribute. None of the program attributes fall into this quadrant in this study.

Somewhat troubling is the fact that respondents rate the “unique ethics” focus of the program at the lower end of the scale. This is a critical component of the institution’s mission and historically has been the focus of many communication and marketing efforts. This issue may need to be explored with further qualitative research methods.

Focusing on Quadrant I (Concentrate Here), many of the qualitative comments included in the data indicate that respondents selected this program because the tuition payment or deferment was compatible with their employers’ reimbursement plan. Additional issues relative to “affordability” may need to be explored.

The program was recently reaccredited by ACBSP. In order to address the “credible” dimension that students deem important, an exploration of students’ understanding of accreditation may be necessary. Vehicles to more effectively communicate this information may also be useful. This is one of the first attempts to apply Gale’s CVA methods to institutions of higher education graduate programs. We paired this model with both IPA and EFA in order to provide recommendations for strategic marketing direction for program administration. This new information should be explored in the future with a variety of institutions’ markets and students in an attempt to develop a standardized model generalizable to a variety of populations.

## CONCLUSION

With this research, we have begun to explore the application of CVA (Customer Value Analysis), IPA and EFA to graduate programs in institutions of higher education. This study seems to suggest that there may be profitable applications for CVA analysis in the higher education industry, so that programs may understand market dynamics and how they are evolving in order to develop more targeted programming to meet the needs of “customers.” We encourage institutions of higher education to explore this and similar models, and we encourage other scholars to continue research in this area.

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## APPENDIX

### MBA CVA SURVEY

You are invited to participate in the DeSales University MBA survey. In this survey, you will be asked questions about your MBA program experience. The survey should take approximately ten minutes to complete. Your opinions are very important to the successful development and delivery of the MBA program at DeSales University! As a token of appreciation for your time, you will have the opportunity to be entered in to a drawing for an IPAD MINI! You may provide your contact info at the end of the survey.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point. Your survey responses will be strictly confidential; data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the study, you may contact Dr. David Gilfoil, MBA Program Director, at david.gilfoil@desales.edu.

Thank you very much for your time and support. Please begin the survey now by clicking on the Continue button below.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The DSU MBA Program is:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor disagree	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
practical and relevant: it is practitioner focused, applied, includes knowledgeable faculty and in-demand concentrations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
flexible: tuition deferral, multiple program entry points, campuses, varied delivery formats, GMAT waiver option	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
comprehensive: number of courses, concentrations, degrees, certificates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
affordable: quality education, competitively priced.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
unique for its focus on ethics in business, character and Christian humanism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
global: variety of global course offerings, study tour opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
credible and trusted: ACBSP and MHSCE accredited, state and regional brand recognition, high student satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
personal: attentive advisors, small class size, responsive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
connected: quality network of corporate and educational partners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
digital: state of the art classrooms, online programs, training available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please provide a numerical importance weight for each factor (how important is this factor in the selection of your MBA program). The total sum of all of your importance weights should equal 100.

- practical and relevant: it is practitioner focused, applied, includes knowledgeable faculty and in-demand concentrations. \_\_\_\_\_

- flexible: tuition deferral, multiple program entry points, campuses, varied delivery formats, GMAT waiver option. \_\_\_\_\_
- comprehensive: number of courses, concentrations, degrees, certificates \_\_\_\_\_
- affordable: quality education, competitively priced. \_\_\_\_\_
- unique for its focus on ethics in business , character and Christian humanism. \_\_\_\_\_
- global: variety of global course offerings, study tour opportunities. \_\_\_\_\_
- credible and trusted: ACBSP and MHSCE accredited, state and regional brand recognition, high student satisfaction. \_\_\_\_\_
- personal: attentive advisors, small class size, responsive. \_\_\_\_\_
- connected: quality network of corporate and educational partners. \_\_\_\_\_
- digital: state of the art classrooms, online programs, training available. \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate DeSales University on each factor relative to any competing MBA programs you may have considered.

The MBA Program is:

	DSU much less competitive	DSU less competitive	Neither competitive nor uncompetitive	DSU more competitive	DSU much more competitive
practical and relevant: it is practitioner focused, applied, includes knowledgeable faculty and in-demand concentrations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
flexible: tuition deferral, multiple program entry points, campuses, varied delivery formats, GMAT waiver option	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
comprehensive: number of courses, concentrations, degrees, certificates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
affordable: quality education, competitively priced.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
unique for its focus on ethics in business , character and Christian humanism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
global: variety of global course offerings, study tour opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
credible and trusted: ACBSP and MHSCE accredited, state and regional brand recognition, high student satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
personal: attentive advisors, small class size, responsive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
connected: quality network of corporate and educational partners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
digital: state of the art classrooms, online programs, training available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate ANY OTHER FACTORS that influenced your choice to enroll in the DSU MBA program and/or ANY OTHER MBA programs you considered:



What is your age group?

1. Under 20
2. 21-35
3. 36-55
4. 56-67
5. 68 & Older

What is your marital status?

1. Married
2. Single
3. Divorced
4. Widowed
5. Other

What is your annual household income?

1. <\$25,000
2. \$25,001-50,000
3. \$50,001-\$75,000
4. \$75,001-\$100,000
5. >\$100,000

What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female

Are you currently employed?

1. Full-time
2. Part-time
3. Not at all

Please indicate your status in the MBA program:

1. Prospective Student
2. Currently Enrolled
3. Alumnus/alumnae

What is your zip code?

To thank you for your time, we will enter your name in to a drawing for an Ipad Mini! If you'd like to participate, please enter your name and email address below.